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Production, Circulation and Reception in Italy of Sixteenth-Century Printed Sources on Japan

Sonia Favi

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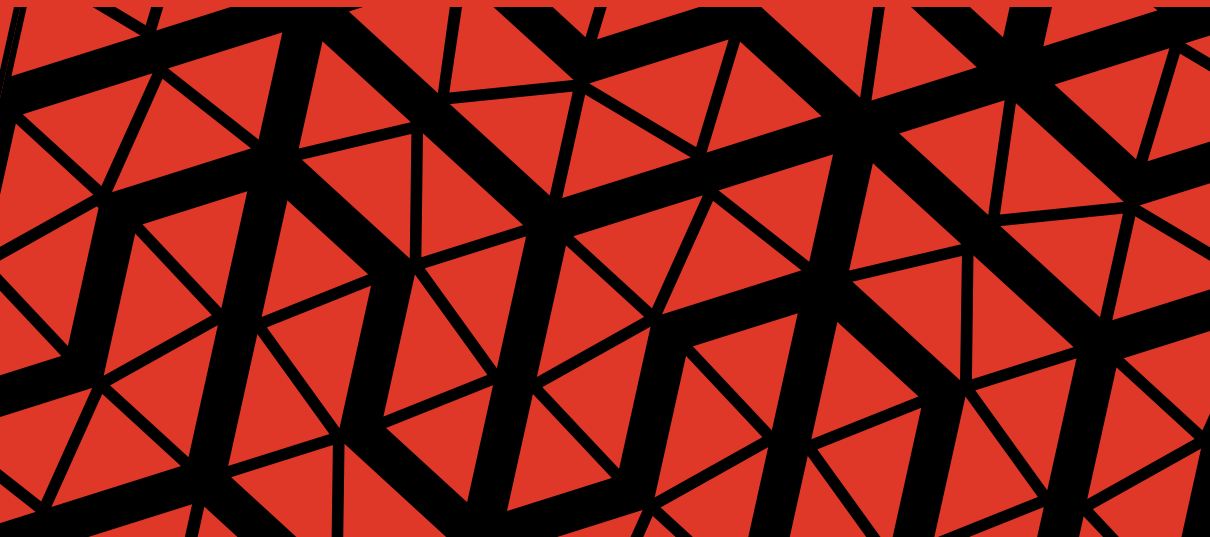

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Abstract

The first 'direct' encounter between Europe and Japan in the second half of the sixteenth century generated a huge amount of written sources, in European languages, on Japan. This works explores the imaginary that they built, focusing on the interplay between 'factuality' and 'myth' and on the way their depiction of 'Japan' reflected European self-images and desires. The work, moreover, estimates the effective impact of this imaginary in Europe, using the Italian editorial world as a case study, and analysing the cultural and economic processes that led to circulation, or, in some cases, to the lack of circulation of the sources in published form. Italian publishing centres dominated the European book market up to the end of the sixteenth Century. Venice, in particular, was, ever since the beginning of the fifteenth century, a main centre for the diffusion of information about international events. Above all in the case of Jesuit sources, many *editio princeps* were Italian and provided the basis for subsequent translations in Northern European languages. Firstly, the work will provide an introductory framework to my discussion on sixteenth-century materials, by focusing on the 'mythical' imaginary on Asia and Japan developed through European sources before the so-called era of 'Great discoveries'. It will then discuss how the early Portuguese explorations in the Atlantic Ocean and Greater China Seas area came to affect the perception and representation of Asia in the sixteenth century, and focus, particularly, on the production of lay sources on Japan and on their (lack of) distribution in the Italian market. Lastly, it will focus on the sources related to the Christian missions in Japan, and particularly on the materials on Japan resulting from the system of correspondence adopted by the Jesuit order.

Keywords Japan. Christianity. Sixteenth century. Representation. Book history.

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0 Introduction

> Mythology is static, we find the same mythical elements combined over and over again, but they are in a closed system, let us say, in contradistinction with history, which is, of course, an open system. The open character of history is secured by the innumerable ways according to which mythical cells, or explanatory cells which were originally mythical, can be arranged and rearranged. It shows us that by using the same material, because it is a kind of common inheritance or common patrimony of all groups,of all clans, or of all lineages, one can nevertheless succeed in building up an original account for each of them. (Lévi-Strauss 2005, 17)

The fine line between 'myth' and 'history' is the dimension where 'Japan' as a cultural object was produced, circulated and received in Italy (and Europe) in the sixteenth century.

The sixteenth century marked a most crucial phase in the history of the Japanese archipelago. After a century of internal division and turmoil, the unifying process initiated by the military leader Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), and completed by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), did not simply restore the integrity of the Japanese State: it pushed Japan, as a political entity, into a whole new dimension. While not erasing regional differences (that predated the political disruption brought by the rise of the warlords, the *sengoku daimyō*), it contributed to the creation of the conditions – the birth of regional (and even national) markets, reliable transport, urbanization, schooling – for a new, albeit still relative, level of cultural integration within Japan. The interconnection between these processes of state (and identity) formation and the presence of European natives living, preaching and commercing on the Japanese archipelago has long been a matter of fascination and discussion among scholars. Past historians are known to have attributed a strong weight to European influence, not only in terms of culture and economy, but also as far as religion and politics are concerned. Emblematic is Boxer's statement in the preface of the first edition (1951) of his well-known work, *The Christian century in Japan*: "but for the introduction, growth and forcible suppression of militant Christianity in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, it seems probable that Tokugawa would have not retired into its isolationist shell". (Boxer 1951, IX). Most contemporary scholars,

on the other hand, have worked to debunk these assumptions, minimizing the weight of the foreign presence in Japan, in the face of endogenous developments predating the arrival of the Portuguese. Massarella (1996, 136) has underlined how the very label 'Christian century', that has commonly come to be associated, at least in non-Japanese literature, with this phase of Japanese history, is in itself problematic, as it implies that "Christianity was quite central to the formation of the early modern Japanese polity", while "in reality, the role of Europeans in early modern Japanese state-building is secondary". Not quite as explored is, however, the other side of the coin: what legacy did the encounter between the Europeans and the Japanese leave for Europe?

The so-called era of 'Great discoveries', the aftermath of Da Gama's pioneering expedition around the Cape of Good Hope (paralleled by Columbus' voyage to the New World), surely had game-changing consequences for Europe, in more than one respect. Through the Portuguese merchants first, and then through the Spanish, the Dutch and the English, European economy came into direct connection with the huge and prosperous maritime economic systems of the Indian Ocean and of the Greater China Seas. The balance of European trade, as a consequence, slowly shifted away from the Mediterranean and toward the oceans. The amount of Asian products flowing to Europe increased sensibly, and Europeans progressively became involved into Asian inter-port trades. At the same time, new political structures were born – starting with the Portuguese *Estado da India* – specifically created to exert control over the newly discovered maritime trade routes. The treaty of Tordesillas – that sanctioned the Portuguese expansion in the Atlantic Ocean – worked in this sense as a fundamental landmark for the construction of European modernity: where in the previous centuries state leaders had fought over lands and people, sovereignty was now, through the treaties, also being claimed over (yet to be encountered) seas. The ocean had become

> politicised space to be fought over, controlled, taxed, allocated and re-allocated, and international law had to extend its reach to encompass this new concept which was to lie at the hearth of European colonial expansion. (Newitt 2005, 57)

European perception of the 'outside world' was also, inevitably, influenced. European travellers, in increasing numbers, began to live and work in the newly discovered regions. Their experiences there challenged the visions of Asia that had dominated Medieval narratives, where direct testimonies had been scarce and geographically limited. Asian countries and populations came to acquire a definite character of 'reality', after having been relegated for centuries, in the European imaginary, to the realm of the magical and the legendary. However, 'myth' – intended, broadly, as a projection of one's

desires and fears on the object of representation – was still central to the way the 'Other' was understood. As the newly encountered populations came to be acknowledged as real, in fact, they became part of a 'Christian mythology': they came to be deemed as pertaining to the domain of Divine Law, as 'Gentiles', who had to be approached with the prospect of extending the bounds of Christendom. Missionary impulse, of course, had been part of the Christian ethic since its origins – in accord to the teleological conception of history as a progression towards the last judgment, where all human beings, God's subjects, should be led to the eventual, everlasting salvation. The new wave of geographical explorations, on the other hand, contributed to putting the drive to convert nonbelievers in a whole new perspective. Intellectual controversy soon arose, both on how the newly encountered populations were to be perceived, and on how to perform the missionary imperative. Were all the Gentiles really of the same kind of humanity as the Europeans? Were all of them apt to hear and understand the Christian message – and in the same way, or to different extents? The 'Other' was slowly defined, through a process of self-definition, that would exert long-lived influences on European intellectual history.

Throughout the sixteenth century, the intercourse with the Japanese archipelago occupied a central role in these processes. Japan, up to the first decades of the sixteenth century, had been 'Cimpagu': the mythical golden land of Marco Polo's writings. As 'Cimpagu' was pushed beyond the boundaries of the known world, 'Giapam' was born – a golden land of a different kind. 'Giapam' was, for the Portuguese merchants, a stage for exciting economic opportunities: a market where precious materials were largely available for purchase and silk and cloth were easily sold, a most fundamental source of silver for a country that was working its way into a developing world bullion trade. At the same time, up to the final decade of the sixteenth century, Japan was the territory holding the most promising prospects in terms of evangelization.

The growing European presence in Japan in the second half of the sixteenth century was born of these interests and expectations. And it translated into the production of a wide range of first-hand sources, reflecting the developing knowledge accumulated on Japan by the merchants and missionaries travelling to and operating on the archipelago. Letters and longer accounts were exchanged among the Europeans residing in East Asia and shipped to Europe to report about the status of the religious and commercial missions. Part of these materials was kept under reserve, but many sources were distributed commercially in Europe, and, thanks to the diffusion of print, reached a considerable level of popularity, giving way to what was, in all respects, a small editorial boom. This was the case, in particular (even though not exclusively), of the Jesuit sources. The missionary materials were in fact released into the editorial world with more deliberation than other sources – as instruments of propaganda, fitting

into the purposes of the Counter Reformation. They were not, however, simple tools of propaganda in the hands of the Roman Church: they also, as we will see, worked their way into the market, fitting into dominating editorial trends.

The missionaries' and the merchants' reports contributed, for the first time, to the creation and systematic divulgation of an imaginary of Japan – an imaginary grounded, as opposed to the mythical visions of the Middle Ages, in 'factual' knowledge, but not necessarily devoid of 'myths'. As Caputo (2016, 11) underlines, a question needs to be asked in relation to all literature connected to travel: even in the presence of a 'factual' narration, where does this type of literature stands, in the dialectic relationship between reality, textuality and fantasy? In other words, is myth inherent to the way one represents oneself in relation to the Other?

In this work I aim, in light to these considerations, to explore the imaginary on Japan that was built by the sixteenth-century sources, in relation to the cultural processes that motivated their production, and focusing on the interplay, inside them, between 'factuality' and 'myth'. I also aim at analysing the effective impact of the imaginary in Europe, in light of the circulation and reception of the sources as published materials. In published books, text is but an aspect: books can be analysed also as objects, viewed in the light of the cultural and economic processes that lead to their production and circulation (or, sometimes, lack thereof). A special focus will be put on the Italian editorial world. Italian publishing centres dominated the European book-market up to the end of the sixteenth century.[1] Venice, in particular, had, ever since the beginning of the fifteenth century, a central role as the "centro di raccolta e smistamento delle informazioni relative a ciò che avveniva al di la dei mari" (Milanesi 1978, XVIII). This Venetian interest toward faraway realities was connected to the progressive decline of Venice as a commercial leader in Europe – especially after the fall of Constantinople (1453) and the discovery of the West Indies. This decline prompted the authorities of the Republic to seek and obtain information about recent geographic discoveries. Political motivation, on the other hand, soon came to be mingled with genuine cultural interest (Caputo 2016, 89-90). Above all in the case of Jesuit sources, as we will see, Italian editions are of particular interest from the perspective of distribution and reception. Many *editio princeps* were Italian and provided the basis for subsequent translations in Northern European languages (Lach 1965, 674-5).

Firstly, I will provide an introductory framework to my discussion on sixteenth-century materials, by focusing on the 'mythical' imaginary on

1 When they were hit by a crisis, connected to the policies of the Counter Reformation, that, in the long run, would move the axis of the publishing world towards the Protestant countries. See in this regard Maclean 2012, 211-34.

Asia and Japan developed through European (mostly indirect) sources before the so-called era of 'Great discoveries'. 'Japan' was relatively late in coming on European's intellectual map, but even before Marco Polo a long tradition of contacts had been established between the European continent and Asia. The course of such relations, far from linear, had been matched by a parallel tradition of geographical, cartographical and historical writings, reflecting an ever-changing and developing 'European' consciousness of 'Asia'. A large literature already exists on this tradition, and dwelling on it would be well beyond the scope of this work. I will, nonetheless, try to summarise it, while pointing at a list of useful references, as way to contextualise the sixteenth century sources and as a way to introduce the reader to the peculiar dialectic relationship between 'factuality' and 'myth' that is a key to the interpretation of sources on Japan.

I will then discuss how the early Portuguese explorations in the Atlantic Ocean and Greater China Seas area came to affect the perception and representation of Asia in the sixteenth century, and focus, particularly, on the production of lay sources on Japan and on their (lack of) distribution in the Italian market.

Lastly, I will focus on the sources related to the Christian missions in Japan, and particularly on the materials on Japan resulting from the system of correspondence adopted by the Jesuit order. A wide range of literature already exists discussing different aspects of the Jesuit system for correspondence, its evolution and its long-term impact. Lamalle (1981-82) explores the innovative cultural potential of Jesuit letter writing and the way in which Jesuit correspondence was organized and archived. Lach (1965) underlines the role of the reports in conveying, after the prolonged lack of direct contact during the Middle Ages, the very first significant bits of factual knowledge about Eastern Asia to Europe. In a similar vein, Harris (1999) builds on previous works by Wessels (1924), Bolton (1936) and Dainville (1964) to discuss the contribution of Jesuit travels and writings to geography, natural history, botany and ethnography. Caputo (2016) specifically discusses the reports from Japan published in Italy between 1552 and 1585 as part of a broader analysis of the impact of the imaginary related to Japan on Italian literature, from the writings of Marco Polo (1254-1324) to Francesco Carletti (1573-1636). Palomo (2005) focuses on the edifying nature of the reports and their role in building a common religious identity among the Jesuits. Friedrich (2008), on the other hand, focuses on the letters' administrative value: he discusses the factors that prompted Loyola and Polanco to conceptualize a central government for the Society, and the ways in which (not without controversy) this sedentary centre obtained and archived information from the local level, using the Jesuit correspondence system as a case study of the connections between the emergence of rational bureaucracy and the birth of a modern system of information management in Europe. Delfosse (2009) more thoroughly

analyses the dialectic relationship between the central level and the local level by describing the system of correspondence in a diachronic perspective. While crediting Loyola for his role in building a pyramid structure of information within the Society and in defining the letters' basic aims and characteristics, she argues that Jesuit letter-writing was an evolving reality, constantly redefined in accord with the order's expanding needs. Similarly, Asami (2002) discusses local contributions to the readjustments of the system, focusing on the reports from Japan, the way Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606) envisioned their structure, and the selection of information intended for inclusion in published letter-books. The present work will focus on the role of the system in creating a (generally) coherent 'Christian' narrative on Japan as part of a new narrative of the European 'Self', and on how this narrative impacted the Italian book market, by creating a niche market that fit in contemporary Italian editorial trends.

The "Appendix" includes a list of edition of Jesuit letters on Japan published in Italy in the sixteenth century.[2]

2 The list derives from an ongoing research work through library catalogues and collections. The research project also resulted in a database, including metadata about the Japan-related or Japanese documental (historical and literary) materials kept in Venetian libraries and museums, accessible here: URL `http://www.unive.it/pag/33845/` (2018-09-17).

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1 From Myth to Geography
Towards the Shaping of a Conceptual Map of 'Japan'

Summary 1.1 'Myth' and 'Reality' in the Medieval Discourse on Asia. – 1.1.1 Classical Myths and Legendary Traditions on Asia in the Early Middle Ages. – 1.1.2 'Mythical' and 'Factual' Representations of Asia in the Mongol Era. – 1.2 Marco Polo and 'Cipangu'. – 1.3 The Cartographical 'reality' of Asia and Japan in the Fifteenth Century. – 1.4 Expanding Trade and the Evolving 'Maps' of Asia and Japan in the Era of 'Great Discoveries'

1.1 'Myth' and 'Reality' in the Medieval Discourse on Asia

1.1.1 Classical Myths and Legendary Traditions on Asia in the Early Middle Ages

The medieval discourse on Asia was deeply rooted in the images of 'India' produced by the Greek and Latin literary traditions. The Indian subcontinent was known to the Greek world at least since the sixth century BC. The history of Greek Indography traced back to the officer Scylax of Caryanda, who, in the early years of the reign of Darius of Persia (presumably around 519 BC), was sent by Darius to explore the sea route down the Indus and towards the Arabian Peninsula. Scylax produced a 'practical' report on his voyage, and while, judging from the paucity of direct references to him by later writers, he was probably "more known about than known" (Parker 2008, 16), his writings set off an early tradition of oral and written narrations of India. This was to be further developed by Herodotus (c. 484 BC–c. 425 BC), who, with his *Histories* (written from 450 BC to 430 BC), gave birth to a new, 'discursive' Indography, that mingled 'factuality' and 'myth' and included many *topoi* that medieval writings would come to associate with the 'Orient'.[1] Writings on India flourished after Alexander the Great's India campaigns, undertaken from 326 to 324 BC. His military

1 See Parker 2008, 21-2. These recurring traits included gold and cannibalism, that would also, as we will see, be associated with Japan, through Marco Polo's writings.

effort did not go as far as to penetrate India thoroughly, but it established a more direct intercourse between the subcontinent and the Greek world, and expanded Greek understanding of India beyond the realm of the territories surrounding the Indus River (Lach 1965, 6-12).

During the *Pax Romana* regions and populations existing beyond the Eastern fringes of India also entered the intellectual landscape of the inhabitants of the European continent. From the first century BC up to the third century AD, thanks to political stability, to the relative safety of the terrestrial and naval routes that connected Rome to Asia (guaranteed by a more severe control over brigandage and piracy), and to the reduction of the fiscal impositions affecting commerce within the territories controlled by Rome, not only the connections established by Alexander with the Indian peninsula were maintained and expanded, but a regular commercial intercourse also flourished between the Latin world and the Chinese territories. Trade routes, originating from Antioch and Alexandria of Egypt, headed South, to Peshawar and India, or North, along the Silk Road that led to Tun Huang and China. Travellers from the eastern regions of the Roman Empire, and particularly Syrians and Egyptians, came to travel towards the Chinese regions on a regular basis (Tucci 2005, 18). The driving force in the intercourse was probably the Roman demand for Asiatic luxury goods (and particularly Chinese silk), which made the balance of the trade overtly in favour of the Asiatic counterparts. As Sansom (1965, 18) underlines, in the developing economy of the Roman Empire the levels of consumptions were subjected to a constant rise, and these articles, above all spices and plants, became common in the majority of Roman households. Asian products came therefore to play an important role in the everyday life of the urban Roman population.[2] The exchanges prompted the circulation of knowledge, as well as money. And as a consequence to this intercourse, as early as in the first century AD, a number of Latin writers were able to include mentions and even sketchy descriptions of China in their works.

Pliny was one of the first historians to use the term ‘Seres’ in reference to the Chinese population. The word, of Iranian origin, had previously been applied to Central Asian populations trading gold from Siberia to Persia. By Augustus’ time, it came to be associated with the production of silk and with

2 Preliminary diplomatic contacts were also, possibly, established. In the second century BC, an envoy of the Han Emperor Wu-ti apparently reached the Eastern fringes of the Roman dominions, paving the way for a number of subsequent missions directed in those areas. The first reported case of a mission originating from the Roman territories and directed to China is instead dated 166 AD, when some travellers reached the Chinese court bearing tributes and declaring themselves to be ambassadors of An Tun (Marcus Aurelius). No definite proof exists, however, that this expedition was sent directly from Rome to the Chinese Court: possibly, in this and other similar cases, the expeditions were privately set up by merchants, hoping to establish new commercial relationships (Sansom 1965, 17).

the Chinese territory. Virgil and Statius, among others, used it with such connotations in their writings (Tucci 2005, 22). Pomponius Mela, the author of the earliest known Latin geographical work,[3] also mentioned the Seres. His work largely relied on earlier Greek sources, without adding much to the existing geographical knowledge of Asia. However, he seemed to be aware of the travel accounts of his contemporaries, reported of the existence of rich lands beyond the realm of eastern India (the imaginary Chryse and Argyre, whose soil he claimed to be of gold and silver) and described the Seres as "a people full of justice and best known for the trade they conduct in absentia, by leaving their goods behind in a remote location" (Romer 1998, 118). Ptolemy of Alexandria (c. 100-175 AD), whose work, as we will see, was most influential to the development of early modern cartography, based his work not only on Greek antecedents, but also on the accounts of the merchants that, from his native city, travelled back and forth along the terrestrial and naval routes that led to Asia. He accounted with remarkable detail (though with many inaccuracies) for the complex geographical divisions of India and South Asia, and mentioned the Seres, placing them "above [i.e., to the north of] the Sinai", that is, in what he identified as the north-easternmost part of the civilized world (Berggren, Jones 2000, 79). In spite of their wider horizons, however, the Roman sources did not differ from the Greek ones in mingling factual elements and myth.

The impact of these early sources on the general public was probably fairly limited. The merchants, and more generally the inhabitants of the Eastern fringes of the Roman Empire, had to be well aware of the possibilities opened by the commercial routes to Asia. The sources, moreover, testify an awareness of the complexity of the cultures coexisting on the Asian continent from the part of at least the learned section of the Roman population. However, the territories beyond India were still treated as such remote a concept that it is unlikely that they made a lasting impression on the Latin world in its entirety.[4]

After the third century, the Roman control on the routes that connected the European continent to China and India began to waver. With the shift of the Imperial power to Costantinople and the collapse of the Western Roman Empire (as well as the subsequent collapse of the Gupta Empire in India), the sea routes lost their importance in the exchanges, and the land routes gradually gained centrality. At the same time, new political forces (the Axumites first, and later the Arabs) acquired control over the territories that separated Europe and Eastern Asia and began to act as mediators

3 The *De Chorographia*, that appeared in many descendant copies as *De Cosmographia*, and as such would be reissued, both in Italy (with several Venetian editions) and in the rest of Europe, throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. On Pomponius and his work, see Romer 1998.

4 On the impact of the sources in Europe, see Lach 1965, 6-12.

in their commercial intercourse. As a consequence, throughout the Early Middle Ages, only a limited number of individual travellers crossed the path to the two areas.[5] Just as China was about to enter a great era of expansion and openness under the Tang dynasty, direct relations between the European continent and both India and China were severed. And with the loss of commercial opportunities in Asia and the incumbent Islamic threat, the interest of Latin Christendom progressively focused on the Mediterranean Sea. At the same time, the Bible gained increasing relevance as a reference for geographical knowledge. Encyclopaedic works such as the *Etymologiae* by Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636) became standard models for literary descriptions of Asia. Greek and Latin literature remained the main source for geographical representations, but the classical myths and notions were filtered and remoulded, incorporated into the writings of the early Christian thinkers and given authority through the Scriptures. The titbits of factual information that the Greek and Latin writers had included in their works became even more diluted in the myths, as no contemporary travel account reached the level of authority necessary to corroborate them.[6] It was only in the Crusades era that the intercourse between Asia and Latin Christendom displayed once again some of its previous dynamism. Travellers from the Christian kingdoms were, for the first time in centuries, brought in significant numbers to the western fringes of Asia. In the era of the so-called late medieval European Commercial Revolution, the possessions they acquired through their military campaigns came to function as commercial outposts, where Asian products were purchased in exchange for Venetian and Byzantine coins.[7]

It's not easy to evaluate how much of an actual knowledge about the lands beyond Persia and Arabia they were able to accumulate through such exchanges. Surely, up to the end of the thirteen century, little information about Asia had been passed on to the rest of the European population. As suggested by Olschki (1957, 39-50), the merchants themselves might have

5 Like Cosmas Indicopleustes, author of the *Christian Topography*, who based his work as much on religious observations as on his travels, that took him to Ceylon. For a critical edition of Cosmas' work, see Lemerie, Wolska-Conus 1968-1973, or the more recent Italian translation Maisano, Wanda Wolska-Conus 1992.

6 For an in-depth account on the Medieval imaginary about the 'East' and its roots in the classical tradition, see Le Goff 1977. A schematic illustration of all the Medieval legends and myths related to Asia and an extensive bibliography on the subject are also included in Boscaro 1988.

7 At an early stage, the volume of the commerce was, however, fairly limited. Up to the thirteenth century, western merchants still dealt with Arab and Jewish intermediaries, and, likely, were not able to afford much more than common products – leather, cereals, fish and metals – from North-Western Asia. Lopez (1976) has written extensively about the European Commercial Revolution and its implications for the commercial relationships between Asia and Europe. Greif 1994 analyses instead its political premises.

had little interest in accumulating knowledge collateral to the trade; or, in spite of the factual and practical knowledge they did collect, they might have consciously aimed at perpetrating the traditional images of Asia, so as to surround the imported products with an allure of exoticism. The newly developed commercial relationships did not therefore immediately add to the objectivity of European literary representations of Asia. Not only the weight of the classical myths was not upstaged, but, by the beginning of the High Middle Ages, a number of more recently popularized legendary traditions also came to dominate the Christian imaginary of Asia.

The most popular of such traditions was probably the one related to the Macedonian conqueror, Alexander the Great. Tales about his life and deeds – including accounts of his Indian campaign – had begun to circulate in oral and written form in the fourth century BC, to be summed up in the *Anabasis Alexandri* by Arrian (ca. 86-160 AD). While this work soon after fell into oblivion (to be rediscovered much later, by European scholars of the Renaissance period), the conqueror remained at the center of a living popular tradition (Boyle 1974, 217). In literature, this tradition was perpetrated, among other writings, by the *Alexander Romance*, an anonymous work focused on the conqueror's advance in India, presumably composed in the third century AD by some Hellenized Egyptian resident of Alexandria. It was first rendered into Latin in the fourth century (another Latin translation followed in the tenth century), and was subsequently translated into a number of European vernaculars, as well as into Armenian, Pahlavi, Syrian and Arabic (Boyle 1977, 13-27). It became the source of a rich literary and iconographical production both in Europe and in Asia, and perpetrated the myth of Alexander well into the High Middle Ages.[8]

The Asian, and particularly the Indian imagery born of the *Alexander Romance* was paralleled by the one connected to the legendary tradition of St. Thomas the Apostle. St. Thomas was believed to have set out for the Indian subcontinent directly after the resurrection of Christ, when the Apostles split into different regions of the world for the sake of Evangelization. Sold as a slave to an Indian merchant named Habban, he was taken to an Indian court, where he supposedly converted the king, Gundafor (Gudaphara), to Christianity. According to the legend, he managed to create a consistent Christian community, before a slight to another Indian (or Persian) king, Mazdai, lead to his martyrdom. The main source for the medieval tradition on St. Thomas were the *Acta Thomae* (Acts of Thomas), a Syrian work, part of the New Testament apocrypha and presum-

8 For a general overview of the historiographical materials produced on Alexander up to the Middle Ages, see Pearson 1960.

ably composed in the early third century.[9] It was through the subsequent translations of the *Acta* (in Greek, Latin, Armenian and a number of other languages) that the legend gained popularity throughout the Christian world. The figure of St. Thomas was then to be further popularized by the writings of the first missionaries that ventured to China through the newly reopened land routes, so that the tradition lived on well up to the era of the Great Discoveries (Vigneras 1977, 82-90).

This was partly linked to the appeal of the idea that a large Christian community existed somewhere in Asia. European rulers of the Crusades era clung to this notion, in the hope of finding new allies against the Muslims. The same idea was also at the heart of the legendary tradition of Prester John, that acquired popularity in Europe in the twelfth century.[10] The first known testimony about the legend is the one included in the seventh book of Otto of Freising's *Chronica sive Historia de duabus civitatibus* (chronicle of the two cities), written between 1143 and 1145. The book reported of a hearing granted by Pope Eugene III to the bishop Hugh of Jabala (Syria), in the fall of 1145. The bishop, born in France and loyal to the Roman Church, had set out for Europe in order to seek help against the Saracens (who, starting with the taking of the city of Edessa in 1144, had scored a number of notable victories against the crusaders, under the guidance of the general Imad ad-din Zengi). According to Freising's report, after relating to the Pope about the Syrian situation, the bishop added an account about a 'Presbyter Ioannes', a Nestorian priest king living somewhere East of Persia and Armenia; the king, who had posed a significant threat to the Persian army, had apparently been trying to reach Jerusalem, in order to bring help to the members of the Christian Church stationed there, but had been unable to cross the river Tigris with his army.[11] The legend gained remarkable popularity after the year 1165,

9 For a detailed account of the legend as narrated in the *Acta*, see Medlycott 1905. While the Indian Christians tend to identify themselves, still, as the 'St. Thomas Christians', no definite historical proof exists that the voyage of St. Thomas ever happened in the first place (even if the actual existence of a king Gudaphara in India, in the first half of the first century AD, has been substantiated by archaeological evidence); even more doubtful are the long-term effects of the Apostle's influence on the diffusion of the Christian religion in India (Brown 1982, 43-64).

10 For the connections between the St. Thomas tradition and the legend of Prester John, see Robert Silverberg (1972, 27-48).

11 Nowell (1953) and De Rachewiltz (1996) report of the many possible origins of the legend. Prester John has been associated by a number scholars with Yeh-lü Ta-shih, a Mongolian conqueror who, in 1141, won a renowned victory against the Seljuk Sultan Sanjar at Qatwan, near Samarkand, exerting a strong impression on Latin Christendom. The (often oversized) reports of the achievements of the Nestorians in Asia may have prompted the belief that the conqueror adhered to the Christian faith. Others identify him with the Georgian commander Ivané Orbelian (who obtained a number of victories against the Turkish army between 1123 and 1124) or with the monarch of Ethiopia – a country that had been introduced to Christianity ever since

when the Byzantine emperor, Manuel Comnenus, forwarded to Frederick Barbarossa, Holy Roman Emperor, a letter supposedly composed by the legendary priest, who described himself as the ruler of 'India' (a term which could mean anywhere between actual India and the farthest East, or Africa). It subsequently took root both in Western and Eastern European kingdoms, and its influences lived on for more than five centuries, well after the reopening of the sea routes to Asia (Silverberg 1972, 11-16).

In cartography, as well as in literature, scholars of the Middle Ages assumed map models found in the Hellenistic and Roman traditions, modifying them in accord to the changing emphases in thought. World maps or *Mappaemundi*, in particular, developed into a number of defined graphical structures, according to their historical origins: Roman cartography, and particularly Sallust's *De Bello Jurgurthino*, inspired the so-called tripartite maps, which represented the inhabited world as a disk, with Asia on top, Europe in the lower left quarter and Africa in the lower right quarter; Erathostenes and the Greek *climata* theory were instead the root for zonal maps, that divided the world into five climatic zones following the parallels of latitude; a later source, a lost eight century map included in the *Commentary of the Apocalipse of St. John* by Beatus of Liebana (who stressed the idea that the Apostles had to travel in all parts of the world in order to spread the Christian truth) is believed to be the origin of quadripartite maps, which represented the world in the same fashion as the tripartite form, with the addition of a fourth part, identified with the Antipodes.[12] Regardless of graphical differences, however, maps of all typologies came to be structured more as an allegorical narrative rather than as a spatial description of the current world. As they were given meaning through biblical sources, the *spiritual* picture of Christianity was bound to prevail, in their representations, over the reality of geographical information (Woodward 1985, 515). As underlined by Harley and Woodward (1987, 288-94), the lack of accuracy in the *mappaemundi* did not necessarily imply a lack of current geographical knowledge from the part of compilers. Their format and the lack of factual information may very well have been, as in the case of literature, deliberate. Medieval maps served aims established by custom, more than determined by utility. *Mappaemundi*, in particular, formed a well-defined cartographical typology, that very rarely showed contact with other cartographical genres of more practical use (such as celestial maps, regional or local maps, and, above all, portolan charts – which showed, indeed, a faster evolution, but

the fourth century and, in spite of being later isolated from Europe by the Arab conquests, was by the twelfth century still rumored to host a Christian stronghold. Others suggest instead that Prester John may have been an allegorical creation altogether: the image of an utopian king, originally born to inspire the European public, which ended up being taken too literally.

12 For an overview of the different typologies and their origins, see Woodward 1985. For an accurate periodisation of the *mappaemundi*, see Harley and Woodward (1987, 296-318).

are, on the other hand, very rarely dated before the fourteenth century). *Mappaemundi* did not aim at producing a detailed geographical outline of the regions they represented. Their purpose was instead "philosophical and didactic: a schematic representation of the earth that in the more detailed examples was extended to give a great deal of information about its inhabitants and their relationship to the deity" (Harley, Woodward 1987, 284). The authors could be considered more as illustrators than cartographers in the proper sense of the term, as their maps, which were made to appeal to a learned public, could hardly be separated from the textual descriptions that accompanied them. While it is difficult to ascertain how much of the geographical knowledge of the present and of the past was available to the compilers of the *mappaemundi*, however, what is sure is that their willingness to "point out that the knowledge of information about the earth was of strictly secondary importance to the Christian, whose mind should be on a higher spiritual plane" (Woodward 1985, 515), prevented their work from conveying precise geographical information to their public, above all as far as Asia was concerned.

1.1.2 'Mythical' and 'Factual' Representations of Asia in the Mongol Era

In the thirteenth century, the way Asia was perceived and represented in European literature underwent a progressive shift. By the beginning of the century, some of the barriers that had previously kept European travellers from personally reaching for Eastern Asia began to crumble. In 1204, the Byzantine Empire, that had previously banned foreigners from travelling beyond Constantinople, was temporarily overthrown, allowing Genoese and Venetian merchants to establish their commercial outposts around the Black Sea. At about the same time, in 1206, the Mongol prince Temüjin, having secured his leadership over the tribes of the eastern Eurasian steppe, assumed the title of Chinggis Qan. This was the start of the expansion of the Mongol Empire, which by the time of the Qan's death, in 1227, would extend as far east as the Yellow Sea and as far west as the Caspian Sea, incorporating nomadic tribes and settled people alike. By mid-century, the Mongol Empire came to pose a very concrete threat to Christianity. In 1242, after reducing Georgia to tributary status, the Mongol general Baiju led his forces against the Seljuq Sultan of Anatolia. The following year, the Seljuq army was defeated, causing a large number of mercenaries, former subjects of the Khwarazmian dynasty, to flee towards Jerusalem. The city, that was, at the time, under the shaky control of the Latin Kingdom established there during the First Crusade, was sacked and left in ruins. An even more direct menace came at about the same time from the north-western Asian frontier. Between 1240 and 1241, Poland and Hungary were attacked, and

their major cities were raided. The Mongols retired without proceeding to annex the territories they had ravished, nor carrying their military operations further into the European territory, but their pressure on the eastern edges of Christianity was not to relent for decades (Jackson 1991). Internal divisions in the Mongol camp prevented further attacks in the years that immediately followed the raids, but a military campaign was again conducted against Prussia and Poland in 1259. While no other major Mongol strike against Europe followed, further minor raids were conducted against both Poland and Hungary throughout the 1280s and the 1290s.[13]

The reaction of the Christian political and intellectual élite to the expansion of the Mongol Empire was not as ready as might be expected. Early reports about the rising power of the Mongols were relayed to Europe by Syrian Christians and missionaries stationed in Hungary, who had been in touch with the Nestorians of central Asia. Probably as an effect of the long-standing isolation of Latin Christianity, though, the threat was not immediately perceived in its full force. On the contrary, due the weight of legendary traditions such as the narrative of Prester John, the news vaguely fed the hope of an alliance with a strong Asian force against the Muslims in Asia Minor (Lach 1965, 31).

The incumbent invasion of Hungary was what finally gave reality to the Mongol power. At the beginning of 1238, a Hungarian Dominican, brother Julian, came back from a missionary trip to the Volga regions and Russia, relaying second-hand information about the Mongol advance. He also brought back a letter that had been found in the hands of a group of Mongol emissaries, imprisoned by the Grand Duke of Suzdal, Iuri. It was a request of submission, directly addressed by the Gran Qan, Batu, to Bela IV, king of Hungary. Julian reported to the king and to the papal legate at the Hungarian court, relating about the Mongol victories in Asia. A copy of the letter, which had raised considerable worry at court, was forwarded to King Bela's uncle, Patriarch of Aquileia, and from there to several leaders in Europe. The earliest extant manuscript, transcribed in the German Benedictine monastery of Ottobeuren and dated 1241, includes, together with the letter, a copy of a prophecy, clearly associated with their advance, which anticipated dire times for Europe (Lerner 2009, 9-24). Soon after the diffusion of the letter, news of the devastation brought on Poland and Hungary by the Mongol hordes reached Christian leaders. By the time of his election, in 1243, Pope Innocent IV had been in possession of two letters from King Bela relating about the raids, and he had had occasion to talk with various refugees from West Asian lands that had been under attack. The alarming reports he collected prompted him to send no less than three embassies to the Mongols,

13 For a very general overview of the military campaigns directed by the Mongol against Europe, see Jackson (2005, 58-86; 1999, 703-719).

between March and April 1245, not even waiting for the opening of the Council of Lyons, bound to be held the same year (Jackson 2005, 87-97).

In spite of this, in the mid-thirteenth century, European Christian leaders still appreciated the potential role of the Mongols as an Asian ally to Christianity. From a religious point of view, given their known tendency to tolerate and recruit members of different religious sects, the Mongols were often associated with heterodoxy, and were deemed as a more approachable counterpart than the Muslims. The diplomatic and religious missions organized by Christian leaders set out therefore with the aim of accumulating knowledge about the ambitions and the military tactics of the Mongols, but also in the hope of spreading and affirming the Catholic faith amongst them. This intention was coupled with the underlying ambition of negotiating a military cooperation against the Muslims (Jackson 2005, 143).

In 1248, Louis IX, king of France, who had travelled to Cyprus preparing for a campaign against the Saracens of Egypt, was approached by the Mongol general Eljigidei, who started a negotiation for a joint operation against the Muslims. The king's attempt at invasion turned out to be disastrous, but, given this hopeful premises, he nonetheless pursued further diplomatic contacts with the Mongols. In 1249, he dispatched an emissary, André de Longjumeau, as an avowed diplomat to the Mongol capital, Qaraqorum. The Mongols, however, had been motivated by immediate and practical military circumstances, more than by a real correspondence of intents with the Christian leader. The aim of Eljigidei had been, in fact, to direct the crusading army towards Egypt, so as to deflect Europe's military effort from territories that were more immediate military targets for the Mongols, such as Syria (Jackson 1980, 483). This became apparent when André de Longjumeau reached the Mongol capital. His reception at the Mongol court was, in spite of all previous contacts, tepid and he returned to France bearing a request for annual tributes to King Louis IX (Lach 1965, 33). This made Christian leaders more wary in their subsequent interactions with the Il-Qans. By 1260, Pope Alexander IV advocated the need of a crusade against the Mongols, warning the fellow leaders of Europe that their pretenses of friendship towards Christianity were merely part of a military tactic (Jackson 1999, 716). All in all, in the second half of the century, the attitude of Christianity towards Mongol power became far more ambivalent and complex than it had been in the first half, affecting the diplomatic intercourse between the Mongols and Christian leaders.

At a more popular level, and as a direct consequence to this evolving situation, literature often came to depict the advance of the Mongols in an apocalyptic light. The growing power of the Il-Qans was related to the prophecies of the seventh century Syriac work the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, and their military triumph was equated to the coming of the Antichrist (Jackson 2005, 143-6). On the other hand, many missionaries

travelling to the Mongol Empire compiled reports of their travels – and often proved to be keen observers. Religious missions, which were carried on well into the fourteenth century, granted therefore, for the first time in centuries, a consistent flow of information from Asia.

The work that inaugurated this new flow of writings was the *Historia Mongalorum*, by Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, a Franciscan envoy sent from the Papacy to the Mongols.[14] The scope of his work, compiled upon his return to Lyons in 1247, was still somehow limited, in comparison with later writings. Giovanni only travelled as far as the headquarters of the Grand Qan, near Qaraqorum, and at a time when the influence of different Asian cultures had yet to plant deep roots in the Mongol society. While he was not able to accumulate significant knowledge on the Mongol Empire in its entirety, however, he marked

> a transition in medieval literature on Asia, for it is primarily an itinerary and a factual description of what he and his companions saw, heard and surmised. He does not quote earlier writers except for Isidore, or incorporate in his narrative many of the traditional fables about Asia. He heard about Cathay [China], learned that it bordered the sea, and was apparently informed about its language, religion (somewhat mistakenly), and arts. (Lach 1965, 32)

Still, the *Historia Mongalorum*, employs 'myth' in a way that is indebted to the previous literary tradition on Asia. In his depiction of China, which he did not visit himself, Giovanni da Pian del Carpine doesn't refrain from relying on authority and adopts a somewhat idealized approach, that calls back to an utopian imaginary that had gained popularity in the Middle ages. The 'Kytai' (Chinese) are described as

> pagans who have their own script and a new and old testament and lives of the fathers and hermits and buildings built like churches in which they pray at their own times, and say they have saints. They worship one god, honor Jesus Christ, and believe in eternal life, but they are not baptized. The Kytai honor and revere our scripture, approve of Christians and give them many alms. They seem to be good and humane. (Hildinger 1996, 51)

This narrative recalls both the Greek and Latin tradition and medieval legendary narratives such as that of Prester John and of Alexander. This was not the only myth of classical origin that crept into Giovanni da Pian del Carpine's writing – descriptions of Cynocephali (Hildinger 1996, 69), and

14 An annotated English translation of the work can be found in Hildinger 1996.

other monstrous creatures were included, albeit relegated to the representation of lands removed from the itinerary actually followed by the writer. On the other hand, Giovanni's descriptions of the Mongols and his considerations on the political and military organization of Mongol power, based on personal observation, opened a whole new perspective on the representation of Asia.

In 1253, Louis IX promoted a second mission to the Mongol capital, headed by the Franciscan William of Rubruck. While André de Longjumeau had travelled for diplomatic purposes, Rubruck was sent with a more strictly missionary purpose. He also appeared to be familiar with Giovanni da Pian del Carpine's work and the report he wrote for King Louis IX about his mission, titled *Itinerarium fratris Willielmi de Rubruquis de ordine fratrum Minorum, Galli, Anno gratia 1253 ad partes Orientales*, was very similar in approach.[15] While Giovanni had gone no further than the Mongol camp, however, William had actually been able to enter the city of Qaraqorum, and was the first European traveller to provide a detailed depiction of the structure of the Mongol capital, as well as of the exteriors and interiors of its buildings. He also included a description of the Qan's palace, that challenged the imaginary of the mythical, golden palaces of the 'East' and, instead, approached the described object through comparison.

> The palace resembles a church, with a middle nave and two sides beyond two rows of pillars and three doors on the south side. The tree stands inside, opposite the middle door, and the Chan sits at the northern end, in an elevated position so that he is visible to all. There are two stairways leading up to him, and the man who brings him his cup goes up the one and comes down the other. The space in the middle, between the tree and the stairways that give access to him, is clear: there stands the cup-bearer, and also envoys bringing gifts, while he sits up above like some god. (Jackson, Morgan 1990, 210)

This dialectic relationship between similarity and difference would become recurrent in the representation of the 'Other' (including, as we will see, descriptions of Japan up to the sixteenth century) and, particularly, of the 'religious other'. Rubruck, as can be expected, reserves a special section of his report to the Nestorians of Asia, and to the Christians dwelling in the court of the Qan (Jackson, Morgan 1990, 211-16). He also, however, writes extensively of Buddhism, represented not per se, but through its dialectic relationship with Christianity. Rubruck describes foreign religions in the form of theological debate, a rhetorical device that would become

15 The account is translated in Jackson and Morgan (1990). An older translation of both Giovanni da Pian del Carpine's account and of William of Rubruck's account (together with a few letters from other missionaries) can be also found in Dawson 1955.

common in Christian literature on Asia. Some of the arguments he includes in the section on Buddhism would recur, almost *verbatim*, in later Jesuit literature on Japan. For example, the way the roots of evil are explained to Buddhists.

> "If your God is as you say, why has He made half of things evil?" "That is an error", I said. "It is not God who created evil. Everything that exists is good". All the turns were amazed at this statement and recorded it in writing as something erroneous and impossible. Next he broached the question: "Where, then, does evil come from?" "Your question is at fault", I said: "you ought first to ask what evil is before asking where it comes from". (Jackson, Morgan 1990, 233-4)

Aside from religion, Rubruck's report focuses on a wide variety of matters, ranging from diet, to clothing, to funeral practices. He was overall able to immortalize the diversity of Mongol Empire, including descriptions of the Tangut and other Tibetan people that had been annexed to the Mongol Empire during the first decades of its expansion (Jackson, Morgan 1990, 157-8). Like Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, Rubruck did not get to travel as far as China, but he was able to identify what his contemporaries knew as 'Cathay' with the land of the 'Seres' of the classical sources, and to make some perceptive considerations on Chinese writing (Jackson and Morgan 1990, 160-1). In this sense, his work constituted a further step away from the traditional narratives on Asia, and opened a new path that would be followed by subsequent writers.

The first European missionary report of some note to include a first-hand description of China was the one composed by the Franciscan missionary Odoric of Pordenone. Odoric had left Europe sometime between 1316 and 1318, when the roots of a Christian mission had already been planted in China. His voyage brought him through India, Quanzhou, Hangzhou and Yangzhou, and finally to Qanbaliq, where he arrived around 1325. He stayed in the Mongol capital for about three years, before embarking on his return trip. The exact itinerary of his journey back to Europe is not clear, but he seems to have gotten to visit Tibet and some of its peripheral areas.[16] He was back to Italy by 1330, after more than ten years of permanence

16 The first Christian missionary to reach China was Giovanni da Montecorvino, sent to the Mongols by Pope Nicholas IV in 1289. Father Giovanni settled in the new Mongol Capital, Qanbaliq, located in the site of modern Beijing. There, favorably received by the Mongol authorities, he founded a Franciscan mission. Despite the opposition often met by the father from local Nestorians, the Christian community grew steadily and by the beginning of the fourteenth century, it was big enough to require the aid of further missionaries, causing another Franciscan, Arnold of Cologne, to be dispatched to Qabaliq. In 1313, three Franciscan bishops sent by Pope Clement V, Gerard Albuini, Peregrinus de Castello and Andrea da Perugia, consecrated Giovanni as first archbishop of Qanbaliq. Several missionaries were

in Asia. His travel report, related to a fellow Franciscan at St. Anthony's Convent (Padua) and commonly known as *Itinerarium de mirabilibus orientalium Tartarorum* (or, more simply, *Itinerarium*),[17] is probably the richest among the European missionary accounts compiled during the Mongol era.

The work was influenced by both the medieval traditional narratives on Asia and the new path opened by previous land travellers. Odoric mentions, in reference to his return trip, having passed through the 'Land of Prester John', possibly speaking of modern inner Mongolia, but he also specifies that it was different from the way it had been depicted in previous sources (Liščák 2011a, 4).[18] Odoric includes first-hand descriptions of the Malabar coast, of Java, Sumatra, Champa, and of all the major Chinese cities he visited on his way to Qanbaliq. He focuses mostly on the religious landscape of the localities he visited, taking note, above all, of the presence of Christians and Muslims, but includes also comments on customs and society, and on some geographical aspects – such as the types of cultivations and the species of animals he encountered.[19] Curiously, his narrative doesn't reserve much space to the missionary efforts of his fellow Franciscans in Qanbaliq, except by mentioning the number of conversions, above all among the authorities. He seems to have frequented the Qan's court regularly – a sign that the Franciscans were welcome there – and he describes the court in remarkable detail.[20]

The impact on the contemporary European readership of the 'factual' narratives included in the missionary reports (and 'diluted' in the more traditional narratives they included) is not easy to estimate. Popular traditions with a deeply rooted background, such as the legend of Prester John or the narrative of Alexander, as well as the classical and biblical myths, still retained much of their influence, acting as a counterbalance to the new images of Asia. Works such as the *Image du monde* by Gautier de Metz, or the *Trésor* by Brunetto Latini, published as late as, respectively, 1245-47 and 1260, were still very much indebted to Latin writers and the majority of the fourteenth century authors who included images of Asia in their

to join this first group in Qanbaliq in the following years, including Odoric of Pordenone himself. For further detail on the context of the mission and its itinerary, see Liščák 2011a.

17 The original manuscript being lost, there is no certainty about the original title. The report is also known as *Descriptio orientalium partium* or as *Relatione*. Other recurring titles include *Diversæ Historiæ*, *De ritibus hominum et condicionibus huius mundi*, *De mirabilibus orientalium Tartarorum* and *De (rebus) mirabilibus* (Liščák 2011b, 69-71).

18 As Lach (1965, 41) underlines, Odoric was the last medieval traveler to openly place the land of Prester John in Asia.

19 The factuality of the information included in the *Itinerarium* is discussed in Liščák (2011a, 4-9).

20 An English translation of Odoric of Pordenone's account was realized in 1866 by Sir Henry Yule and can be found, with an introduction by Paolo Chiesa, in Yule 2002.

works largely drew from them, as well as directly from the classics. Some writers, like Dante, did include mention of the Tartars in their works, but did so without challenging in any substantial way the traditional images of Asia (Lach 1965, 74-80).

The *Historia Mongalorum* circulated for some time as a separated work, in manuscript form, mainly in Giovanni da Pian del Carpine's circle. A few years after its composition, between 1256 and 1259, it was, moreover, included into a well known encyclopaedic work of the time – the *Speculum Historiae*, by Vincent de Beauvais, a Latin world history in thirty-one books, based on a combination of secular and religious sources. William of Rubruck's *Itinerarium* was similarly included as a source in Roger Bacon's natural science treaty, the *Opus Maius*. The work did not reach, however, a remarkable level of popularity, until much later, in 1733, when its first proper edition was published (Olschki 1957, 58). Odoric of Pordenone's *Itinerarium* was easily the most widely read work out of the missionary reports, as testified by the consistent number of manuscripts – over one hundred and thirty – that have survived up to our time. Moreover, even though a vast majority of them are in Latin, a few translations into European Vernaculars were produced, a sign, as we will see in relation to sixteenth-century works on Japan, that their readership might not have been limited to the learned clerical and university circles.[21] Both the *Speculum Historiae* (and, consequently, Giovanni da Pian del Carpine's account) and Odoric of Pordenone's *Itinerarium* became part of the source materials used for the compilation of the *Book of Sir John Mandeville*,[22] one of the most widely read pieces of travel literature of the late Middle Ages. The work was presumably composed between 1356 and 1357,[23] in Anglo-Norman French. It was subsequently translated into eight different vernacular languages and in Latin, and widely circulated throughout Europe. More than three hundred manuscript copies of it, in different versions, remain to this

21 Twenty-four manuscripts were produced in Italian, nine in French and seven in German throughout the fourteenth century, and one Spanish manuscript was created in the fifteenth century. (Liščák 2011b, 65-6)

22 This was the common medieval designation of the work often referred to in modern editions as the *Travels of Sir John Mandeville* – on the basis of a printed edition dated 1586. On Mandeville's work and the way it represented the 'East', see Higgins 1997. On its circulation and reception, see Tzanaki 2003.

23 John de Mandeville, a knight native of St. Albans, England, supposedly composed the book on the basis of his own travels through Asia and Africa. While part of the narration could be ascribed to personal experience, however, a huge section of the work is actually acquired by other popular travel narratives of the time. The main sources used for the work, aside from Odoric of Pordenone and Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, are listed by Higgins (1997, 9-10). Even the author's identity, as no contemporary mention exists of a John Mandeville, has been the object of a long scholarly debate, summed up by Tzanaki (2003, 2-3).

day (Higgins 1997, 8). Even the *Book of Sir John Mandeville*, however, can hardly be defined 'popular' in the modern sense of the term. The public of the manuscripts, a highly costly and elite media in comparison to some of the later categories of printed books, was likely to consist in members of the aristocracy – even though they may have not been, above all in the case of knights, familiar with Latin (Tzanaki 2003, 4-5). Some of the books would, on the other hand, stand the test of time, and eventually undergo the transition from manuscript to print, in an era when literature was becoming growingly accessible also to the lower strata of the population. The first printed copies of Odoric of Pordenone's *Itinerarium*, for instance, would appear at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and at least six different editions would be produced by 1600 (Liščák 2011b, 70). Even more numerous would be the editions of the *Book of Sir John Mandeville* – first printed in 1515, and reproduced for at least seventy-two times before the end of the century (Tzanaki 2003, 1).

Diplomats and missionaries were not the only participants in the new flow of exchanges between Asia and Europe. By 1279, when they defeated the Southern Sung Dinasty, the Mongols had managed to unify virtually the entirety of the Asian continent under their dominance, and even with the internal conflict that derived from the division of the Empire into a confederation of rival Qanates, by 1261-62 the new order granted an overall stable and peaceful political asset to Asia. This made it relatively safe to travel, and opened a huge operation field for trade – one where the role of the intermediaries that had traditionally conducted the commercial exchanges under the Muslims dominance became inconsequential. The merchants, particularly the Italians, that had been operating in the outposts acquired during the Crusades era and around the Black Sea, were quick in taking advantage of the possibilities offered by the new Asian order. By the mid-thirteenth century, the most resourceful of them had already started to deal with luxury goods – textiles, gems and gold, mainly from Persia, India and Central Asia – purchased not merely in response to the European demand, but also, and mostly, as a way to appeal to the Asian market. The Qan princes proved to be avid purchasers of this kind of products, as the gold and the textiles were at that point (as an effect of both commerce and the tribute system) one of the bases of their economical system. The direct involvement of the Qans in the exchanges raised the stakes for the European commercial enterprise, further promoting its infiltration eastwards.[24]

While the role of the Polo brothers as pioneering figures in this new

24 For an in depth analysis of the role played by the Mongols in the trans-Eurasian exchanges (with a particular emphasis on the role of the textiles), see Lopez 1976 and Allsen 2002.

trade is widely recognized,[25] drawing a definite timeline of its development is not easy. Merchants mostly kept the details about their commercial transactions and about the routes they covered under extreme reserve. The majority of the information available about them is derived from writings not directly concerned with the trade (such as the above mentioned missionaries' reports), that, while registering the presence of the European merchants, do not include much more than sparse and obscure information about their activities. Given this lack of reports and commercial documents, it cannot be said, all in all, that the experiences accumulated by the merchants operating in East Asia came to influence the late Medieval European imaginary of Asia in a significant way.[26]

A few exceptions can, however, be mentioned. Sometime between 1310 and 1340, the Florentine professional merchant Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, agent of the Bardi company, wrote *La pratica della mercatura*, a work meant as a sort of handbook for commerce. The book included the description of one of the routes followed by the European travelers to China – the one from Crimea to Qanbaliq, that had once been covered also by the Polo brothers. Pegolotti himself had never travelled to China, but he had collected reports from a number of other merchants, possibly fellow Florentine citizens, as by that time at least the Florentine Frescobaldi company had reportedly began to import silk from China (Lopez 1943, 166). He was therefore able to provide advice about the journey and about the equipment that was necessary to face it, and also to include practical information on how to conduct the transactions – such as lists of the spices commonly sold in Europe that could be purchased in Asia, lists of the products that could more easily be placed in Asia, and the current Chinese prices for silk, given in Genoese currency.[27] Pegolotti's book was, in this sense, very practical in scope. Being directed essentially to merchants, it was not meant to exert an impact on the more generic European readership.

25 On the role of Niccolò and Maffeo Polo in the expansion of the Italian trade in Asia, see Olschki 1957, 72-93.

26 In any probability, as the result of a deliberate choice, at least, in the case of the Genoese merchants. See in this regard Lopez 1943.

27 Pegolotti actually put a lot of stress on silk, a sign of how important a good it had become for Europe, whose own production was not, apparently, enough to meet the demand (Lach 1965, 45-6).

1.2 Marco Polo and 'Cipangu'

Very different in impact was another, most notable merchant source on Asia: *Il Milione*,[28] Marco Polo's account of his family's and his own experience as merchant, diplomat and administrator in the Mongol Empire. The work was not meant for a popular audience; on the contrary, it catered openly to a noble audience, as was common for the romance literature of the time (Olschki 1957, 47). It was, nonetheless, widely circulated even before the author's death, in 1324, in many different versions and translations, and given to print by 1477.[29] Its popularity is testified not only by the huge number – around a hundred and fifty – of manuscript copies of the work that have survived up to our days, but also by chroniclers, such as Ramusio, that reported of its diffusion, and by the number of direct and indirect references to the work included in other pieces of travel literature composed until the end of the Middle Ages.[30]

Marco left Europe in 1271, in the company of his father Niccolò and his uncle Maffeo, at about the time when the merchants' "rush to the Farther East" (as defined by Lopez 1943, 164) was gaining full force. The two brothers had already travelled from their outpost in Crimea to China in 1260, and had been received, in Qanbaliq, by the Grand Qan, Qubilay, himself. The Qan had entrusted them with a request for the Pope, to send

28 The choice to refer to Marco Polo's work with the title *Il Milione*, as opposed to what is presumed to be the original title of the work, the *Divissament du monde* (which put more emphasis on the geographic nature of the work rather than on its nature as a travel narrative), is linked to the focus the present work puts on the editorial history of the work in the sixteenth century. As Caputo (2016, 14) underlines, this title became in fact conventional in the Italian editorial tradition of the sixteenth century, as the consequence of a nickname commonly associated with the Polo's family. It should be noted, however, that work would also become known, throughout Europe, as *The travels of Marco Polo* and other alternative titles such *The voyages of Marco Polo* and the more literal translation of the original title *The description of the world*. The most used and renown English version of Marco Polo's work is Cordier 1920, based on the third, annotated edition of the Henry Yule's translation of the work, completed in 1903 by Henri Cordier.

29 It was thereafter reproduced in various version until the first attempt to collate the different manuscripts was made by Giovanni Battista Ramusio, in his collection of travel literature, using a 1532 Latin edition by Francesco Pipino, integrated with four different manuscripts. See in this regard Caputo 2016, 94-5.

30 Summed up in Lach 1965, 35-9. Caputo (2016, 6) underlines, on the other hand, how the popularity of the book has sometimes been overstated, as, due to its growing lack of practical utility after the new stop in the relationships between China and Europe, it lost some of its impact (above all after the publication of the *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*). The editorial history of Marco Polo's work (both in manuscript and in printed form) is discussed in Iwamura 1949. For a thorough analysis of the contents of Marco Polo's work in relation to the wider context of Europe's 'discovery' of East Asia, see instead Olschki 1957 and Larner 1999. An in-depth discussion of the way Marco Polo's work influenced European descriptions of Japan will be included in the following chapter.

learned European men to the Mongol capital in order to instruct the court about European religion, politics and military tactics. The Polo brothers, complying with Qubilay's request, had travelled back to Europe and sought audience with the newly elected Pope in Rome, managing to bring back with them, together with Marco, two Dominican Friars. The two missionaries actually chose to stop and turn back halfway on the voyage to Qanbaliq, leaving the Polos empty-handed. Nonetheless, when they arrived back in the Mongol capital, they were received again by the Qan.

Both the two brothers and Marco were welcomed into the Qan's services, as it was customary for the Mongols to employ strangers, as well as men from the populations under their dominance (Arabs, Turks, Persians, Qidan, Nüzhen), into their administration, so as to diversify its ranks. It was precisely Marco Polo's role as a member of the Mongol administration – a role that he retained for seventeen years – that allowed him to travel throughout China, visiting even some of its most peripheral regions, and collecting the knowledge and the experiences that he included into his work. This was composed a few years after his return to Venice, between 1298 and 1299, in the prisons of Genoa, where Marco had ended up after having being captured during a battle between Genoa and Venice. It was dictated to a fellow prisoner, Rustichello da Pisa, who, as an author of romances, impressed some of the stylistic peculiarities of the genre on the narration, such as the use of the Vernacular (French, intermixed with some Italianisms).[31]

Il Milione was easily the richest of the narratives on Asia produced in the thirteenth century. Contrary to many contemporary religious travellers, Marco Polo did not dwell on the variety of the religious creeds inside the Mongol Empire (even though he described, on occasion, the Buddhist practices he had occasion to witness). He proved however to be a keen observer when it came to portraying the complexity of the political and administrative system of the Empire, its internal power structure, its infrastructures and means of communications, the architecture of its cities, and also – an uncommon element, still, for the travel narratives of the thirteenth century, but befitting Marco Polo's role as administrator – its natural resources. *Il Milione* was peculiar also in that it underlined the cultural variety and complexity of East Asia in a more clear-cut way than what the earlier travel relations had done, and in that it introduced European readers, for the first time, to some peripheral regions previously unknown. The book shed some light on the cultural divide between what some previous writers already had identified as 'Cathay' (that is, Northern China), and Southern China ('Mangi', according to the Mongol terminology). Moreover, it tentatively traced the geography of the Southern Asian

31 For further reference on Marco Polo's journey, see Bergreen 2007.

regions and seas. [32] In this sense, the structure of his account can be said to fit both in the realm of travel relations and in that of geographical works, an approach that, as Padrón (2002, 45) underlines,[33] was close to that of many much later – mostly, early modern – travel narratives, on which the work itself exerted a fundamental influence.

Il milione was also the first European book to ever make a recognizable reference to Japan. Marco Polo introduced it in the second chapter of his third book, under the name 'Cyampagu' – possibly a rendition of the Chinese denomination *Jih-pen-kuo* (Boxer 1951, 14).[34] Marco, himself, had not visited the archipelago, and the information he included in his account was collected during his voyages to the easternmost parts of the Chinese continent and during his stay at the Mongol court (where the invasions of the archipelago, attempted respectively in 1274 and 1281, were being planned). And while some of the narrative strategies he adopted, such as the use of an impersonal narrator, were specifically meant to reinforce the illusion of objectivity (Caputo 2016, 16), the information was in many respects inaccurate: he greatly overestimated Japan's distance from China, misjudged the position of the archipelago, and unrealistically stressed its commercial isolation at a time when Japan had developed a rich history of maritime relationships with Eastern Asia (Oliveira e Costa 2007, 43).

His account, moreover, projected on Japan some of the myths that it had contributed to dispel in reference to China. His description of the palace of the Emperor as entirely roofed and decorated in gold was a call back to the fabulous Eastern palaces of the literary tradition on Asia: China had been brought into the realm of the 'real', and therefore Japan had to become the new 'golden land'. As far as the Japanese were concerned, his description fixed some narrative tropes that, as we will see, would become common, recontexualised, in later Jesuit literature. The Japanese were presented in way that made them 'appealing' to the European public, both in an aesthetic and in a moral sense: they were 'white' – a term that,

32 Marco Polo's work was, actually, only partly an exception to the merchant's tendency to reserve. As Olschki (1957, 76-7) underlines, the account carefully avoided making reference to the commercial activities of the Polo family in Asia. Even the first encounter between Berke Qan and the Polo brothers, who had not at the time been invested with any official capacity, and who conducted with him what at all effects was a commercial transaction, was conveniently veiled under the pretense of an exchange of courtesies amongst equals.

33 In tracing the purpose of Marco Polo's work and its relationship with the literary genres of the time, Padrón defines it as "geography organized as a journey" (2002, 45), suggesting its similarity with the cartographical genre of the itinerary map. He underlines, on the contrary, its fundamental difference from maps of the Renaissance period, which put the readers in the position of a detached observer – while Marco Polo's narrative treated them as travelers, moving through the routes he describes.

34 The name recurs more frequently, in subsequent literature connected to Polo, as 'Cipangu', and in a number of other variants such as 'Cypangu' and 'Zipangu' (Caputo 2016, 16-17) .

as we will see in the analysis of the Jesuit sources, was yet to be charged with the racial connotations of modern times; and they were obedient to 'reason' a category of Thomist derivation that, again, we will analyse for its application to the construction of a Jesuit cosmography in the second half of the sixteenth century. In a more general sense, as Caputo (2016, 21-9) underlines, Polo's narration of Japan is 'mythical' in the sense that Japan, as an object of description, is downgraded from ultimate meaning to instrument in the political and moral agenda of the writer.[35] While the modalities of representation would change, this would prove true also of later 'first-hand' accounts of Japan.

In spite of its popularity, the veracity of Marco Polo's account was questioned by many contemporary and later scholars. The work, also given its format and the persistence in it of some of the 'mythical' narratives of the classical tradition, was perceived by many as a romance more than as an objective geographical reference. It is not by chance that the geographical information included in the book would not be incorporated in world maps until late in the fourteenth century, with the Catalan Atlas of 1375.[36]

1.3 The Cartographical 'Reality' of Asia and Japan in the fifteenth century

Cartographical and geographical works were actually very late altogether, in accepting the influence of the travel narratives of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

It was in the fourteenth century that most of the portolan charts that have survived to our day were produced, by the sailors travelling along the Mediterranean coasts and on the Black Sea. Contrary to the *Mappaemundi*, the portolan charts were very practical in scope, laid out for everyday use by sailors themselves. Objectivity was a requirement for them, and, in this sense, they contributed in a significant way to laying the foundation for the later developments of cartography as a science. Given the very different premises on which their construction was based, however, *Mappaemundi* did not immediately prove prone to receive their influence. The above mentioned Atlas of 1375 and some other Catalan and Majorcan maps of the late fourteenth century did include information derived from the charts, as well as from the factual travel narratives of Marco Polo and

35 "Viene declassato da significato ultimo della comunicazione a essenziale strumento della stessa a servizio dell'agenda morale e politica delle volontà individuali che se ne appropriarono mediante l'atto della scrittura". (Caputo 2016, 24)

36 Some data from Marco Polo's account were, however, included in an earlier portolan chart, the Laurentian portolan, dated 1351 (Lach 1965, 66-7).

Odoric of Pordenone. Thanks, above all, to the contributions of the Jewish merchants, who were able to travel with relative freedom through the lands governed by the Muslims, they were able to include strikingly objective information on Northern Africa, even though they still failed at conveying a convincing picture of the Southern African coasts or of the asset of the Indian Ocean (which was considered a landlocked sea throughout the Middle Ages).[37] These maps were, however, more an exception than a rule. It would be mostly in the so-called era of 'Great Discoveries' that the use of empirical data in map making would become more common even in the case of world maps.

On the other hand, the fifteenth century would significantly shift cartographical representation towards factuality. By the mid-fourteenth century, the Mongol Yuan Dynasty started to succumb, first to the pressure of rebellions and political struggles, and then to the Ming Dynasty, that progressively extended its control over China, conquering the last resistance in 1388. The fall of the Mongols was paralleled by a new rise of the Muslim power in West Asia, which would culminate, in the following century, with the Turkish conquest of Constantinople of 1453. This was coupled with Europe's own economic struggles and internal conflict – the Hundred Years' war erupted in 1337 – that caused most European leaders to project their attention and efforts inwards. All these factors contributed to a decline in the commercial land routes across the Asian continent. It is possible that a number of travellers nonetheless ventured to China, during the fifteenth century, but no record exists of such voyages. Merchants such as the Venetian Niccolò de' Conti did sporadically reach India via land, and left accounts of their travels. These were, however, scattered reports, and generally meant for limited audiences. In an era when the Catalan merchants were growingly challenging the Italian primacy in commerce, the urge for reserve was felt even more strongly than before (Olschki 1957, 59-65).

On the other hand, in the second decade of the fifteenth century, the Portuguese embarked on the path that would lead to the construction of their seaborne empire. The Portuguese Crown promoted a series of voyages of exploration, both by land and by sea, along the Atlantic coast of Africa, which would culminate in Vasco da Gama's achievements of the late 1490s and in the opening of the commercial sea routes linking Europe and Asia.[38] The Portuguese Crown focused, at first, mostly on the

37 On the issue of *mappaemundi* and realism, see Woodward (1985, 512-15).

38 The Portuguese Crown was not actually the only political entity to dispatch travellers to Asia during the fifteenth century. The Venetian Seignory, in particular, dispatched several embassies towards Persia, seeking an alliance against the Turks after the capture of Constantinople – and some of the ambassadors were able also to report news, albeit vague, of Eastern Asia (Lach 1965, 64). The Portuguese enterprise was, however, the most notable. The impulse behind it has often been identified with the country's own naval history

North-West African coast, where the Portuguese shared a long history of trade relationships and hostilities with the Muslims. In 1415, Portugal conquered the Moorish Island of Ceuta, on the Straits of Gibraltar, gaining control over a strategic African harbour and a fundamental Muslim centre for commerce. The conquest was partly meant to provide corsairs with a better field of action against the Muslim trade, at the same time shielding Portugal from possible invasions by the Muslims, and granting protection from naval raids both to the Italian merchants that travelled towards Northern Europe and to the Portuguese that traded in the Mediterranean Sea. The main ambition of the Crown was however to obtain at least partial control on the African gold trade, that originated from the Upper Niger and Senegal rivers and crossed the Sahara by means of camel caravans. In the end, however, the benefits of the conquest did not live up to the Crown's expectations. Holding the city against the Muslims put a considerable strain on the Portuguese finances, and the effort to extend Portuguese power on inland Africa brought no appreciable result in return. Nor did the attempt to control the commercial routes, as the Muslim moved their trade from Ceuta to other centres. This was what prompted the Portuguese crown to seek an alternative way to extend its control on the African commerce, by advancing along the Atlantic coast of the continent. Between 1418 and 1425, the Portuguese proceeded to occupy the previously uninhabited Madeira Islands, and by 1419 they had begun to explore the African coast. The progress was slow at first – the then known southern limit of the Atlantic Ocean, around Cape Bojador, was only crossed in 1434, after numerous failed attempts. However, the first, rocky years of exploration were functional to the accumulation of experience in the field of nautical science. By the fourth decade of the fifteenth century, the advance was progressing at a steady pace, and when Henry of Portugal, who had been the first promoter of the explorations, died, in 1460, Portugal was already concessionary of all the commerce along the West African coast, and had engaged in slave trade along the Sahara littoral, as a way to finance further explorations. The Portuguese

and richness in expert sailors. As Boxer (1969, 13-14) underlines, however, the importance of the sea for Portugal, as opposed to other European nations, has often been overstated. The country had few natural harbours and, even though the sea played an important role in its history, Portugal was not, by the beginning of the fifteenth century, a pre-eminently maritime nation. Its population was mostly composed by peasants, with a general shortage of deep-sea sailors and a definite prominence of agricultural activities over seagoing occupations. Probably, strategic and economic factors were at stake. By the beginning of the fifteenth century, Portugal was relatively affluent, but overall backwards in comparison to the richest core of western Europe. The country was, on the other hand, favoured by peace, as opposed to neighbouring countries, preoccupied with foreign and civil wars. Open on one side on the vast operational field of the Atlantic Ocean, and on the other on the Mediterranean, with its flourishing trade, Portugal was therefore prompted to find in the sea those opportunities that were not available in its mountainous hinterland.

had also managed to divert to the coast part of the gold trade along the Saharan land routes – as they would continue to do, in growing proportions, throughout the second half of the century.[39]

The expansion was motivated, in this sense, by the strategic and economic benefits of the explorations. On the other hand, the crusading ardour against the Muslims and the quest for Prester John were also still, undoubtedly, a factor. The imaginary location of the realm of Prester John was, in fact, extremely ambiguous. Up to the thirteenth century, the kingdom had mostly been vaguely placed somewhere between Central or Eastern Asia. As an effect of the European encounter with 'Cathay', however, its position had progressively shifted, in European writings, to Eastern Africa, where a Christian stronghold had been believed to exist for centuries, in Ethiopia. Ever since 1402, a number of Ethiopian Coptic emissaries reached Europe, further reinforcing this belief. As the Portuguese advance progressed in the Asian Seas, however, the location of the kingdom might have verged again on being identified, generically, with India, or more generically Asia, thus motivating the further eastern penetration of the Portuguese naval effort.[40] As Boxer (1969, 20-4) underlines, the mixed nature of the motivations behind the Portuguese enterprise emerges very clearly in the Papal Bulls (the *Dum Diversas*, promulgated in 1452, the *Romanus Pontifex*, dated 1455, and the *Inter Caetera*, of 1456) that granted official support by the Roman Church to the Portuguese advance. The *Romanus Pontifex*, in particular, insisted on Prince Henry of Portugal's ambition to make contact with those in the 'Indies' (used, in this case, in its generical meaning) who honoured the name of Christ.

The search for the kingdom of Prester John, mixed with the ambition to participate in the Asian spice trade, worked as a central motive in particular for João II of Portugal, who became king in 1477, and who was the chief promoter of the quest for an alternative route to Asia via Africa. By 1485 or 1486, notice was reported to Europe of the existence of an African king named Ogané, who held "as high a position among the African people as the pope did among the Christians" (Diffie, Winius 1977, 159), and who was identified with Prester John. This prompted a new round of voyages, starting with the attempt to penetrate the African inland, by Alfonso de Paiva and Pero de Covilhã. The sea expedition guided by commander Bartolomeu Dias also left Portugal, in the hope of circumnavigating the African continent. Dias did round the Cape of Good Hope at the beginning of 1488 and was able to report back to Portugal, where he returned by December of the same year, that the 'Indies' could effectively be reached by sea. Covilhã and

39 On the capture of Ceuta, and for in-depth account of the Portuguese advance along the African Coast up to the 1480s, see Diffie, Winius (1977, 46-153).

40 On Prester John's 'translocation' from Asia to Africa, see Brewer 2015, 214-27.

Dias' voyages were shortly followed by Christopher Columbus' enterprise. The explorer came back to Europe by 1493, having unknowingly paved the way to previously uncharted territories, but with the conviction of having discovered a group of islands on the fringes of Eastern Asia, among which, according to contemporary chronicles, Marco Polo's Cipangu was assumed to be included (Diffie, Winius 1977, 166). As Scammell (2000) underlines, the outcome and the premises of Columbus' enterprise set it apart from the other explorations by his contemporaries. While the voyages of Dias, Covilhã, and of their predecessors had been sponsored by the Portuguese Crown, as parts of an almost one-century-long exploration effort, Columbus, a man of obscure birth who had been refused the Portuguese patronage, had sailed mostly out of his own initiative, albeit at Spanish service. Yet, his expedition was inspired by very similar motives. On one side, the aspiration to find a sea route to Asia, in order to gain easier access to territories that were expected to enshrine great wealth and exciting economical opportunities. On the other, the religious impulse – the desire of extending the bounds of Christendom and of freeing West Asia from the Muslims. Columbus' expedition had the effect to ignite the rivalry between Portugal and Castile. The contention was actually the culmination of a contrast that had been lurking in the background of Portuguese explorations for the greatest part of the century, and that was solved in June 1494, with the Treaty of Tordesillas, that established a circular line of division, running from pole to pole 370 leagues west of Cape Verde Islands, and splitting the known world into two spheres of influence.[41] All territories east of the line were to pertain to Portugal, while the western sphere was assigned to Castile, that, given the still uncertain geographical outline of the world, presumably hoped to extend its influence on Eastern Asia and the land of 'Cipangu' – that was believed to have been reached by Columbus – and on its gold. The Treaty of Tordesillas officially sanctioned the Portuguese exploration of Asia. This encouraged João successor, Manuel I, in pursuing the search for the spice trade and for the realm of Prester John. It was under his patronage that Vasco da Gama sailed in July 1497, following the route around the southern tip of Africa and into the Indian Ocean that had been opened by Dias, and bearing letters addressed to Prester John and to the Raja of Calicut. His return, in 1499, marked the start of the full-fledged European exploration of the Asian seas.

In spite of their long-lasting effects on Europe's relationship with Asia, little to no information about the fifteenth century explorations of the Atlantic African coast and of the African and Western Asian inland was made available to the contemporary European public. Given the economic

41 The full text and translation of the Treaty, as well as a related bibliography, are available in Davenport 2012, 84-100.

and strategic motivations behind the expeditions, the Portuguese Crown was probably motivated to keep the discoveries and the achievements of the travellers it sponsored under strict reserve, even in the case of those voyages that could potentially hold the highest resonance.[42] There is, for example, no contemporary full-fledged report of Dias' enterprise – which would only be accounted for, and still in a rather rough and incomplete way, by João de Barros, in the following century. In the case of Covilhã's voyage, there is not even any certainty that a detailed account ever came in possession of the Portuguese Crown. While a report was dispatched by Covilhã to king João, in fact, no definite proof exists that it ever reached its destination.[43]

Given such reserve, and the shortage of people travelling on the land routes to Asia, all in all the fifteenth century did not add in a significant way to the amount or the quality of the factual knowledge on Asia available either to the learned or to the general contemporary European population. Moreover, the knowledge accumulated by European diplomats, missionaries and merchants in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries partly fell into oblivion, due to the lack of further contacts.[44]

At the same time, however, the fifteenth century marked a fundamental development in the science of cartography. Old-styled *mappaemundi* were still being produced as late as in the 1470s – a 1472 edition of Isidore de Seville's *Etymologiae* was, for example, accompanied by a map representing the world in tripartite form, one of the later examples of *mappamundi* that has survived to our days. This cartographical genre, however, was to progressively disappear, and to be replaced by 1500 by new types of maps. This happened under the influence of Ptolemy's *Geographia*, that underwent a revival since the beginning of the fifteenth century. More than forty manuscripts of the *Geographia*, probably based on a tenth or

42 The Crown did not always succeed in this – as demonstrated by the fact that ever since the 1470s not only the merchants sponsored by the Spanish Crown, but a number of European sailors of various provenance had begun to appear on the Atlantic African coast, mining Portugal's monopoly on the trade conducted in such regions (Lach 1965, 54).

43 The report included information both on India and on the Arab trade, and in particular on the Arab shipping techniques, such as the way they made use of the monsoons. Diffie and Winius (1977, 165) argue that the way Vasco da Gama's voyage was later conducted makes it actually hard to believe that the contents of Covilhã's report were ever available to João or his successor.

44 From 1405 to 1433, the Chinese Ming Dynasty had actually promoted a series of naval expeditions in the Indian Ocean, under the command of the fleet admiral Zheng He, as a way to bring the peripheral regions of the Chinese empire under the influence of its tributary system. Lack of economic motivation from the Chinese part, and a subsequent ban on commerce, prevented however a further promotion of the naval explorations, which might have resulted in the establishment of contacts with the Portuguese travellers pursuing the route around the Cape of Good Hope. See in this regard Levathes 1997 and Hattendorf 2007.

eleventh-century byzantine manuscript, were produced by the end of the century, and the work was also given to print in 1475, an *edition princeps* shortly followed by many others (Lach 1965, 67-8).

The *Geographia* was especially influential on fifteenth century cartography in terms of its use of geometry – in the form of the grid of latitude and longitude – as a spatial armature for the representation of the surface of the Earth. Such use of geometry

> allows the mapmaker to do something that his or her medieval counterpart could not readily do. That is, he or she can model, with an accuracy that would only grow between 1500 and 1800, the relationships of objects and locations on the surface of the Earth, conceived as a geometric grid. That geometric armature, moreover, in itself inscribes something that we cannot readily identify, an empty space that is entirely distinct from a 'blank spot'. That space is not merely the blankness produced by ignorance of an un-discovered geographical or hydrographical feature – a 'negative emptiness' – but the abstract space into which geographies and hydrographies are plotted – a 'positive' emptiness. It subtends the entire surface of the map, but its 'positive emptiness' – its substantial independence from the objects and locations it serves to plot – only becomes visible when we realize that it logically extends far beyond the borders of the image. It extends into that vast part of the spherical Earth that is not represented here, but whose existence is presupposed by the geometry of the grid. (Padrón 2002, 30-1)

The fifteenth century revival in Ptolemaic studies established, in this sense, the basis for the development of cartography as an independent science – and for the construction of world maps as representations of the world rather as symbols for it.

At the same time, many of the conventional representations of the *Geographia* contradicted the factual geographical knowledge provided both by Marco Polo's account and by portolan charts, which were being produced in growing numbers as a result of the naval explorations of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. The *Geographia* perpetrated erroneous notions about the conformation of the Indian and Southern Asian coasts, and about the Indian Ocean, represented as enclosed by land – therefore feeding the belief in the impossibility to reach Asia by circumnavigating Africa (an assumption that would be dispelled by Dias' enterprise). It also greatly overestimated the eastward extension of the Asian continent, postulating the existence of unknown land beyond the easternmost regions of China – an idea which would constitute the very basis of Columbus' voyage and of his subsequent belief that the lands he had discovered belonged to Asia. Given the weight of Ptolemy's name, in a century where classical authors were consistently being revaluated, such notions re-

tained a lot of influence on most mapmakers, in spite of all the evidence pointing to the contrary.

Only a limited number of world maps integrated the notions included in the *Geographia* with information brought to light by more up-to-date accounts and charts. One of them was the *mappamundi* drawn in the 1450s by Fra Mauro, in the Venetian monastery of San Michele. The work, one of the most important cartographical achievements of the fifteenth century, largely drew on classical authors (not only Ptolemy, but also Plinius and Solinus), but relied also on the medieval narratives of Niccolò de Conti and of Marco Polo.[45] The influence of these travel narratives emerges in the way it pictures India and the Indian Ocean, and in the inclusion of the 'Isola de Zimpagu', placed north of Giava. This was one of the very few unmistakable representations of Japan included in a fifteenth-century map.[46] Henricus Martellus' world map and Martin Behaim globe, both almost exclusively based on traditional sources, likewise included 'Cipango', but exaggerated Marco Polo's inaccuracies, to the point that the country was located in the southern hemisphere (Oliveira e Costa 2007, 43).

Fra Mauro's map is probably the most complete compendia of the knowledge of the Earth that was at the time available to the learned population. One can speak only in terms of learned population, as, as Woodward (2002, 16-17) underlines, this was still the only designed audience for world maps. In spite of the influence of Ptolemaic studies, European maps of the fifteenth century were still far from being a tool of common, practical use, or something that a private citizen would purchase. They were mostly meant to be approached by specialists, or destined to be hanged in public places. This is not to say that the public was totally oblivious of their existence. Woodward mentions, for example, a *barzelletta* (song) very common by the 1450s, which implied a knowledge, from the part of the audience, of the distinction between the *mappaemundi* and the portolan charts.[47] However, it would not be until the sixteenth century that the production of printed atlases and the birth of the cartographic industry would turn maps into a commercial object, familiar to a significant section of the European population.

45 For a fuller discussion of Fra Mauro's map, its sources and its reception in connection to the general reception of Ptolemy's *Geography* in Venice, see Cattaneo 2011.

46 Another one was included in a now lost map by Paolo Toscanelli, dated 1474 (Boscaro 1990, 101-10). Maps, on the other hand, showed progressive increment in the number of the Islands located in area where Polo had placed 'Cipangu', in what might have been a conscious effort to integrate the new knowledge in the representation of Asia. See in this regard Caputo 2016, 30-6.

47 "Aggio visto lo mappamondo e le carte di navigazione. Ma la Sicilia mi sembra la più bella del mondo. Ho visto tutte le isole del mondo, ma per l'isola più bella – Cecilia – non si trova su nessuna carta. È venuta dall'altro mondo" (Woodward 2002, 16-17).

In conclusion, the fifteenth century was a landmark in the progress of the relationships between Asia and Europe, but such progress did not immediately result in a growing conscience, among the general European population, of the 'reality' of Asia. A revolution in geographical knowledge was, however, inevitable in the long run. In the aftermath of the treaty of Tordesillas, control over the sea trade routes became a central point in European expansion strategies. The Roman and Canon laws that regulated international affairs in Europe were progressively remoulded so as to legitimise conquest and mass conversion. And while, as we will see, in the sixteenth century the real entity of the power held by the Portuguese over the territories facing the Indian Ocean is debatable, a door to Asia was opened for European travellers, that was never to be closed again. The naval exploration of the Atlantic Ocean paved the way for the access of Portuguese ships to the Asian Sea routes, and for the involvement of European merchants and sailors in the Asian trade. Following Da Gama's steps, and advancing along routes already established by native sailors, European merchants would settle into the existing Asian trade centres, mingling in an already thriving economy and reporting about it to Europe. Missionaries would soon follow on their wake, building up an even more stable flow of information from Asia to Europe. Their reports about their travels and activities would contribute to the accumulation, in their native countries, of a whole body of direct factual knowledge about Asia, challenging the mythical and religious visions of the world dominant throughout the Middle ages – even though some of the traditional narratives would only temporarily be set aside and still, at least partly, retain their weight until much later.[48] However, as we will see, this did not necessarily mean that Asia would be represented, in European literature, in an objective way.

1.4 Expanding Trade and the Evolving 'Maps' of Asia and Japan in the Era of 'Great Discoveries'

When Vasco Da Gama left Europe in 1497, aiming for the circumnavigation of Africa, the pioneering quality of his voyage was, apparently, not something that even his patron, Manuel I of Portugal, was able to predict. Preoccupied with both internal and international struggles, the king had provided him with less than two hundred men – many of whom died during the voyage – and with a very little capital of diplomatic gifts and trade goods. Da Gama himself was a figure of only minor value at court, and

48 Influences of the Prester John legend have, for example, been argued to be found in Russian representations of Japan as late as in the nineteenth century. See in this regard Manning 1922.

surely not one properly trained to deal with foreign rulers and dignitaries. Not by chance, the mission brought no remarkable result in terms of the establishment of diplomatic contacts – both on the African coast and in India (Newitt 2005, 57-8). On the contrary, Da Gama's antagonistic attitude towards the natives, and his openly suspicious stance regarding all Muslims, established a climate of mutual hostility that would hinder even future relationships – so that violence and aggression would remain, throughout all the early phases of the Portuguese expansion, a significant aspect of the intercourse between Portugal and Asia.[49]

In all other respects, however, Da Gama's mission was, from the Portuguese perspective, a success. His diplomatic and commercial achievements were not remarkable, but he nevertheless returned from his voyage bearing spices and Indian products for a value that yielded about 6.000 per cent of the expenses that had been necessary for his mission (Hamilton 1948, 37). His enterprise proved without doubt that the route around Africa could be profitably followed in order to reach India – and therefore the cities where the spice trade originated. The voyage prompted, as a consequence, a series of further missions, aimed at gathering information about the geography of India (and East Asia in general) and about commerce in the Indian Ocean.

The Portuguese Crown's major interest was in the pepper trade, which at the time was mostly based in Calicut, and inserted in a complex commercial network, constituted by a number of well-defined communities of merchants – held together by kinship, origins and, often, religious ties. Most of the harbours of the region included enclaves where the different communities – including Hindus, Jains, Jews, Armenians and Muslims – resided, paying taxes to local authorities but autonomously administering their affairs (Newitt 2005, 60).

In order to handle the Portuguese Asian affairs, in 1505 the Portuguese nobleman Francisco de Almeida was appointed viceroy and sent to Asia, formally establishing the *Estado da India* – a title that would come to encompass the totality of the possessions acquired by the Portuguese in Asia, from eastern Africa to the sea of Japan. The 'state' was to function as an Indian Ocean base from which to enforce Portuguese control over the Asian trade. In accordance to the treaty of Tordesillas, and to the Papal bulls that had sanctioned the Portuguese advance in the territories east of the Cape Verde Islands, it was to claim sovereignty over the Asian Seas, as well as over all the Christians residing in the territories facing them (Boxer 1969, 68). The main necessity detected by the Portuguese Crown's representatives of the *Estado* was to secure a number of fortified harbours, that could work both as commercial outposts and as naval and military

49 Even though more recent writings have partially reconsidered the emphasis put on violence by the more traditional historical narratives on the Portuguese enterprise in Asia. See in this regard, Disney 1995.

bases – both to conquer and defend against local competitors. After the appointment of Almeida as viceroy, the capture of the key bases for the Portuguese expansion was accomplished in a matter of no more than ten years. By the end of the first decade of the sixteenth century, supremacy had been secured over the east African coast. In 1510, under the lead of Almeida's successor, Afonso de Albuquerque, the Portuguese were able to conquer the landlocked island of Goa, a strategic harbour involved both in the Cambay-Cape Comorin trade and in the horse-trade that interested the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar. Electing Goa as his headquarters, Albuquerque proceeded then to the capture of Malacca (1511) and of Ormuz (1515), which granted the Portuguese control over the Persian Gulf and access to the South China sea.[50]

While the central bulk of the Portuguese possessions was seized in this early phase, even after the death of Albuquerque in 1515, and at least up until 1580 – when the Portuguese and Spanish Crowns were united under Philip II of Spain (resulting in a temporary end of independence for Portugal) – the territory under the direct control of the *Estado da India* kept expanding. A number of minor fortified and unfortified harbours were secured throughout the century – notably Bassein (in 1534), Diu (in 1535) and some of the ports in the Kanara region (Barrett 2012, 2). In many cases, moreover, the Portuguese were able to establish merchant communities even in locations over which they could not obtain sovereignty – such as Cochin, Calicut, Chaul, Solor and Ternate – sometimes obtaining formal cessions of territory by local rulers, and sometimes abiding by informal agreements with them. Their territorial bases came to include a huge number of trading posts (*feitorias*), various fortified strongholds (*fortalezas*) and, more rarely, some urban settlements (*cidades*), usually assigned to the control of autonomous town councils. Through such possessions, albeit scattered, the Portuguese managed to extend their influence on a vast section of the Indian Ocean (Barrett 2012, 4).[51]

50 For a more in-depth narration of the steps that led to the Portuguese capture of their principal bases in the Indian Ocean, see Diffie, Winius 1977, 243-71.

51 In spite of it being referred to as an *Estado*, the vast maritime area over which the Portuguese came to extend their influence was hardly a unit characterized by political homogeneity. While most historians refer to it in terms of a colonial empire, therefore, some, like Villiers (1986, 38) object to the use of such definition, arguing that the Portuguese control extended mostly over trade, without affecting the Asian territory in a significant way. In any case, surely, the *Estado da India* came to employ a set of institutions that rivalled in complexity with later colonial empires. In order to enforce its regulations, to protect its headquarters, to build and maintain its forts and ships, to collect taxes and other revenues, and to purchase the trade goods, a vast, dedicated body of royal bureaucrats was needed, as well as all the professional sailors and armed forces necessary to back them up (Newitt 2005, 70). This system of administration required in turn, in order to be kept in place, huge financial resources – resources that the Portuguese Crown, at the time, could provide only partially. This made it necessary, for the *Estado*, to develop a certain level of self-sufficiency,

The Portuguese control over trade was never totally effective. Their ships were not exempt from losses from corsairs attacks, and occasionally succumbed to insurgences and acts of resistance from the part of local authorities (such as in the case of Ternate, which had to be abandoned in 1575). Moreover, as Boxer (1969, 48-59) illustrates, the vastness – and great dispersion – of the Portuguese possessions inevitably put a great strain on the *Estado da India* in terms of man-power, and political circumstances occasionally forced the Portuguese Crown's representatives to opt for a 'light' enforcement of their regulations, so as to maintain good relationships with those local powers whose support was essential for keeping their supremacy in the region. Such losses and limitations were not enough to shake the foundations of the Portuguese seaborne empire, but they were effective in limiting the measure of its control on trade, above all as far as its capacity to annihilate the local competition for certain products was concerned. They were the reason why, ultimately, the creation of the *Estado da India* was enough to affect the panorama of Asian trade in the sixteenth century, but not to revolutionize it (O'Rourke, Williamson 2009, 672). One might also add that while the position of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean opened access for them to the seas East of Malacca – namely, the maritime area, encompassing East and South-East Asia, known as Greater China Seas region – their authority in the area was very limited.

Throughout their advance in the Indian Ocean, the authorities of the *Estado da India* had vaguely heard about the Chinese (referred to as 'Chijns'). The capture of Malacca was what first made the Portuguese familiar with them, as well as with the other populations of the China Seas region, and their thriving commercial activities. The city was a big window toward eastern Asia, and the most important emporiums along the trade route connecting the Indian Ocean and the Greater China Seas region. When the Portuguese first reached it, in 1509, several Chinese ships were stationed in its harbour, and when, two years later, they battled for its capture, some Chinese junk masters – acting independently from orders by the Ming central authorities (who, however, did not intervene to defend the city, in spite of its being part of the Chinese tributary system) – were instrumental in their success. In Malacca, the Portuguese interacted also with the merchants they identified as the 'Gores' – who were possibly inhabitants of the Ryūkyū Islands, or even of Southern Japan – and through

that primarily came from the revenues (rents, tributes and licences) collected from its harbours and trading posts – where local monopolies on products such as opium, indigo and palm-wine, were also enforced –and through tributes exacted from the Asian merchants shipping and trading along the Indian Ocean routes (Barrett 2012, 5). As Mathew (1986) illustrates, for example, the representatives of the *Estado* set in place, to this end, a complex custom system, based on the concession of trade licences (*cartazes*).

them they surely heard, if only vaguely, of the Japanese archipelago itself (Massarella 1990, 20-1).

West of the city, the Portuguese found themselves faced, much as in the Indian Ocean, with a solid commercial network, controlled by different communities of seafarers in close relationship with one another, and trading along well-established trade routes. The region encompassed a vast complex of seas – extending in longitude from the South China Sea to the East China Seas, and in latitude from the Japanese Inland Seto Sea to the Southeastern Asian seas of Sulu, Java, Celebes, and Banda. It

> combined both diversity and cohesion. On the one hand, there was the multiplicity of peoples, cultures, languages and histories of Japan, China, and Southeast Asia; on the other hand, the seas were a unifying conduit for the transmission of goods, peoples, germs, ideas and religions. Like Braudel's Mediterranean, the China Seas tied an area of heterogeneous civilizations together through commercial and cultural exchange. […] The China Seas region blended peoples and cultures from not only Asia but from around the world in a maritime melting pot. It provided an area of transit and a source of income for untold numbers of people. Despite their different languages and ethnic origins, the indigenous groups of 'sea peoples' – the ama of Japan, the Dan (Tanka) of Southern China and the 'sea gypsies' (Orang Laut), Iranun, Balangingi, and Bugis of insular Southeast Asia – shared a common maritime culture and life experiences that distinguished them from their countrymen living on shore. Throughout history, people continuously moved in and out of the region – migrants, sojourners, emigrants, missionaries, traders, sailors and slaves – first from India, China and Southeast Asia, and later from Japan, Europe and Africa. (Antony 2010, 5)

Many of the seafarers operating in the area were devoted to 'piracy' – a term which is to be intended, in the context of the Greater China Seas region, in a broader sense than the one of illegitimate armed robbery usually applied to it in Europe. It encompassed a variety of maritime activities – raiding, but also transport, trade and/or smuggling – which did not fall under the direct control of the land elites of the regions, and were therefore at times construed as illegal by them, but which were not necessarily conceived as such by the populations living in the maritime areas, prone to consider the sea as a lawless space (Reid 2010, 15). The groups that engaged in such activities were of many different origins – Chinese, Korean, Japanese and South-Asian – and were referred to, by the land-based authorities of the sixteenth centuries, with many names, ranging from *haidao* (or, alternatively, *haizei*, *haifei*, or *haikou*, 'sea bandits') in China, to the Japanese equivalent *kaizoku*, to the term *wokou*, used by the Chinese, more specifically, in reference to the groups of pirates raiding and

creating disturbances along their shores (Antony 2010, 7-8). They often cultivated stronger relations with each other than with the land-based populations of their respective territories – sea did not function as a border, for them, but as a way of communication, through which they created cultural and commercial connections that eluded the limits of existing political structures and went far beyond the official relationships entertained by the states' central authorities.[52] In Japan, the role of the *kaizoku* groups had come to be, by the sixteenth century, integrated in the existing power structures of the state, and *kaizoku* were sought for as allies by the *daimyō* (territorial lords) competing for power in the archipelago.[53] Quite different was the situation in China, where central authorities, faced with the impossibility to rein the commerce, attempted to stop it completely, by enforcing a ban against shipping and overseas trade (Massarella 1990, 20). As Seyock (2005) underlines, however, the restrictions were not really effective in containing private trade, above all in the southern provinces where, in spite of the risk of repercussions, many of the seafarers kept venturing through the old routes – often backed up by conniving local officials. Moreover, while the Chinese sea bans were the reason why, while in possess of a level of naval technology that would allow them to sail into long oceanic routes, the Ming war-junks never actually came to threat the Portuguese hegemony over the Indian ocean, they were, however, equipped to pose a threat to the Portuguese carracks and galleons that roamed to the China Seas.

In 1517, the viceroy of Goa, Lopo Soares de Albegaria, sent to Canton the commander Fernão Peres de Andrade, who successfully established contacts with local authorities. When the commander headed out of the city, he left behind Tomé Pires, who had sailed with him as ambassador of the viceroy, in charge with the task of establishing diplomatic relationships with the Ming authorities in Beijing. Pires, however, did not achieve much in terms of his mission – mainly because, while he was in Beijing, an envoy came to the city from the Sultan of Malacca, lamenting the Portuguese advance on his city, and advocating a Chinese intervention. A decisive rupture in the diplomatic intercourse came, moreover, when the Portuguese tried, by force, to establish in the South China Sea the same order that they had achieved in the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese that had settled in Tunmen after Alvares' landing strived to turn the island into one of their bases – building fortifications and using them as military and naval headquarters, so as to attack and rob Chinese ships and collect prisoners and

52 For an in-depth treatment of the *wakō*'s activities in the sixteenth century see Kwan-wai 1975 and Carioti 2006. On the role of the sea as a bridge between Japanese maritime populations and the other coastal area of the Greater China Sea region, see Amino 1993, 1997, 1998).

53 The process is described in Shapinsky 2010.

slaves. The Portuguese behavior led to retaliation from the Chinese part. Pires was arrested (to die in prison a few years later), Tunmen was liberated and a ban was declared against commerce with the Portuguese. Between 1521 and 1522, in a succession of naval confrontations, the Portuguese ships were easily defeated, with many casualties, by the Ming coastguards fleets, and repelled to Malacca (Zhidong 2011, 9-18). After the defeat, the Portuguese were quick in lowering their ambitions. They did not attempt at establishing further official contacts with the central Chinese authorities, and they generally threaded very carefully in the Chinese territories, avoiding to impose their presence, in fear of a possible Chinese retaliation attack against Malacca. In other words, even though "they […] gained admission to the coveted China trade, it was on the terms laid down by the Chinese authorities and not on those imposed by themselves" (Boxer 1969, 49).[54]

The more immediate effect of the Portuguese expansion in both the Indian Ocean and the China Seas – in terms of the circulation of information on Asia – was, as far as the first half of the sixteenth century is concerned, its impact on the developments of cartography. Da Gama's voyage had provided European cartographers with a whole new body of information concerning the Atlantic coast of Africa, and that body soon expanded, to encompass knowledge of the coastal outline of the Indian Ocean and of the China Seas. The Portuguese Crown strived to keep geographical notions secret, keeping all written reports and maps in the archives of the *Casa da India*,[55] but at least part of them were bound to leak outside the circles of the royalty, and into the hands of foreign competitors. The opening of the trade route around the Cape of Good Hope had in fact created much distress among the leaders of the main competing commercial centres, and most of all among the Italian merchants that had, up to that moment, dominated the spice trade in Europe. Growingly, spies were sent in the thriving commercial scenario of Lisbon, so as to gather information about the discoveries (Braudel 1995, 543).

54 A more favourable turn in the relationships between China and Portugal only came in 1552, when the Portuguese merchant Leonel de Sousa reached the Kwangtung coast. Sousa realized the necessity to comply with Chinese practices, striving to remove the violent reputation that the Portuguese had accumulated in the previous years, and, above all, making sure to openly recognize Chinese sovereignty by paying duties over the commerce. Sousa found an open-minded counterpart in the vice-commissioner for the maritime defence circuit (*haitao*), Wang Po, leading, by 1554, to an agreement that legalized the trade with the Portuguese. Following this agreement, in 1557 the Portuguese were finally able to obtain from the local authorities permission to create a local outpost, in Aomen (Macao), which was thereafter elected as their East-Asian headquarters (Mote, Twitchett 1998, 343-4).

55 The *Casa da India* (House of India) was the Portuguese crown administration office in charge of Portugal's non-European trade, that held the responsibility for all exports to and from Asia – taking care of all practical aspects, from the storing of the merchandise, to arranging the shipments to and from the Indian Ocean. For an in-depth discussion of its responsibilities and structure see Barrett (2012, 5-6).

One of such spies was the Italian Alberto Cantino, who, in 1501, reached the Portuguese capital, travelling on account of the Duke of Ferrara, Hercule d'Este. He was, in theory, to be engaged in horse-trading, but had been unofficially entrusted with the task of collecting intelligence about the Portuguese advance in the Indian Ocean. During his stay, he managed to bribe one unknown Portuguese cartographer into drawing for him a planisphere, including the most recently collected geographical information.[56] The planisphere, that has come to be known as the 'Cantino map', represented the whole known world – which did not, yet, include Japan, but comprehended, for the first time, all of the Americas (including the Brazilian coastline), the entirety of Africa, and a great part of Asia (including China and Indo-China). It was "the first map to project the sphere of the earth onto a plane (i.e. two-dimensionally) on a truly global scale" (Devezas, Rodrigues 2007, 175).

The Cantino planisphere represents, in other words, the earliest known example of 'modern' world map, combining the impact of Ptolemaic studies (that, as seen above, had dominated cartography in the last decades of the fifteenth century) with that of the European Oceanic expansion. It was the expression of a new cartographical genre, cosmography (*cosmographia*), which came, by the beginning of the sixteenth century, to fully replace the tradition of Medieval *Mappaemundi*. This genre was, in a way, a direct product of the geographical explorations. The newly encountered territories led to the expansion of the scopes and forms of cartography, not only inspired to the inclusion of a new range of territories, but also to a redefinition of the geographical categories that had been established by Ptolemy's work (i.e. chorography, intended as the representation of limited territories; geography, intended as the representation, with the application of geometry, of ampler territories within the boundaries of the 'inhabited world' – the *oikoumene* of the Greeks – known to Ptolemy; and cosmography, intended as astronomical cartography). By 1500, cosmography had evolved into a form of 'universal geography', representing the surface of the earth in its entirety, with the application of both the mathematical standards previously adopted in geography and the astronomical notions that had pertained to Ptolemaic cosmography – in other words, using parallels, meridians, tropics and poles as a reference grid so as to read and 'contain' the whole world. The term geography was, in turn, applied to the representation of smaller regions – usually not vaster than provinces – characterized by political unity or by physical coherence.[57]

56 As stated in his letters to the Duke of Ferrara. On the Cantino map, see Devezas, Rodrigues 2007, 175-9.

57 Topography was also born, and joined chorography in representing single locations, such as fortresses and castles. See Woodward 2002, 20-1; 29-36.

Cartographers had, for their part, evolved into professionals who, contrary to their medieval predecessors (who often worked anonymously), were valued as the recognized authors of their works. Their stance was not that of 'artists', or of 'narrators', as in the case of the authors of the *Mappaemundi*, but that of scientists – who had to be versed in a variety of matters, ranging from geometry, to geography and astronomy. Their reputation was a primary requisite for the credibility of their works, as well as their sources. Among them, at least for the first half of the sixteenth century, the classical geographers – Ptolemy himself, but also Strabo and Pomponius Mela – continued to hold a significant weight. With the advance of the century, a growing influence was also derived from the nautical world maps that, as a consequence of the discoveries, began to be produced alongside the regional portolan charts that had circulated in Europe ever since the fourteenth century.[58]

The evolution of the standards for the representation of the surface of the Earth was not the only development in the science of cartography in the first half of the sixteenth century. It was precisely by this period that, starting with Italy, publishers began to turn maps, including world-maps, into commercial products of large diffusion. The cartographical industry, born in Florence in the late fifteenth century, underwent a quick development in Rome and Venice (that took Florence's place in the industry when the city was deprived of the centrality of its role in the commercial network linking Europe to Asia by the opening of the routes in the Atlantic). By 1530, the two cities had become the two major cartographical producers in Italy and, more generally, two leading centres in the European publishing market – a role they were bound to maintain up to the last decades of the sixteenth century (Woodward 2002, 16-19). Their production underwent a steady growth, tied, conversely, with a flourishing commerce for the maps, that was tied to an expansion in their public, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. By the 1560s, maps had completed their evolution from instruments used for travel, war, and administrations, or as pictorial decorations to be hanged both in public places and in the houses of the aristocracy (who had had an almost exclusive access to manuscript maps), into consumer

58 As seen above, maps of this kind, disconnected from the classical sources, were more directly based on the routes traced with compasses by the sailors shipping through the oceans, and included a whole range of practical information (such as wind directions) that did not pertain to Cosmography. Cosmographers strived to find room for such knowledge into their works, but, throughout the first half of the sixteenth century, the two genres co-existed without entering into a successful combination. Only in 1569 they finally merged, in Gerard Mercator's work, which would become, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, a standard in map-making. Mercator produced a projection which "sought to reconcile the navigator's need for a straight-forward course with the trade-off inherent in flattening a globe" (Monmonier 2004, 7).

and divulgation goods, penetrating the everyday life of a huge section of the European middle classes.[59]

The expansion of the market was tied with an inevitable stylistic renovation. The advance of the century was marked by a drastic format change – with the abandonment of Latin in favour of Vernacular languages, and the adoption of smaller dimensions. By 1565, moreover, Venetian producers had opened to clients the possibility to order and purchase bound-together compositions of maps originally conceived to be sold singularly, put together according to the interests of the buyer. The practice would soon spread to other publishing centres, and the Roman (of French origin) publisher Antonio Lafréry was the first, in 1570, to add a frontpage to such compositions, giving birth to the atlases genre, thus known as *lafreriani*. The catalogue produced by Lafréry, in 1572, for all the titles on sale in his house (*Indice delle stampe in vendita nella bottega*), counts more than 500 works of this kind, and shows how florid the commerce for cartographical products had grown out to be by the final decades of the century (Collari 2012, 1).

As a consequence to this commercial growth, maps came to play a growing role in the way the European public viewed the world as a geographical entity: they sealed the passage from the religious perception conveyed by the medieval *Mappaemundi* to a secular representation – one that implied the idea of a world which could be captured in a uniform, ordered image and over which dominance, both rational and material, could be systematically extended. With the new cartography,

> geometric space – abstract and homogeneous – came to be deployed for the first time in western culture. The consequences of this development were felt by Europeans and non-Europeans alike, especially as the universalist claims of the new, abstract spatiality empowered modern, western European culture at the expense of premodern others. (Padrón 2002, 31)

In this sense, the new type of map, that in the first place was connected to the above described geographical explorations, created in turn further ground and motivation for maritime expansion. How map collecting impacted the effective diffusion of up-to-date geographical knowledge is, on the other hand, doubtful. What reached the hands of buyers were hardly 'current' geographical notions (those, even when sneaked away from the hands of the Portuguese, tended to be kept quite firmly in the hands of

59 As Woodward (2002, 59-60) underlines, studying sixteenth and seventeenth-century private inventories shows how maps were largely collected in the residencies of the professional lay classes (and only in a lower measure in the houses of the clergy and the lower strata of society) – a sign that their possession must have been, much as in the case of art collections, a way for them to affirm their growingly relevant social status.

state leaders).[60] Printers in Rome and Venice, for the most, marketed their products as modern and new, describing them, in their prefaces, as "nuovo, recente, vero, esatto, ricco, aggiornato" (Woodward 2002, 35). However, as a matter of fact, they not always had the means to get in possession of truly updated information (and the majority of their clients, for their part, did not know enough about the discoveries to discern correct knowledge from outdated one).

Nonetheless, by the beginning of the sixteenth century, the progressive diffusion of print in Europe would turn cartography, as well as travel and geographical literature, into an object of commercial diffusion, granting to the new narratives on Asia a popularity previously unthinkable of. It was in this context that the first direct contacts between Europe and Japan happened, and that the earliest first-hand reports on Japan began to circulate in Europe.

60 The Cantino map, itself, was never given to print or divulged to the general public. Completed by 1502, and sent back to the Duke of Ferrara, it was kept in the archives of the Ducal Library in Ferrara, and then, after 1598, in the palace in Modena where the D'Este family transferred. The map only came to light again in the nineteenth century, and is currently reserved in the Biblioteca Estense Universitaria of Modena. See Devezas, Rodrigues 2007, 177.

2 The Circulation of Lay Sources on Japan in the Sixteenth Century

Summary 2.1 The Portuguese Encounter with Japan: Portuguese First-Hand Merchant Reports and Lay Histories and their Circulation. – 2.2 The Spanish Competition: Circulation of Spanish Sources on Japan in the Sixteenth Century. – 2.3 Cartography on Japan in the Sixteenth Century.

2.1 The Portuguese Encounter with Japan: Portuguese First-Hand Merchant Reports and Lay Histories and Their Circulation

In the years that intervened between their defeat from the Chinese fleets and their settlement in Macao, individual Portuguese seamen were still able to keep exploring the Asian Seas. Some of them, moreover, managed to build themselves a niche in the private trade that, in spite of the bans, was being carried on in the Chinese Southern provinces – so that, by the time they finally managed to build a settlement in Macao, they had already been able to develop a close network of contacts with local Chinese and Japanese pirates. Given the thriving maritime commercial scenario of the China Seas, described in the previous chapter, Portuguese traders had, surely, also been collecting a growing amount of information about Japan, at least since the establishment of their outpost in Malacca. This kind of first-hand knowledge, however, hardly emerges from the published sources of the time, which include only a number of scattered and fragmentary references to the archipelago.

I have already mentioned Tomé Pires, a Portuguese apothecary at the service of prince Alfonso in Lisbon, who had travelled first to India and then, in 1511, to Malacca as a 'factor of the drugs'. Sometime before 1515, probably during his stay in India, and before his departure for the mission to China that would lead him to his death, Pires composed the *Suma Oriental que trata do Mar Roxo até aos Chins*, meant as an official report to King Manuel about the commercial possibilities offered by the newly

encountered territories.[1] The work was structured as an all-comprehensive work – systematically describing all of the sea-facing countries between the Red Sea and the Great China Seas area, and, upon completion, appeared as the earliest extensive narrative about the East Indies to ever be composed by a Portuguese. The *Suma Oriental* included a brief reference to Japan, mentioned in the variation "Jampon", presumably based on Malay or on some Chinese coastal dialect (Lach 1965, 652), with an added brief description, that Pires possibly derived from local traders, or from the "Gores" that regularly traded with the area. "Jampon" is compared with the "Liu Kiu" (or "Lequeos" – i.e., Ryūkyū) islands, and said to be larger and more powerful, but not devoted to trade – even with China, of which it is stated to be vassal – because of a lack of necessary ship-building technology. According to the description by Pires, the "Luçoes" actively purchased gold and copper directly by Japan, in exchange for their local products (cloth, fishnets, but also foodstuff, wax and honey) (Cortesão 1944, 131).

The fact that the thriving maritime Japanese activities in the China Seas were apparently not known to Pires was maybe due to the fact that merchants from the Ryūkyū Islands and Japan – the "Gores" mentioned by Pires, with whom the Portuguese had dealt ever since their arrival in Malacca – as well as Chinese coastal merchants, had purposefully misdirected their European competitors, so as to protect their trade.[2] What is striking is, however, that in spite of the growingly strong position of the Portuguese in the China Seas, mentions of Japan are conspicuously absent from all Portuguese reports composed in the first half of the sixteenth century, aside for the reference in Pires' work.

Oliveira e Costa (2007, 44) argues that, at this point in history, very little was probably known about the archipelago even in India and eastern Asia – actually adhering, in this assumption, to Pires' own representation of Japan as basically isolated, and eclipsed from the eyes of the outside world by the Ryūkyū islands, which presumably functioned as a commer-

1 An annotated modern English translation of the *Suma Oriental* has been realized by Armando Cortesão, on the base of a codex he found in Paris in 1937 (a manuscript copy of the original one composed by Pires). The work was published, in two volumes, by the Haykluyt Society, also including the "Book" by Francisco Rodriguez, a Portuguese pilot who left a number of nautical maps and annotations, as well as panoramic drawings, that were originally incorporated in the codex. The work appears in the final bibliography as Cortesão 1944.

2 And, probably, this misdirection had some part in the Portuguese temporary dismissal of Japan as a possible commercial partner, which prevented them from venturing towards the archipelago before the fortuitous landing in Tanegashima. More simply, though, the Portuguese might have refrained from pursuing the route to the archipelago because it would have been an hazard for them to venture there without a solid expectation of profit – as not only, as seen before, their resources were limited (both in terms of finances and manpower) but their position in the China Seas was not as secure as in the Indian Ocean (Massarella 1990, 23).

cial intermediary for the archipelago. Given the context provided by the greater China Seas region, however, this is improbable, also considering that it is known that notice of the archipelago had actually reached Western Asia as early as in the ninth century A.D., brought back from the Kingdom of Silla by Persian merchants.[3] The lack of references to Japan in European literature before the mid-sixteenth century can be more easily explained as a side-effect of the more general political stance of the Portuguese crown toward the territories belonging to its alleged sphere of influence. In other words, the lack of knowledge filtered into works divulged in Europe was probably the result of a deliberate policy of control on information from the part of Portuguese authorities. The Papal Bulls issued in the second half of the fifteenth century, aimed at sanctioning the Portuguese rights in Africa and Asia, echo Portugal's monopolistic aspirations. It is likely that such a stance would also translate in the attempt to prevent information about the new Asian commercial routes from leaking in the hands of Spanish merchants and of other European commercial competitors.[4]

The effects of this policy on the editorial world are evident: in spite of the impact of the Portuguese expansion in terms of the integration of Europe into a wider market,[5] a comparatively small amount of new publications about Japan (and Asia in general) was issued in Europe, before the 1550s. To quote Lach,

> It is hard to believe that chance alone is sufficient to account for the fact that not a single work on the new discoveries in Asia is known to have been published in Portugal between 1500 and mid-century. […] Treatises on Portugal's military and political establishments in the East were left unpublished, many of them not being printed until recent times. It seems highly likely that the chroniclers feared or were forbidden to include information in their account which was classifies as a state secret. (Lach 1965, 153)

3 The merchants might have heard about the archipelago while on the Korean peninsula, or even have crossed the sea and personally reached it. The information they reported, still extremely vague and often erroneous, was the source for the Persian writer Ibn Khurdadhbih, who wrote of the archipelago in his *Kitāb al-Masālik w'al- Mamālik* (Book of Roads and Provinces), composed between 844 and 886. He named it Wakwak, a rendition of *wa-koku* (another Chinese name for the archipelago), and described it, much as in later representations, as a land rich in gold (Massarella 1990, 10).

4 Starting with King Manuel who, on November 13, 1504, ordered by decree that complete secrecy was to be maintained over the oceanic navigations, under penance of death For a more complete overview of the measures taken by the Portuguese Crown to ensure secrecy, see Lach (1965, 151-4).

5 The economic effects on Europe of the intercourse with Asia in the sixteenth century have been analyzed at length by O'Rourke and Williamson (2002, 2009).

The *Suma Oriental* itself had a very tortuous editorial history. Likely, Pires sent it back to Europe by the end of the 1510s, before leaving Cochin for China, but it was not until 1550, when Giovanni Battista Ramusio included a (incomplete) translation of the work in the first edition of his *Navigationi et Viaggi*, that the content of the book was finally put to print.[6]

This policy did not undergo any significant change, even after the first recorded landing of Portuguese natives in Japan. In 1543, a Chinese junk carrying three Portuguese merchants shipwrecked on the island of Tanegashima, in south-eastern Kyūshū. The Europeans on board seemingly made a strong impression on the local population of Tanegashima, and during the time necessary for the repair of the ship, they were not only able to participate in the lucrative commercial exchange engaged by its crew with the local population – where most of the junk's cargo was sold at a highly profitable price – but were also received in the residence of the local lord Tanegashima Tokitaka, in Akōgi. The encounter at Tanegashima held some unprecedented consequences for Japan. The lord of the island, upon receiving the three Portuguese, showed interest in the muskets they were carrying with them and, after a demonstration of their use, agreed to purchase one, or possibly two of them, for a considerable sum – so as to be able to reproduce and use them in his ongoing battle with the Nejime lord for control on Yakushima Island. The weapon, which was to be named *tanegashima teppō* (or *tanegashima* or *teppō*) became a key factor in the wars that divided the *daimyō* (feudal lords) of Japan, giving a significant advantage to all the domains (starting with Satsuma, to which Tanegashima was tributary) that were able to afford its production) (Lidin 2002, 3).[7] European merchants were promptly roused to interest by this new possibility for gain, and word of their discoveries quickly spread among other Portuguese, so that, even before the end of the 1540s, many travellers had followed on their wake.

Among them was, notably, Fernão Mendez Pinto, a Portuguese of lowly origins who, in search for fortune, had reached India in 1537, and made a living out various activities, ranging from soldier, to merchant, to missionary, amassing quite a fortune. Pinto stayed in Asia until 1558, and, in the intervening years travelled four times to Japan, the last time in official

6 Ramusio's work, however, did not include the name of the author, which in part explains why the *Suma Oriental* has remained quite obscure until fairly recent times. For a discussion of the editorial history of the *Suma Oriental*, see the introduction to Cortesão 1944.

7 In a context of thriving cultural and commercial exchanges, Portuguese merchants almost surely had, even before the 1540s, come in contact with Japanese natives – and it is not unthinkable that some of them might have reached Japan even before 1543. There is, however, no record of any such enterprise. Unrecorded direct contacts may have occurred on the archipelago, but the encounter at Tanegashima could as easily have been the actual first European landing in Japan (Massarella 1990, 23).

capacity – as ambassador for the viceroy, in charge with the task of establishing diplomatic relationships between the *Estado da India* and Japan. Pinto also entertained close relationships with the Society of Jesus and helped their cause, after befriending Xavier on his third trip to Japan (in 1551) and lending him the money for the construction of the first Christian church to be built there. This put him in a peculiar position compared to other Portuguese travellers stationed in the Indies in his time. After that moment, his activities became closely entangled with those of the Society of Jesus. He actually joined the order in 1554, and provided for the above mentioned evangelical and diplomatic mission to Japan to which he, himself, took part. Before returning to Europe, however, he willingly left the Society, for reasons not completely clear, and, in his later writings, his stance towards the Jesuits actually appears to be quite critical. As Catz (1990, XV) observes, he, in opposition, represents the pagans (and in particular the Chinese), as a sort of utopian society, governed by the laws of God in spite of having never heard of Christ.[8]

Pinto would use the first-hand knowledge collected during his travels for his renown account, the *Peregrinação*, one of the richest sources on Asia produced by the mid-sixteenth century.[9] In light of his first-hand experience with Japan, his work conveys a richer image of the archipelago than the one delivered in Pires' work. All of his four journeys are included in the narrative (as well as a brief description of the Ryūkyū islands). Pinto relates about the first encounter of the Portuguese with the Japanese in Tanegashima, about the events that piqued Xavier's interest toward the archipelago, and about the first phases of the Christian mission there. He accounts for the religious disputation between Francis Xavier and the Japanese Buddhist Priest in Bungo, and also relates about the diplomatic mission to the same court of Bungo, a few years later.[10]

As Lidin (2002, 71) underlines in his overview of Pinto's four Japanese visits, however, even in Pinto's narrative about Japan truth and fiction are strictly interwoven (as they are in his writings about Asia in general). He does include 'factual' geographical knowledge about Japan, and his description of his last voyage seems truthful, but many doubts arise about the dates and circumstances of his travels. If one were to take his narrative

8 Catz deems this stance as exceptional, but actually – putting aside the criticism towards the missionaries' methods – many of Pinto's points would be echoed by the descriptions of the Japanese population included in the Jesuit literature of the sixteenth century. They also had an antecedent in some of the above described medieval narratives about the 'East', and more generally in Thomist thought.

9 For an English translation of Pinto's account and for an in-depth treatment of his life and travels, see Catz 1990.

10 For an English translation of the section of Pinto's work centered on Japan, see Catz 1990, 272-87; 445-519.

at face value, in fact, Pinto would have personally witnessed all the major occurrences in the first steps of the Portuguese intercourse with Japan. Pinto places himself as part of the first group of Portuguese merchants landing in Tanegashima, together with a Diogo Zeimoto and a Cristovão Borralho – this is, however, doubtful, even if he must have reached Japan for the first time soon afterwards. He also allegedly, according to his writings, was part of the crew that brought Yajirō (a Japanese convert who had fled from justice in Japan, and who would be, as we will see, instrumental to prompting Xavier to travel to Jaan) from Japan to Xavier, and he was not far from the place where Xavier died in 1552. One might say that Pinto experimented in the ambiguity that would become common in the editorial genre of *historia* (which, sometimes under the title *cronica* or *relatione*, would come to include most of the travel narratives of the sixteenth century): the term stands in fact for a "form of writing codified by tradition and supposedly grounded in truth, reality, objectivity. […] But 'historia', much like today's 'storia', was used at the time to mean both history and narrative fiction" (Pallotta 1992, 349).

The presence of such an extensive narrative on Japan by a Portuguese man who was not (properly) a missionary is, all in all, more an exception than a rule, even as far as the second half of the sixteenth century is concerned. On the other hand, in the above mentioned climate of censorship, the account by Fernão Mendez Pinto was destined to an unfortunate editorial history. It was in fact never put to print during the life-time of the writer, but only by 1614. His association with the Jesuits might have allowed him to make profit of their channels of editorial distribution, but a reason for the delay was possibly the satirical stance adopted by the writer towards the political and religious institutions of sixteenth-century Portugal. Pinto's work is, as mentioned above, peculiar for his time, in that

> the author is extremely critical – though never openly – of the overseas action of the Portuguese, whose self-proclaimed mission to conquer and convert all non-Christian people with whom they came in contact, was viewed, within the fiction of the work, as a false and corrupt ideal. This is what sets Pinto apart from his contemporaries, because he alone, had the courage to question the morality of the overseas conquests, which he condemns as acts of barbaric piracy. (Catz 1991, 501).

After its publication, Pinto's work actually enjoyed great fortune in Europe for the greatest part of the seventeenth century. However, its mixed nature – chronicle, embellished with fiction – made it so that it was not received in the way the author had originally intended it. The account was viewed more as an imaginative adventure book than as a realistic portrait of the author's experience in Asia. Also due to such reception, and to the many faulty and revised translations, its popularity eventually faded (Catz 1990, XV).

Another notable traveller of the mid-sixteenth century was captain Jorge Álvares,[11] who reached Japan with his three-ships fleet in 1546 and travelled extensively along the coast of Kyūshū (without, however, significantly penetrating inland). Álvares was author of another narrative on Japan – produced upon his return to Malacca in 1547 under open request by the Jesuit Francis Xavier. Álvares' report included information about a wide variety of matters, ranging from the Japanese physical appearance, to religion, to architecture, to customs (food and forms of sustenance in general, houses, manners, execution of justice). He noted the treatment of foreigners from the part of the Japanese to be remarkably open in comparison to other Asian populations – with the same hospitality expected whenever the Japanese were invited on board of the Portuguese ships. The focus of the report, probably because it was meant to be received by Xavier, was actually, for the major part, on topics on which the Jesuit themselves would dwell plenty in their letters (even if not always with the same conclusions).[12] Contrary to subsequent Jesuit letters, however, the report by Álvares was never published, even if part of its contents later resonated in the letters written by Xavier.[13] The report was sent by Xavier to the central authorities of the Company of Jesus in Rome, from where it was further circulated among the members of the order, becoming the first item in a huge pile of documentation collected by the Jesuits of Japan – without, however, reaching out of the circles of the Society to the general public (Lach 1965, 657).

After the mid-sixteenth century, Japan ended up offering to Portuguese merchants one of their most crucial sources of profit in the China Seas. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the demand for silver in China was rising at a steady pace, as the result of the growing diffusion of money-use.[14] The Chinese production of silver could not match such needs as, after a mining boom in the early sixteenth century, the level of productivity of the local mines fell to an inappreciable amount. On the other hand, by the 1530s, a number of gold and silver mining sites began to be opened throughout Japan – making the archipelago one of the primary producers in the Great China Seas area. Their development, undertaken by the warring *daimyō* in response to the financial necessities imposed by their

11 Not to be misunderstood for his namesake, who had reached China in 1513 and was by the 1540s long dead.

12 A transcription of Álvares' report can be found in Izawa 1969 (240-57). An English overview of the text can also be found in Boxer 1951 (32-6).

13 A comparison between Álvares' report and Xavier's letters can be found in Ellis 2003.

14 Which was, in turn, the result of a revolution in commerce, caused by the "monetization of public finance as well as private exchange, dissolution of servile social relations and the emergence of free labor markets, regional specialization in agricultural and handicraft production, rural market integration, and the stimulus of foreign trade" (Von Glahn 1996, 432).

military operations, resulted not only, as Kobata (1965) underlines,[15] in the creation of a unified gold and silver-based currency system – perfected by the seventeenth century, thanks to the high value attributed to the two metals as the base for monetary exchange and to the unified financial system set in place by the Tokugawa – but also in the integration of Japan into the world silver market. While Japanese silver was not directly exported in Europe, its trade came in fact to occupy an important position both in the general East Asian trade and in the European East Asian trade. In 1539, the tributary exchanges between China and Japan were put to a stop, but this did not put off the trade between the continent and the archipelago. On the contrary, the exchanges thrived, left in the hands of Asian private seafarers – in particular, merchants from the Southern Chinese provinces, such as Chekiang, Fukien and Kwangtung, who, eluding the bans, traded Chinese products in exchange for the metal. By the end of the 1540s, hundreds of ships were routinely travelling back and forth from the continent to the archipelago (Atwell 1982, 70). The growing illicit trade elicited concern in the Ming authorities, and this resulted in a stricter enforcement of the Chinese bans over commerce. In this context, the exchanges with Japan emerged as a most profitable venture for the Portuguese merchants. The demand for Chinese products grew steadily, also bolstered, in the later decades of the century, by the subsequent rise to power in Japan of political leaders such as Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), who actively sought the development of mining technology and of foreign trade as a way to finance their military ambitions.[16] The desirability of the trade soon prompted the authorities of the *Estado da India* to set up a more defined and centralized structure for the exchanges: while for the first decade individual Portuguese ships had carried their private ventures to Japan in something of an unregulated way, in the 1550s, by the time the outpost in Macao was created, the reins of the commerce were firmly taken by the hands of the Portuguese Crown. A primary necessity for the authorities of the *Estado* was to regulate the commerce so that the offer of silk would not come to exceed the (albeit huge) demand in Japan, resulting in an uncontrolled lowering of the prices. The frequency of the exchanges was therefore limited to only one voyage per year, to be conducted on a designated carrack (*náo*), by a captain-major directly appointed by the Crown. The captain was responsible for both the trip to Japan and the settlement in Macao. While he was out of the port, the outpost was theoretically bound to be left in the hands of a *Senado*, put in charge of its government *ad interim*, but the Captain did not actually always make the voyage himself, and often sold the privilege

15 On mining, see also Kobata 1968. On the silver trade, see Kobata 1976.

16 See Cooper 1972 for a general overview of the Macao-Nagasaki commerce.

to bidders – not without instances of corruption (Boxer 1969, 33-4).[17] The voyage of the carrack started from Goa, from where the designated ship usually left charged with Indonesian spices. It made a first stop in Macao, from where the crew had access to the annual Guangzhou trade fair, where they traded the spices for silk, as well as gold, ceramics, medicine, and other Chinese products. The ship then headed to Japan, where the Chinese products were traded for the Japanese silver. In China, the metal would be sold for more silk, to be shipped again to Japan or to be directed in Europe via Goa. The round-trip from Goa to Japan could take a period varying from eighteen months to three years, according to the length of the stay of the ship in Macao and Japan (which, in turn, depended on whether the ship missed the monsoons) (Cullen 2003, 22).

In the Japanese archipelago, the commerce interested at first several ports of Kyūshū – most notably Hirado and Kagoshima, but also Yokose and Fukuda. Since the year 1570, however, Nagasaki became the chosen location for the exchanges. The local *daimyō*, the Christian convert Ōmura Sumitada, bestowed to the Jesuit fathers (who, as we will see, had reached the archipelago by the end of the 1540s) the permission to build a port in the area – specifically so as to receive the Portuguese ships – and in 1580 handed to the Society of Jesus the right to manage it, in exchange for the custom dues paid both by the Portuguese and the Japanese merchants using it. The city, for almost ten years, functioned as a sort of 'semi-colony', where the administration and military power was left in the hands of the Jesuits.[18]

17 The regulations put in place by the Portuguese authorities in Macao did not obliterate every form of exchange by Portuguese merchants operating outside the control of the Crown. The trade was effectively concentrated on the Macao-Nagasaki route – and both cities grew exponentially thanks to it, so that, when the commerce was put to an end, less than a century later, they had grown out of their status of small fishing villages, to become thriving ports – but while it was possible to control the flow of ships and goods leaving Macao, it was not as easy to prevent merchants from shipping goods to Japan via other countries. Still, the role of Captain was an extremely desirable one, as it granted, to whoever performed it, the right to retain – together with the incomes derived by his own private ventures – a percentage of about 10% of the profit made by selling the cargo in Japan (Takase 2002, 4).

18 The status of Nagasaki as a colony was however, much as in Macao's case, never made official. Even though the city fell under the administration of the Jesuits, its real sovereignty still pertained to the Ōmura family (Yasutaka 2010, 119). For a discussion of the circumstances that led to the founding of the port and to its administration by the Society of Jesus, see Pacheco 1970. The Jesuits would keep playing an important role as intermediaries in the commerce, even after Toyotomi Hideyoshi took control over the port in 1587, during his campaign for the unification of Kyūshū. The association of the Portuguese merchants with Christian religion would in fact, in the end, cost them their presence in Japan, after the beginning of the persecutions against the Christians on the archipelago. By 1636, their presence in Japan had been limited to the artificial island of Dejima, in Nagasaki harbour. The Shimabara rebellion, between 1637 and 1638, further worsened their stance. The rebellion was the final culmination of a building unrest among the peasants of the Shima-

After the establishment of the Macao-Nagasaki trade, the Portuguese policy of control on information appeared to grow more lenient. By the mid-sixteenth century, it had become clear that it would be impossible to stop other European competitors from coming to exert a growing influence on the East Asian trade – and the pressure of Asian sailors, merchants and pirates (who kept effectively challenging Portuguese dominance), had been doubled by that of Spanish sailors and merchants (soon to be flanked by Dutch and English seamen). On the other hand, the quantity of new first-hand material on Japan produced by Portuguese merchants remained scarce. One reason for this might be that, while in Europe the restrictions about the publication of material related to Asia were eased, Portuguese merchants operating in East Asia still held some reserve about divulging information on the country that had become one of their most important sources of income in Asia. As Cooper (1992, 265) underlines, moreover, few Portuguese merchants actually resided over long periods in Japan, meaning that the amount of knowledge amassed by them was not necessarily significant. This was combined with the difficulty in handling an efficient system for correspondence with Europe, that might have discouraged most of them from sending back information to their native lands (considering that merchants lacked the kind of strategic motivation that would prompt, instead, the missionaries to perfect their system of intelligence). In this regard, one should also mention that most of the Portuguese merchants were based in the same city, Nagasaki, making it also unnecessary for them to resort to correspondence on a regular basis for matters of practical communication (contrary to what would happen with the Dutch and the British in the seventeenth century). Nevertheless, in the new economical (and editorial) climate, some works that had been completed in the first half of the century but had

bara peninsula and the Amakusa Islands (later joined by the lordless *samurai* of the area), vexed by the excessive taxation, imposed to cover the costs for a number of construction projects initiated by the local Matsukura *daimyō* family, and totalling about 70 percent of the whole peasants' produce (Laver 2011, 129). The discontent was also exacerbated by the strict religious persecutions enacted by the Matsukura *daimyō* – in an area that had once belonged to the Christian Arima family and where, in spite of the ban on Christianity, a strong underground Christian movement still persisted. This is why when, in 1637, the unrest was brought to a climax and the uprising began in full force, the rebelling forces were immediately associated with Christianity, even though the veracity of this association is unsure: many of the local peasants' families were Christians, and Christian images and symbols were used by the rebels, but it is doubtful how deeply the element of Christianity ran in the rebellion as an ideological foundation and at an organisational level. The connection between the Shimabara rebels and the Portuguese merchants of Dejima was not a close one – as it basically only amounted, so far as it is known, to their sharing of Christian beliefs – but it was enough to elicit repression from the part of the *bakufu*. The suppression of the rebellion preluded therefore to the enforcement of a more strict policy of control on trade, that directly affected the Portuguese – who, from 1640 onward, were officially banned from the country. The matter is discussed in Kanda 2005.

not reached the hands of publishers, and new ones based on information that had been collected in the previous decades, but that had never seen the light, could finally be put to print.

Two notable examples were the *História do descobrimento e conquista da Índia pelos portugueses*, a treatise about the expansion of the Portuguese empire, composed by the historian Fernão Lopes de Castanheda (1500-1559), and the *Decadas da Asia*, a work of similar purpose by the Portuguese humanist João de Barros (1496-1570). Castanheda's work was largely based on information personally collected by the author during a ten-year stay (from 1528 to 1538) in the Indies, and further expanded, upon his return to Portugal, with other first-hand accounts from travellers that had similarly ventured to Asia. Barros, on the other hand, had never personally lived in Asia (except for a brief voyage to Guinea), but he enjoyed the patronage of the Crown and acted for a period as treasurer of the *Casa da India*, being therefore privy of part of the information collected in its archives (Boxer 1981, 98). The first volume of Castanheda's work was printed in 1551, and six others followed during his lifetime (to which an eight printed volume was added posthumously, by interception of Castanheda's son). The first volume was translated into several European languages, and all the seven volumes published antemortem were issued into an Italian edition (translated by Alfonso Ulloa) in 1577. The first three books composing Barros' *Decadas* were published between 1552 and 1563, while the fourth was published posthumously (the draft of a fifth volume was also produced before his death, which was put to print as late as 1615). Part of the work was included, in translation, in the 1554 edition of Ramusio's *Navigationi et Viaggi*, and the first two *decadas* were rendered into Italian by the same Ulloa that would later translate Castanheda, in 1562 – testifying a certain editorial success.[19]

Even if both works were only published for the first time around 1550, the central bulk of Castanheda's history was ready by 1539 when he came back from Asia, and the same was true, apparently, for the basic draft of the one by Barros. The two works, in this sense, did not go far enough to cover the first years of direct interaction between Portugal and Japan, and both include only scattered references to the Japanese archipelago. Barros' work was later reprised by Diogo do Couto (1542-1616), a Portuguese historian who spent most of his life in India, and worked as keeper of the archives in Goa and as an official chronicler of the Portuguese Empire. He wrote eleven *Decadas*, (four of which were published during his lifetime, between 1602 and 1616), but his history did not add much about Japan to what Barros had written – while, in the meantime, a flow of

19 For a more in-depth overview in the editorial history of the works, also in light of other Iberian publications about Asia produced in the second half of the sixteenth century, see Lach 1965, 181-97. For a comparative insight on the contents of the works, see Boxer 1981, 97-129.

Jesuit writings about the archipelago had already reached the European continent (Lach, Van Kley 1998a, 314-15).

In this sense, Portuguese merchants never became a primary source of information on Japan for the European public, even after the establishment of a steady flow of commercial relationships. On the other hand, it was in a climate more favourable to the circulation of information that, with the landing of Francis Xavier in Kagoshima, the institutionalized system for correspondence operated by the Society of Jesus came to include Japan, and it was precisely through the Jesuits that a more in-depth knowledge about the archipelago began to be relayed to Europe.

2.2 The Spanish Competition: Circulation of Spanish Sources on Japan in the Sixteenth Century

In the short term, the Portuguese accomplishments following Da Gama's return from his first voyage around Africa had managed to sideline the Castilians – who were still struggling, at the time, with making profit of their newly acquired territorial possessions in America. Already by 1519, however, the Spanish Crown, in the person of Charles I of Spain, had started promoting a new quest for the East Indies. The voyage, put under the command of the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellano and bound to reach the 'Spice Islands' in the Pacific, was not to be conducted around Africa – as the eastward route had been put under Portuguese control by the treaty of Tordesillas – but via Brasil. The expedition did reach the East Asian Seas and came, in 1521, in sight of the group of Islands that would by 1545 be known as the Philippines (Filipina). In 1524, at the congress of Badajoz, the Spanish Crown claimed sovereignty over them, as well as on the Moluccas and on a wide section of China's eastern coast.[20] In the following decades, several expeditions left the American continent for Asia and battles were engaged with the Portuguese in the area so as to bring consequence to the Spanish claims, but the failure to find a return passage from the East Indies through the Pacific put the Spanish at a serious disadvantage (Headley 1995, 628). At last, in 1545, the Spanish explorer Ruy Lopez de Villalobos was able to report a first victory against the Portuguese in the Moluccas, and, in 1565, an expedition commanded by Miguel López de Legazpi (accompanied by the Augustinian Andrés de Urdaneta) managed to extend the Spanish authority over the Philippines. In 1571, the islands were made headquarter of the Spanish East Indies – with Legazpi appointed as governor, and the city of Manila, founded on the location

20 Arguing, to support its ambitions, that the line of demarcation established at Tordesillas run through the tip of the Malay peninsula. See in this regard Headley 1995.

of a large agricultural and fishing village in the island of Luzon, elected as capital. Manila soon grew as another fundamental centre for the East Asian bullion trade – where silver brought from Mexico and Bolivia was purchased by Chinese merchants in exchange for Asian products, such as silk and porcelain.[21]

It was mainly thanks to this role in the South America-China trade that the Spanish settlement in the city also attracted the attention of Japanese merchants. Ever since the 1550s, the flourishing Portuguese commerce with Nagasaki made it clear for the Spanish just how profitable the establishment of a commercial relationship with the Japanese archipelago could be. And, while Spain still needed to thread very carefully in the East Asian waters, so as not to break the agreements made in Tordesillas,[22] even before 1571, a growing number of Japanese private traders began to venture towards the Philippines, and to engage in commerce with the islands of Luzon and Mindoro. The trade involved the purchase, from the part of Japanese merchants, of gold, honey and (later in the century, thanks to the growing Chinese presence in Manila) of raw silk, in exchange for silver. It lured the interest not only of the Spanish settlers of the Philippine Islands, but also of those Portuguese who were not able to take part in the institutional Macao-Nagasaki trade, and therefore found in Manila an alternative way to ship their goods to Japan.[23]

The exchanges were never made official, and in spite of the pressures of the Spanish merchants in Manila and of the huge number of Japanese ships travelling to and from the Philippines, the movement, at least as far as the sixteenth century was concerned, never became mutual. Even after the unification of the Portuguese and Spanish Crowns in 1580 – when king Phillip II of Spain began promoting the establishment of diplomatic and religious contacts between Japan and the Philippines (so as to support the expansion of the Christian missions of Manila) – the military and civil authorities of the city remained cautious toward the perspective of an opening of the trade, in fear of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's desire of expansion (Boxer 1986, 8). The fear was not unjustified. When Spanish vessels did

21 A great number of Chinese immigrants made their way to Manila, to reap the profits of the commerce, so that actually, by the end of the sixteenth century, the city resembled more to a Chinese colony than to a Spanish outpost. On the administration of Manila and the Chinese presence, see Headley 1995 (633-5); Doeppers 1972.

22 Establishing the exact location of the line of demarcation for the spheres of influence established in Tordesillas remained a sensible issue between Portugal and Spain throughout the sixteenth century, and one that involved much bending of cartographical notions in favour of one part or the other. See in this regard Bernard, Tientsin 1938; Headley 1995.

23 And, sometimes, even of those who did have the possibilities to take part in the official trade. In 1588, for example, the Portuguese captain Jeronimo Pereira renounced to the possibility of participating in the Nagasaki trade so as to sell his goods in Manila (Bernard, Tientsin 1938, 119).

reach the Japanese archipelago, circumstances were not always fortunate for them, as when the Spanish galleon San Felipe, travelling from Manila to Acapulco, shipwrecked on the coast of the Tosa domain, and Toyotomi Hideyoshi ordered for the crew to be imprisoned, and for the cargo and the personal belongings of the people on board to be confiscated, and divided among himself and the *daimyō* of Tosa.[24] After Hideyoshi's death, Tokugawa Ieyasu kept, above all in the opening years of his rule, a more open attitude toward the Spaniards (as well as, more generally, toward all the foreign forces at play in the China Seas). Hideyoshi's attitude in the last years of his rule, however, had heightened the caution of the authorities in Manila, so that, even after his death, when his ambitions no longer menaced the Philippine islands, their approach to commerce with Japan remained cautious. In the long run, as in the case of the Portuguese, the Spanish merchants' associations with the Christian orders trying to penetrate the archipelago from the Philippines became a cause of tensions with the Japanese authorities, further limiting their agency in Japan – until in 1624, as a consequence of alleged intrigues hatched by the missionaries, the Spaniards were finally banned from the country.[25]

All in all, given these premises, the Spanish settlers in the Philippines never became a real threat to the Portuguese predominance in the China Seas area. This also explains why the contribute of Spanish merchants to the written sources about Japan that were divulged in Europe never assumed relevant proportions.

The Castillans had, possibly, already gathered indirect information about the archipelago, ever since the members of Magellano's expedition had reached the Philippine Islands in the first half of the century. The Venetian scholar Antonio Pigafetta, who had travelled with Magellano's crew, produced a direct account of the voyage, the *Relazione del primo viaggio intorno al mondo*. The work, while composed in Italian, was first published in French translation (Pigafetta 1525) and only later appeared in its origi-

24 The subsequent petitions from the part of the Spanish captain of the ship, Matias de Randecho, for the recovery of the cargo only served to reignite Hideyoshi's aversion towards the Christians in Japan, giving way, on February 5, 1597, to the martyrdom of twenty-six Christians – six Franciscan missionaries who had acted as intermediaries in the negotiations with Hideyoshi (four Spaniards, one Mexican and one Indian), three Japanese Jesuits and seventeen Japanese Franciscan laymen. Even though, by April of the same year, the San Felipe was repaired and its crew was accorded the permission to leave, Hideyoshi never agreed to return the cargo or the bodies of the martyrs, in spite of any subsequent diplomatic attempts from the part of the authorities in Manila. Hideyoshi's hostility towards the Spaniards might have been at least partly provoked by their Portuguese competitors spreading alarming information about them in order to protect their monopoly. For an in depth account and discussion of the San Felipe incident, see Matsuda 1967. A contemporary accounts of the martyrdom of the twenty-six Christians can be found in Frois 1599.

25 For an overview of the commercial relationships between the Spanish in Manila and Japan in the seventeenth century, see Takase 2002, 88-120.

nal language (Pigafetta 1536).[26] He, however, reported only in passing of Japan. He identified it as 'Cipangu' and misplaced it near the Western shores of America. This is a sign that he probably still relied more on information included in Marco Polo's writings than on accounts collected during his travels. As Caputo (2016, 131) suggests, he was also possibly trying to preserve the 'myth' of the golden land of Cipangu, in the face of recent geographical advancements.

In 1546, a few years after the first Portuguese landing on the Japanese archipelago, the above mentioned explorer Villalobos and the men that accompanied his expedition were also able to collect second-hand information about Japan, during their stay in Tidore.[27] This knowledge was given written form in what is actually the earliest detailed European report on the Japanese archipelago – compiled by one of the members of Villalobos' crew, the Spanish Garcia Escalante De Alvarado, and sent to the Viceroy of Mexico from Lisbon in 1548. The report reveals that the Castillans had been able to gather that Japan was divided in a number of territorial domains governed by *daimyō*, even though it was not clear where their king resided. They had also learned that the villages on the coast were very small and relied on agriculture and fishing for a living, and that the chosen weapons in fighting were bow and arrows – which had apparently led Villalobos to conclude that the country did not have to be particularly rich (as the Portuguese had done before on the base of the information they had gathered in Malacca) and that a more lucrative commerce could perhaps be established with the Ryūkyū Islands, whose role in the East Asian trade at the time had not yet come to suffer from the European competition. The Japanese language was reported to be close to Chinese, and, peculiarly, to German. As for the population, it was described as 'white' (a characteristic that was particularly stressed in reference to local women) and 'well-disposed'.[28] As Lach (1965, 655) underlines, Escalante's ability to compile a relatively detailed report right after the landing of the first Portuguese on the archipelago might in itself be a sign that the Spaniards had collected more knowledge about Japan, in the decades preceding direct intercourse with the country, than one might assume. It is, however, hard to establish to which point the account by Escalante was actually

26 An English, annotated translation of Pigafetta's account (first composed in vernacular Italian with the title *Relazione del primo viaggio intorno al mondo*), is included, together with an overview of the fortune of the book and a general chronology of Magellano's voyage, in Cachey 2007.

27 One primary source was the report by Pero Diez, a Galician from Monterrey who had actually been in Japan in 1544 (Lach 1965, 655).

28 An English translation of the report can be found in Dahlgren 1912-13, 239-60. Such characteristics – whiteness, and good disposition – would also recur, as we will see and comment in the following chapter, also in later writings by the Jesuit missionaries stationed in Japan.

distributed in Europe, or more generally outside the circles of the Iberian Crown. Surely, as it was not given to print, it did not exert great impact in comparison to the narratives of the Iberian (Portuguese and Spanish) and Italian missionaries of the second half of the sixteenth century.

Aside from Escalante's account about Japan, most of what has been left by Spanish merchants and diplomats and lay residents in the Philippines amounts to the contemporary epistolary exchange between the authorities of Manila and Philip II of Spain. The correspondence, started as early as the 1560s, bears testimony of the exchanges between Japanese traders and the Spanish settlement.[29] While the letters are helpful to contemporary historians to recreate the course of the relationships, however, they were not reproduced in printed editions, and it is doubtful that the majority of them would have actually circulated among the European public.

2.3 Cartography on Japan in the Sixteenth Century

One field that was inevitably affected by the Portuguese (and to a lesser extent the Spanish) expansion in Asia was that of cartography. On the other hand, the inability of printed maps to capture up-to-date information was all the more evident in the case of Japan, whose representation lagged behind the discoveries for several decades.

The archipelago, as seen above, only seldom appears in the planispheres produced in the second half of the fifteenth century. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, a growing number of maps and atlases began instead to depict Japan, sometimes with the addition of brief geographical descriptions. The information they included, however, is still rough and inaccurate. As Caputo (2016, 39) underlines, a common denominator between the way Japan was depicted before and after the sixteenth century in cartography is the way 'Japan' works more as a projection of European myths and desires than as a real entity, even in the face of the

29 A sample of the correspondence – in the original Spanish language and Japanese translation – is included in Igawa 2010. A letter dated 1567, and written by Legazpi, already includes mention of Chinese and Japanese ships coming, on an annual basis, to the Philippines (and, as observed by Igawa, while it is not clear when these exchanges began exactly, the fact that they are referred to as 'annual' implies a regularity that suggest they had been going on for some years, possibly ever since the mid-1560s, when the Spanish Crown had established its power in the area). The most detailed accounts are those by the hands of the merchant Bernardino de Avila Girón, who resided, off and on, in Nagasaki between 1594 and 1619, and by the shipwrecked diplomat Rodrigo de Vivero y Velasco. The Italian merchant Francesco Carletti also travelled from the Philippines to Nagasaki, where he stayed between 1597 and 1598 and left an account of Japan, that was however given to print only much later. The account is discussed in depth in Caputo 2016, 273-320.

diffusion of 'factual' knowledge about the archipelago.[30]

This emerges in a very early example of world map including a depiction of Japan, the one realized by the German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller – whose first edition was published in 1507.[31] The planisphere, a wall map in twelve sheets, was part of an ambitious project put in place by the Gymnasium Vosagense, a group of humanists operating under the patronage of Duke René of Lorraine, who aimed at documenting the geographical discoveries perpetrated in the last decades of the fifteenth century by both the Spanish and the Portuguese Crowns in the Atlantic Ocean. The map is emblematic of the way in which, in the sixteenth century, the geographical and cartographical production on Japan negotiated between the new knowledge resulting from the discoveries and more traditional narratives (in a context where literature and geography where still strictly linked). Waldseemüller and the other members of the group were privy to some of the more up-to-date information brought back from the New World, including Amerigo Vespucci's account his voyage of 1501-02 – the map include, as a matter of fact, one of the earliest mentions of the word 'America' in reference to the New World, that was, for the first time, clearly represented as a separate entity from Asia, as a further step away from medieval cartographical conventions (Johnson 2006, 3-4). The knowledge about Asia that emerges from the map is, however, far less current. In particular, the way Japan is represented still appears to largely rely on the Marco Polo tradition, rather than on information directly collected by Portuguese merchants and sailors in the Indian Ocean. The country is represented as a single island, and named Zipangri, probably as a variation of the term 'Cipangu'. It Is located in the Northern hemisphere – and not facing China's southern provinces as in Marco Polo's description – but its distance from the continent is still overestimated.

Even after 1511 and the conquest of Malacca, that granted to Portuguese ships access to the Indian Ocean, cartographical representations of Japan remained scattered and imprecise. In 1528, a map and a description of Japan were included in the first edition of the *Isolario* by Benedetto Bordone – a work aimed at offering an overview of all the known insular countries of the time.[32] The book was the second *Isolario* ever put to

30 For a more complete overview of the earliest existing printed maps including the Japanese archipelago, see Walter 1994.

31 Of this edition, only one copy remains. It can be accessed on line via the Library of Congress site. URL `http://www.loc.gov/rr/geogmap/waldexh.html` (2018-08-05)

32 Full title is included in the final bibliography as Bordone 1528.

print,[33] and it was part of a cartographic genre born in Florence,[34] and developed in the fifteenth century, that would flourish up to the end of the sixteenth century in Italy, with a significant literary impact abroad. The works of the genre were conceived as sorts of illustrated guides, and derived strong influences both by chorography, with its focus on description, and by Portolan charts, whose influence was evident, particularly in the way the coastlines of the islands were traced (Campbell 1985, 181). A second edition of the book was produced in 1534, and several others up to the beginning of the seventeenth century. Bordone's work was likely one of the earliest printed works to spread notice of the existence of Japan to a wider section of the European public, as it was the work that truly launched this cartographic form as a "commercially viable genre for large-scale publishing" (Woodward 2007, 270).

While largely drawing from nautical maps for the depiction of the Mediterranean area and the Levant, however, Bordone's work reflected again a lack of access to up-to-date information about Japan, represented in the third section of the work (focused on the islands of the 'Mare Orientale'). While the attention with which Japan is placed echoes the influence of Portolan maps, the archipelago is still depicted as a single island, and named 'Ciampagu', in open reference to Marco Polo, even though *Il Milione* is never explicitly mentioned. The weight of *Il Milione*, and, more generally, of the mythical narratives of the Middle Ages, also emerges from the hyperbolic emphasis put on the richness of the country (the mythical 'golden land' of the classical tradition) and on the virtue of its inhabitants. This is not at odds with the aims of the work: Bordone explicitly states in the preface of his book that it will mingle *fabule*, myths, and *historie* (Caputo 2016, 42-3). In Bordone's work, as in other contemporary narratives, the two sides of the *historia* genre, the factual and the fictional, were mingled.

Only by the second half of the sixteenth century, when the Portuguese entered into direct contact with the Japanese archipelago, more accurate cartographical representations of the country began to be produced and circulated in Europe. Worth mentioning, among the cartographers of the second half of the century, is Giacomo Gastaldi, who served as a cosmographer to the Venetian republic, producing both 'official' and 'commercial' maps, and who was, up to his death in 1566, the most authoritative among the Italian cosmographers, and an inspiration for many subsequent map authors and publishers. Among his many influential works, Gastaldi authored 34 printed maps included, together with the 26 original maps, in the

33 The earliest one being one *Isolario* focused on the Greek islands, published by Bartolomeo da li Sonnetti in 1485.

34 The predecessor of the genre is usually identified with Cristoforo Buondelmonti's *Liber Insularium Archipelagi*, dated 1420. See Woodward 2007, 459.

expanded edition of Ptolemy's *Geographia* (published in 1548 in Venice), meant as an updated version, produced in the light of the recent geographical discoveries, of the work of the classic geographer (Unger 2010, 109). In the 1561 edition of his *Uniuersale Descrittione del Mondo* (published in Venice by Mattia Pagano), the section devoted to Asia included notice of the discovery of the Islands of 'Giapan', which was also represented in the xylographic planisphere accompanying the work (the *Cosmographia Universalis*). He also authored the maps included in the collection of travel literature by Giovanni Battista Ramusio, the *Navigationi et viaggi*, published in Venice between 1550 and 1556. Most notably, as far as Japan is concerned, he introduced in printed maps the new name 'Giapam' for the archipelago. In 1556, 'Giapam' was represented as a single island on the map titled "Universale della parte del mondo nuovamente ritrovata", with which he contributed to Ramusio's work. Ramusio's work includes also, as already mentioned, an edition of *Il Milione*, in the second volume of his work, in spite of the fact that the geographical information included in the work conflicts with updated information derived from Gastaldi. As Caputo (2016, 135) underlines, Ramusio's book works in this sense as an ideal link between Polo's 'Cipangu' and the new 'Giapam' that would come at the forefront of European literature on East Asia through missionary writings in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Among the cartographers indebted to Gastaldi was Abraham Ortelius, author of the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* – an atlas (in the Lafréry format), which enjoyed considerable fortune ever since its first publication in Antwerp in 1570 – and of what was probably the most influential cartographic representation of Japan of the sixteenth century. In the first edition of his *Theatrum*, Japan was still only included on general maps,[35] but by 1595 the work had been expanded, adding both a map of China, the *Chinae, olim Sinarum regionis, noua descriptio* (which, in itself, included a representation of Japan), and, for the first time, a map specifically devoted to the Japanese archipelago – the *Iaponiae insvlae description*. This map of Japan had been composed and sent to Ortelius, around 1592, by the Portuguese Jesuit father Luis Teixeira, who was at the time working as a mathematician and cartographer for the King of Spain. Teixeira himself had never been to Japan, but he had presumably copied the map from some original work either by an author who had lived there and/or had familiarity with

35 It was depicted, as an archipelago, with the three main island of Honshū, Kyūshū and Shikoku, on three of the maps focused on Asia – the *Asiae Nova Descriptio*, where it was labelled as 'Iapan', and the *Indiae Orientalis Insularumque Adiacentium tiipus* and the *Tartariae sive Magni Chami Regni*, where it appeared as both 'Iapan', on the map, and 'Zipangri', in the added description. The 1570 edition of the work can be consulted online on the Geoweb catalogue of Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana. URL `http://geoweb.venezia.sbn.it/cgi-win/geoweb/archiweb.dll?service=direct&lang=0&uid=000004&session=000000&fld=B&value=001946` (2018-08-09).

Japanese sources, or with a Japanese source in itself.[36] The map represented the three main islands of Japan, labelled Iaponia (Honshū), Bungo (Kyūshū) and Tonsa (Shikoku), and – even though no mention was included as of yet of Ezo, and Korea was wrongly represented as an island, the *Corea Insula* instead of as a peninsula – it overall offered a much more realistic overview of the Japanese archipelago than previous representations.[37]

Teixeira's map was long believed to be the earliest printed map – outside the realm of the *Isolari* – specifically devoted to the representation of Japan. By the first half of the twentieth century, however, Ishida (1938) dismantled this assumption, by bringing to light the existence of an earlier cartographical representation of the archipelago – a folded map in woodblock print, included in the second edition (dated 1586) of the work on Japan by the Swiss author Cysat,[38] published in the height of the editorial boom that, as we will see in the next chapter, had followed the arrival in Europe of the first Japanese mission. In comparison to the map by Teixeira, however, this map presents many inaccuracies – representing, in particular, Honshū and Kyūshū as a single island. More than relying on some earlier cartographical source, as was the case with Texeira's map, it seems to be based on the Jesuit sources that had reached Europe up to that moment of which it constitutes a sort of visual compilation.[39]

Another early cartographical representation of Japan, displaying a similar connection with the Jesuit sources,is the one produced by the Milanese local historian Urbano Monte. Monte had been among the chroniclers of the Japanese mission to Europe,[40] and he apparently based his cartographi-

36 Probably some original Japanese map of the so-called Gyōgi type – i.e. the cartographical model imported in Japan, by the eight century, by the Korean Buddhist monk Gyōgi-Bosatsu, considered to be the earliest maker of Japanese maps (one of the characteristic elements of this kind of map was the focus on the relationship between the capital and the provinces, designed as a series of oval-shaped territories around it. See Kiss 1947, 111. Among the possible sources for Teixeira's map Lach (1965, 710) suggests the two Madrid and Florence manuscript sketches mentioned below and the manuscript work of Ignacio Morera (or Montera), the first European cartographer to have reportedly set foot in Japan. For a more general outlook on the Japanese sources used for the composition of European maps on Japan, see Nakamura 1939.

37 A 1603 edition of Ortelius' atlas, based on the 1595 edition (with all its additions) can be consulted online on the Geoweb catalogue of Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana. URL `http://geoweb.venezia.sbn.it/geoweb/iscgi/archiweb.dll?service=direct&lang=0&uid=000004&session=000000&fld=B&value=000852` (2018-03-15).

38 Cited in the final bibliography as Cysat 1586.

39 This is suggested also by the fact that the Latin description that accompanies the map includes mention of the arrival of Francis Xavier in Japan in 1549, and an enumeration of the twelve Jesuit colleges that had been built in Japan (Ishida 1938, 260-1).

40 He was author of a manuscript diary of the embassy, compiled upon the passage of the mission in Milan, and is well known for the portrait of the Japanese visitors that he included in the chronicle. On his writings, see Gutierrez 1938.

cal representation on the first-hand knowledge about Japan he was able to collect through the encounter with the emissaries, as well as on the knowledge derived from the Jesuit letters from Japan that had been published in Europe up to that moment. His xylographic map – titled *Descrittione e sito del Giapone* and put to print by the publisher Giacomo Piccaglia in 1589 – showed, similarly to the one by Cysat, many inaccuracies. As Guglielmetti (1979) underlines, the archipelago was represented as composed by only one main island, with a number of minor islands surrounding it, and the Inland Sea was basically absent. The numerous place names it included were also clearly derived from Jesuit letters. The encounter with the Japanese emissaries was also the occasion that prompted Monte to write his *Trattato universale*,[41] a manuscript compendium – never published – meant to collect the more up-to-date cosmographical knowledge that had reached Europe by that time. The work was, in itself, quite unoriginal, as it was largely based on classical writings. It included, however, a planisphere made of sixty-two separated maps, in which Monte's original map of Japan was included, with small changes.

Many other manuscript maps of Japan were produced in the second half of the sixteenth century, but never published. The focus of the present work is on printed works, but it is worth noting that they were often more accurate that the ones given to print. Among them, there are two sketch maps based on the Gyōgi type now conserved, respectively, in Madrid and Florence – the first one probably produced in Manila and later sent to Spain, and the second realized on occasion of the arrival of the first Japanese mission in Europe. Worth mentioning are also the manuscript portolan atlases composed by the Portuguese cartographer Fernão Vaz Dourado between 1568 and 1580. The map of Japan ('Iapam'), included in the first version of the atlas,[42] appears, much as the one by Teixeira, to be indebted to Japanese sources.[43] The very same year of the publication of the first edition of Ortelius' atlas, 1570, another version of Dourado's atlas was also being produced, where, in the twelfth folio, focused on the Northern East Indies, Japan was similarly represented as an archipelago with three main islands.[44]

Ultimately, however, even in comparison to published works such as the ones by Cysat and by Monte, the map realized by Teixeira was the one

41 *Trattato universale descrittione et sito de tutta la terra sin qui conosciuta et disegnata in 62 tavole a stampa (incisioni su rame realizzate da Leone Palavicino con l'aiuto di Lucio Palavicino), anno 1590*.

42 The map, the eight of the Atlas, is now conserved in the Library of the Palácio de Liria, in Madrid.

43 The manuscript maps are discussed in Nakamura 1939.

44 The 1570 atlas can be consulted online, on the Berkeley website. URL `http://dpg.lib.berkeley.edu/webdb/dsheh/heh_brf?Description=&CallNumber=HM+41` (2018-08-09).

that exerted the most significant impact in Europe – both in terms of the general European public and of European cartographers. The two earlier works remained quite obscure, while Ortelius' atlas was reprinted in numerous editions, throughout the sixteenth and well into the seventeenth century. It was, moreover, converted into growingly accessible formats – a testimony to its diffusion also outside the circles of learned readers.[45]

The influence of Teixeira's map on the way Japan was represented in Europe was a lasting one. The map was the work that "integrated Japanese and Western cartographic conceptions and laid the basis for more accurate and detailed cartographical works" (Lach 1965, 710) and remained a fundamental model for the majority of the maps of the archipelago produced and divulged in Europe for over a century. This is the case, for example, the seventeenth century editions of Gerard Mercator's atlas, the *Atlas sive Cosmographicae Meditationes de Fabrica Mundi et Fabricati Figura*. In the 1595 edition of the work, published posthumously a year after the death of the cartographer, Japan, called 'Iapan', is still only represented on the world map and the general map on Asia, as a single island. By the 1605 edition, a section on Japan had been added, titled *Iaponia sive Iapan Insula*, where the archipelago was represented according to the Ortelius-Teixeira model. Even the misrepresentation of Korea as an island was not to be corrected until a much later map of Japan, the *Iaponia Regnum*, by Martino Martini, dated 1655 (Boscaro 1990, 104).

45 From the original *in folio* edition, several smaller editions were produced, both in *octavo* and in *sextodecimo*, by the second half of the seventeenth century, so as to be "handier for travellers" ("per maggior commodità de' viaggiatori", as stated in the front-page of the 1667 edition, available on the Geoweb catalogue of Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana – URL `http://geoweb.venezia.sbn.it/cgi-win/geoweb/archiweb.dll?service=direct&lang=0&uid=000004&session=000000&fld=B&value=002527` (2018-08-09).

3 Production and Circulation of Jesuit Sources on Japan in the Sixteenth Century

Summary 3.1 The Jesuit Mission in Japan in the Sixteenth Century: Valignano's Vision. – 3.2 The Published Jesuit Reports on Japan. – 3.3 Francis Xavier's Reports: Laying the Foundations of the Mission. – 3.4 The Published Jesuit Letter-books: Shaping an Imaginary of Japan. – 3.5 The Impact of the Reports in Europe: Italian Editions in the Sixteenth Century.

3.1 The Jesuit Mission in Japan in the Sixteenth Century: Valignano's Vision

The Portuguese were motivated to pursue their maritime expansion not only by the economic benefits derived from the African (and Asian) trade, but also by religious ardour. Missionary effort had come hand-in-hand with Portuguese sea explorations since 1418, when Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460) had assumed the position of *regedor e governador* (ruler and governor) of the Order of Christ. Ever since, this crusading militia had been ideologically and materially involved in the Portuguese explorations, providing the Crown with the greatest source of funding for its maritime enterprise (Hamilton 1948, 37). The link between Portuguese imperial ambitions and Christian missionary efforts had been, as seen above, formally asserted by the Roman Church in the second half of the fifteenth century through a series of Papal Bulls: the *Dum Diversas* (1452), the *Romanus Pontifex* (1455) and the *Inter Caetera* (1456), which granted the right to the Portuguese Crown to administer the newly 'discovered' territories in the East Indies, in both a civil and an ecclesiastical capacity. This established the system that came to be known as *patroado real* (royal patronage) (Boxer 1969, 20-4).The system was then formalized in 1494 with the ratification of the Treaty of Tordesillas, which established a circular line of division, running from pole to pole 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands and splitting the known world into two spheres of influence. All territories east of the line were

to pertain to Portugal.[1] Under the protection of the Portuguese Crown, the Franciscan order and the Dominican order had carried out their missions to India in 1500 and 1503, respectively. By 1538, the Episcopal see of Goa was established, creating what would become the key structure for the administration of the Christian missions in Asia – including the one settled in Japan.[2]

At the beginning of the following decade, on September 27, 1540, Pope Paul III officially sanctioned, with the papal bull *Regimini militantis ecclesiae*, the creation of the Society of Jesus. The *Formula* of the order, proposed by the founder, Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), and by the nine fathers that formed the original core of the Society,[3] identified the purpose of the order in the defense and propagation of the faith. It indicated the ministries through which such purpose should be accomplished, strongly emphasizing the role of public preaching, lectures and more generally education – a trait that would find material expression, ever since the late 1540s, in the founding of the Jesuit schools. The *Formula* also required from the members of the Society the pronunciation of a particular vow, that would bind them to travel anywhere in the world to perform their ministry, once so ordered by the Pope – giving birth to what was, in all respects, an order of itinerant missionaries (O'Malley 1993, 5-6). Travel was, in other words, part of the Society ever since its foundation, in a way that influenced its development and activities in an essential way.[4] In accord to such premises, and also thanks to the connections the early members enjoyed – being in great part of Spanish and Portuguese origin and, therefore, in the privileged position of belonging to the countries that were leading the European exploration – the Society came to exert a pivotal role in the conduction of the Christian missions both in the Pacific and in the Atlantic areas.

The first Jesuit Father to set foot in Asia was one of the members of the original group of the Society's founders, Francis Xavier (1506-1552), sent by Ignatius on a mission to India in the very year of the creation of

1 The full text and translation of the Treaty, as well as a related bibliography, are available in Davenport 2012, 84-100.

2 The See was to become, by 1557, an independent archbishopric and primatial See of the East, reference for a number of dependent dioceses, scattered in the different centers of the missions. By 1575, the dioceses of Cochin, Malacca and Macau had been established. The Japanese one, settled in Funai, was created in 1588 and assigned to the Jesuit bishop Sebastião Morais (Üçerler 2008, 155).

3 Peter Favre, Francis Xavier, Diego Laínez, Alfonso Salmerón, Nicolás de Bobadilla, Simão Rodrigues, Claude Jay, Paschase Broët and Jean Codure. The *Formula* was approved by the Pope as presented, and only slightly revised in 1550 – adding clarifications and specifications and including changes in actual practice, but with no alteration of big consequence.

4 The role of travel in the Jesuit order is discussed in Harris 1999.

the Order, on specific request by the Pope and under the patronage of King John III of Portugal.[5] Upon reaching his destination, in 1542, Xavier was able to send back to Europe promising reports about the situation of Christianity in India, and also to forward a request backed by the Portuguese governor in Goa for the dispatch of other Jesuit Fathers to the country. The response from Rome was favourable, and the Jesuits were permitted to establish a solid presence in India. By the moment Xavier's death, about ten years after his arrival, forty or so Jesuit missionaries already had joined him in the effort of bringing evangelization to Asia. Moreover, by 1548, the Jesuit order took over the administration of the College of the Holy Faith in Goa. The institution, that had been founded by the secular clergy in 1541 and supported by lay benefactors ever since, soon grew out to be a vital centre for the Society in Asia, exerting a role similar to that of the Jesuit colleges of Rome and Coimbra in Europe. It took in its hands the formation of the missionaries dispatched from Europe to Asia, the general direction of the various Asian colleges where they were eventually forwarded, and the sorting of the correspondence between Asia and Europe. Ever since 1556, moreover, it became the main Jesuit printing centre in Asia, with the setting up of the first moveable-type hand press brought by the Jesuits from Europe (Üçerler 2008, 155).

From Goa, Francis Xavier sailed for Japan, so as to personally assess the conditions for the evangelization of the archipelago. That was the act that led to the establishment of the local mission in Japan – where the Jesuits would exert exclusive influence for the greatest part of the sixteenth century.

The encounter, in 1547, with the Japanese native Yajirō (or Anjirō), who had fled from Japan in Jorge Álvares' ship, as well as the report received by Álvares himself, were the reasons that first motivated Francis Xavier to travel to Japan:

> Father Francis Xavier got notice of that [land] in the year 1542 [sic!], through certain Portuguese merchants coming from there: in whose company came a Japanese nobleman called Angero [Yajirō]. […] He is very intelligent, and in little less than six months, brought to Goa by Father Francis, in the College of the Society of Jesus in that city, he learned the Portuguese language, to the point of being able to read it and write it, and in the spiritual matters, and he took much profit in the Christian doctrine, and was baptized and called Paolo di Santa Fede. Through the information gotten from him and from other merchants, Father Francis was persuaded that God would be much served

5 On Xavier's activities in Asia and Japan, see Asami 2011.

> in those lands [...] and he finally resolved to go himself, and left from Goa in April 1549.[6]

Xavier landed in Kagoshima in August 1549, accompanied by Yajirō himself, by two servants similarly converted to Christianity, and by the Jesuit Father Cosme de Torres (1510-1570) and the lay Brother Juan Fernández (1526-1567). He brought with himself letters by the Viceroy of the Indies and by the Governor of Malacca, planning to confer to his visit a quasi-official nature. He originally intended to gain an audience with the "King" (the Ashikaga shogun) in Kyoto, so as to obtain from him official permission to preach and convert on the archipelago. However, as it became clear that the shogun held no real authority over the lands that he nominally controlled, Xavier and his companions soon shifted their interest to creating connections with the local *daimyō* authorities, so as to obtain from them permission to preach the Gospel in their territories (as well as, in many cases, material support).[7] In this strategy, that would become the key to the success of the mission in the archipelago,[8] the Jesuits were favoured, ever since the early years of their permanence in Japan, by their connection with the Portuguese merchants that conducted the silver and silk trade. The respect paid by the crew of the *náo* to Xavier, and to the Jesuits that succeeded him, impressed the Japanese authorities, leading many of the *daimyō* to seek the Christian presence so as to attract European merchants in their dominions.[9] In the

6 "Hebbe notitia di quella il P.M.Francesco Xavier l'anno 1542. per certi mercatanti Portoghesi, che di la venivano: in cui compagnia venne un'huomo nobile Giapanese, detto Angero, [...]. è molto ingenioso, et in poco più di sei mesi, condotto a Goa dal P.M.Francesco al collegio della compagnia di Iesu di quella città, apparò la lingua Portoghese in modo, che la leggeva, et scriveva, et nelle cose spirituali, et dottrina Christiana, fece gran profitto, et fu battezzato, et chiamato Paolo di Santa Fede. Hora per informatione di quello gentil'huomo, et di altri mercatanti, essendo il P.M. Francesco persuaso, che Dio saria molto servito in quelle parti [...] et finalmente si risolvette d'andare egli stesso, et partì di oa il mese d'Aprile del 1549" (Xavier 1558a, f. 101; translated by the Author). On Yajirō, his past and position in Japan, his experience in Goa and, later, as an interpreter for Xavier, as well as for a bibliography of the extant contemporary sources about him, see Ebisawa 1971, 228-52.

7 "Giunti a Meaco, travagliammo per alcuni giorni per parlare al Re, e chiedergli licentia di predicare nel suo Regno la legge di Dio; ma non potemmo mai parlargli; e sapendo poi che non era obbedito dalli suoi, non ci curammo di tal licentia" (When we arrived in Meaco [Kyoto], we strived for a few days to talk to the King, and ask him for permission to preach the Law of God in his Kingdom; but we were not able to talk to him; and knowing he was not obeyed by his subjects, we chose not to care about such permission; see Xavier 1558b, f. 120; translated by the Author).

8 As discussed in Steichen 1903.

9 The close ties between the Christian religion and the Portuguese commercial interests in Japan are widely documented both in the Jesuit and the Japanese contemporary sources. See in this regard, and more in general about the relationship between missionaries, local Japanese authorities and Portuguese merchants, Boxer 1951, 91-136.

two years of his permanence on the archipelago, Xavier was able to create footholds for the mission in the Satsuma domain, in Hirado and Yamaguchi, and to establish connections with Ōtomo Yoshishige (also known as Ōtomo Sōrin), *daimyō* of Bungo (modern Ōita) – who would convert to Christianity by 1578 and become one of the most important Japanese supporters of the Jesuit mission. Aside from working on getting the support of local authorities, Xavier took notice of the primary necessities for the survival and success of the mission – namely, the need for the missionaries to master the Japanese language, as well as to gain a deeper knowledge of native religion, and in particular Buddhism, so as to more efficiently convey the principles of Christianity and participate in doctrinal debates. The confusion in regards to Buddhism and the difficulties of the language actually gave way to some misunderstandings during the Father's stay in Japan – most notably those derived by Xavier's use of Buddhist terms in order to express Christian concepts, which generated the tendency in many Japanese to view Christianity as a Buddhist sect, rather than as an entirely different religion. While this, in any probability, actually eased the acceptance of the missionaries in Japan, it generated a fundamental problem of understanding in the transmission of the Christian doctrine – one of which the Jesuit missionaries had to become aware early on.[10]

In 1551, Xavier departed from Japan, travelling to China (where he, however, would never be able to enter) and leaving Father Cosme de Torres in charge of the Japanese mission – of which he would be Superior up to his death, in 1570. Xavier's departure marked the opening of a still in many ways unorganised phase of the Christian missionary activity in Japan. Under Torres' guidance, the mission was able to grow steadily, but given the still limited number of Jesuit Fathers operating in Japan – who were, in turn, backed up only by a few Brothers and Japanese acolytes – managing the footholds of the mission, scattered as they were through the country, was no easy feat.[11]

10 Leading Xavier himself, for example, to reject the term *Dainichi*, and adopt the Latin term *Deus* as an alternative. See in this regard Gonoi (2002, 40-1). As Ebisawa (1966, 179) suggests, the use of Buddhist terms probably seemed like the logical choice at the time, as the Buddhist language provided for the only terms readily available in the Japanese language to be charged with the philosophical implications of religious salvation. Partly responsible for the misuse of Buddhist terms was also, surely, Yajirō – who had been the one to introduce Buddhism to Xavier, in a grossly misleading way. Only superficially acquainted with Shingon Buddhism, he had in fact reportedly declared that the Japanese "all adore but one God, whom they call Doniche in their language" ("tutti adorano un solo Iddio, il quale chiamano Doniche in suo linguaggio" Xavier 1562, f. 21; translated by the Author).

11 The Jesuits operating in Japan could be divided into three categories: the Fathers (*padres* or *bateren* as they were commonly named by the Japanese), who handled the real authority, and who included only Europeans up to Valignano's time; the Brothers (*irmãos*, named *iruman* by the Japanese), who were mostly European but who came to include about seventy Japanese by the beginning of the 1590s; and the native acolytes and catechists

Torres first settled in Yamaguchi, where, in 1552, the Daidōji temple was donated by the Ōuchi family to the missionaries, allowing them to turn it into a church. When the area was seized by the Mōri family, he moved to Bungo, where, aided by Luis Almeida (who had studied as a surgeon), he promoted the construction of an orphanage and an hospital. A division of the mission also came to be established, in 1560, in the Kyoto area, by Father Gaspar Vilela, who, after reaching Japan in 1556, distinguished himself as a true 'pioneer in adaptation' – shaving his head, dressing in Japanese fashion, and learning to read and write in the Japanese language. He was able to succeed where Xavier had failed, obtaining from the Ashikaga family permission to preach in the area.[12] Adaptation became a common line of action among the Jesuit missionaries, even if not, yet, with the coherence later brought by Valignano. Crucial in this early phase of the mission was also the solving of the matter of Christian terminology, which came to the forefront with new force after Xavier's departure.[13] Father Balthasar Gago was the one who took it into his hands, promoting a linguistic reform that, as he himself explained in a letter sent from Hirado

(*dōjuku*), who were more than a hundred by the beginning of the seventeenth century. The *dōjuku* were not, strictly speaking, members of the Society, but exerted, in practice, a big role in the organization of the mission. Aside from these categories, there were household servants and caretakers, who did not belong to the Jesuits but nonetheless impacted on the budget of the Society. For an in-depth analysis of the structure of the mission and its evolution, see Boxer 1951, 211-27. Among the leading European figures of this early phase, aside from Torres himself and the already mentioned Juan Fernandez, were Gaspar Vilela (1525-1572), Luis Frois (1528/32-1597), Balthasar Gago (c. 1520-1583), Luis Almeida (1525-1583), Francisco Cabral (1529-1609), Organtino Gnecchi-Soldo (1530-1609) and Gaspar Coelho (1530-1590). Frois, active in Kyoto, would become the most prolific writer among the Jesuit missionaries in Japan. Notable, among the Brothers was the Japanese convert known with the Christian name Lourenço, the first Japanese layman to be received inside of the Society of Jesus. Baptized by Xavier himself in 1551, he was received in the Society in 1563 by Torres. He was active in the early phases of the establishment of the Jesuit mission in Kyoto, and was author of a report letter, dated June 2, 1560, which constitutes one the richest extant testimony about the establishment of the Japanese mission in Kyoto. See, in regard to Lourenço, Ebisawa 1942.

12 Vilela first approached the Buddhist monks of Mount Hiei, who exerted an exceeding amount of political and economical power in the city, so as to gain their permission to preach the Gospel in the area. Unable to persuade them, he proceeded, not without difficulties, to preach without official permission, until he was granted an audience with the shogun Ashikaga Yoshiteru, who granted him not only the permission to preach, but also exemption from taxes, also putting a stop to the open opposition that the missionaries had been encountering by the majority of the Buddhist sects of the city ever since their arrival. On Vilela, see Cieslik 1954c.

13 The act of cession of the Daidōji openly referred to the Fathers as 'bonzes' (*sō*) and declared that they had come to Japan in order to preach the laws of Buddhism – revealing how the misunderstandings generated by Xavier were far from being dispelled. Moreover, the Fathers' deepening knowledge of Buddhism made them aware of subtleties in Buddhist terminology they had not been conscious of when they first adopted it, and that inherently complicated its use to convey a set of alien religious concepts. See Cieslik 1954a.

on September 22, 1555,[14] aimed at removing from the use of the Fathers all the Japanese native words he deemed as dangerous or harmful (i.e., theologically charged in a way that would generate misunderstandings about the true meaning of what was being preached). The fathers would substitute them with the original Portuguese or Latin term, expressed in *kana* (so as to avoid the meaning-charged *kanji*).[15]

In the 1560s decade, the Jesuits came to be involved in the game-changing events that started the unification of Japan. They assisted to the rise of Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), the first of the three great unifiers, who conquered Kyoto in 1568, and appointed as a new governor Wada Koremasa, a supporter of the Christian mission (who allegedly intended himself to become a Christian). In 1569, thanks to Wada's intercession, Father Luis Frois (who had joined Father Vilela in Kyoto in 1563) was granted an audience by Nobunaga, sanctioning the beginning of a very advantageous relationship for the missionaries. In the long run, Nobunaga turned out to be one of the most solid supporters of the Christian Fathers – with whom he shared a common hostility towards the Buddhist monasteries settled on the slopes of Mount Hiei, due to their overbearing influence on Kyoto's political and religious life. In 1576, a church was built in Kyoto, followed by another one in the outskirts of the city, two years later.[16] The mission similarly progressed in Kyūshū, were, as already mentioned, the Jesuits came to exert a fundamental role as middlemen in the Portuguese-Japanese trade, while in Bungo mass conversions were achieved, thanks to the influence of the Ōtomo family. By the end of the 1570, about 150,000 people had reportedly been converted in Japan (Elisonas 2007, 31).

The arrival of Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606) on the Japanese archipelago inaugurated a new, more organized phase in the mission. Much as Xavier had acted as the initiator of the missionary effort in East Asia, Alessandro Valignano played the central role in shaping it, most of all by allowing it to assume a new, localized, identity – partially independent from the European forms and adapted to Japanese (and, later Chinese) society and culture. The Italian father was selected as Visitor to the East of the Society of Jesuit in 1572, by the at the time current Superior General of

14 The letter ("Copia d'vna lettera del P. Baldassar Gago scritta in Firando alli 23. De Settembre 1555. al padre M. Ignatio, Preposito generale della compagnia di Iesv") is included in Gago 1558, f. 260.

15 This included a list of about fifty terms, to which other were added in later years. They included terms such as the above mentioned *Dainichi*, as well as *hotoke* (similarly used to express 'God'), *jigoku* (for 'hell'), *jōdo* (for 'paradise') and *tamashii* (for 'soul'). For a more detailed insight on the language reformation by Gago, see Cieslik 1954a.

16 For an in-depth analysis of the relationships between Buddhist monks and Christians and of the political events of the Nobunaga era in connection with the missionary life in Japan, see Sansom 1961, 291-9.

the Society of Jesus, Everard Mercurian. The appointment was the result of a deliberate policy aimed at, at least partly, freeing the activity of the Society in Asia from its dependence from the Portuguese Crown, which had come to weigh on the missions not only in the terms of the Portuguese patronage (according to which the Fathers were dependent to the Crown in terms of transport and subventions), but also through the overbearing authority of some members of the order who were closely connected with the Portuguese Royal family. Valignano was supposed to seize the rein of the missions in Asia in his own hands, and to challenge such authority. And he did manage that, by bringing with himself to Asia a chosen number of missionaries whose formation he had personally accomplished, and by nominating a special Indian procurator in Lisbon, who, among other things, got to manage the entirety of the correspondence to and from the Indies. Backed up by the General, and solid in his authority, when he reached India in 1574 Valignano could firmly take the reins of the mission in his hands. He was in Japan from 1579 to 1582, and then again from 1590 to 1592 and from 1598 to 1603. His first visit to Japan was probably the most influential in terms of the conduction of the mission on the archipelago, as it took place in a phase when the missionaries mostly enjoyed the support of Japanese authorities.[17]

Boscaro (2008) sums up the measures taken by Valignano for the conduction of the mission in Japan into six main points:

1. The promotion of the formation of a native clergy, through the foundations of seminaries, novitiates and colleges, and through the composition of the *Catechismus Christianae Fidei in quo veritas nostrae religionis ostenditur, et sectiae Iaponenses confutantur*;[18]
2. The compilation of the *Avertimentos e avisos acerca dos costumes e catangues de Jappão* (Account of the customs of Japan, completed in 1581);
3. The compilation of the *Sumario de las cosas de Japon* (Summary of Japanese matters, completed in 1583);
4. The handling of the mission's financial matters, and particularly of the acquisition of the port of Nagasaki;
5. The Japanese embassy in Europe known as *Tenshō ken'Ō shonen shisetsu* (boy's embassy to Europe of the Tenshō period), or simply *Tenshō shisetsu*; The Embassy, nominally sent by the *daimyō* of

17 As it this not within the scope of the present work, we will not dwell on Valignano. We refer to the large literature that already exists on his role as Visitor in Asia and Japan, including: Ross 1999; Volpi 2004, 2005; López-Gay 2005; Tamburello et. al 2008.

18 The manual, promptly translated from Latin to Japanese, included the confutation of a number of Buddhist concepts, as well as the explanation of Christian teachings such as the Ten Commandments, the Resurrection, the Last Judgment, Paradise and Hell. The Latin version of the work was given to print in Lisbon in 1586 by Antonius Riberius.

Kyūshū (but, in reality, carefully orchestrated by Valignano), was composed of four young boys: Mancio Itō, the thirteen-year-old chief emissary, a relative of Ōtomo Yoshishige; the thirteen-year-old Michael Chijiwa, cousin of the *daimyō* Arima Harunobu and Ōmura Sumitada; and, accompanying them, Martin Hara (13) and Julian Nakaura (15); they left Japan in 1582 and travelled through India to Portugal, Spain and Italy, returning by 1590, after having been received by a number of representatives of the European nobility, and most notably by the King of Spain and by the Pope, in 1585;[19]

6. The diffusion of moveable-type print in Japan, through the printing press brought by the members of the above mentioned embassy in their return trip from Europe; the printing press was installed first in Goa and then moved to Japan, operating successively, according to the change in political circumstances, in Kazusa, Amakusa, Nagasaki (and later, when the persecutions began in full force, in Manila and in Macao); it gave birth to the so-called *kirishitanban* (literally, 'Christian prints') literature.[20]

Both Valignano's strong support toward the formation of indigenous Fathers (a matter that caused some heated controversy among the missionaries in Japan upon his arrival)[21] and his compilation of the *Avertimentos e avisos acerca dos costumes e catangues de Jappão* suited his ambition to develop the mission in a direction at least partly independent from European forms. Through the *Avertimentos*, in particular, Valignano promoted (for the first time systematically) an approach to missionary activity that assumed adaptation as its core method. The work instructed the missionaries on the common conduct of the laymen and, most importantly, of the

19 For a general overview of the embassy, I refer to Cooper 2005.

20 *Kirishitanban* included works in Latin, *rōmaji* or Japanese, of a number of different categories – such as Japanese works in simplified form, printed to ease the learning of the Japanese language for the missionaries; Christian works and, sometimes, European lay works translated in Japanese to divulge the Catholic doctrine or simple moral concepts in Japan; dictionaries. The materials are really rare, as most of them were destroyed during the persecutions. A very useful source to access *kirishitanban* material is the *Laures Rare Book Database*, created by Sophia University. URL `http://digital-archives.sophia.ac.jp/laures-kirishitan-bunko/?lang=en` (2018-08-10).

21 Valignano found himself at odds, in particular, with the current superior of the mission in Japan, Francisco Cabral, who strongly opposed the idea of bestowing the ministry to native Fathers, mainly on the grounds of a distrust of the Japanese character. This distrust partially emerged also in Cabral's attitude towards the *daimyō*, that had in many cases elicited their hostility, in spite of their general support towards the mission. Cabral was finally pressed to resign from his position two years after Valignano's arrival, in favour of the more yielding Gaspar Coelho. See Cieslik 1955. The native staff would come to play a crucial role in the mission, particularly for the translation of doctrinal material, as discussed in Higashibaba 2001, 20-8.

most influent religious people in Japan – a conduct which they were to imitate, at least on a surface level, in treating with the native population. Valignano was in fact persuaded, both by previous reports from Japan and by his own in-depth investigation of the mission, that the only way to gain the respect of the Japanese (and above all of the civilized *daimyō*) and, consequently, to achieve true success in evangelization, was to conform to local customs and courtesies in approaching them.[22]

In a way, the compilation of the *Sumario de las cosas de Japon* in 1583 came as a direct consequence to such stance. The work, similar in spirit to the *Avertimentos*, consisted of a lengthy account of Valignano's experience in Japan and covered, even though not always coherently, a vast variety of matters. A significant section of the work (in particular, chapters 1-5) was focused on the description of Japan (based on what Valignano had been able to gather about the archipelago during his first visit): it offered an overview of Japanese costumes and their basic differences with European ones, presented a list of alleged Japanese virtues and vices, and introduced Japanese religion (mainly Buddhism) and the political situation in Japan, with particular regard to the provinces where the missionaries were stationed. The rest of the work was focused on matters more specifically related to the mission: it stressed the successes of the Fathers, and the importance of the enterprise in Japan in the overall picture of the Jesuit missionary activity in Asia; it also pointed to the difficulties and necessities the missionaries were encountering – ranging from the need to form a native clergy, to financial problems, to the urgent matter of preventing the arrival in Japan of different Christian (and particularly Protestant) orders – so as to continue to present to the Japanese a unified picture of Christianity; it also included, much as the *Avertimentos*, instructions for the missionaries on how to approach the Japanese population, as well as more general directions on the conduction of the mission as a whole. Inherent to the structure of the work was a multiple aim: the report was meant as a source of information about the mission, to be relayed to superiors and, possibly, to be circulated, among the Jesuit colleges in Europe as an instrument of edification, celebrating the victories of the Catholic church overseas; it was intended as a guide for future missionaries, giving prelimi-

22 Valignano's radical position was bound to generate some controversy among the order, as demonstrated by the contemporary correspondence between the Visitor and the current general Claudio Acquaviva, who generally approved Valignano's approach, but expressed strong doubts regarding the need to assume Buddhist monks as models. Samples of the correspondence, as well as a complete, commented edition of Valignano's work (in Italian translation, by the hands of the Fathers Pirri and Da Fonseca) is included in Schütte 1946. A proof of the controversial nature of the text lies also in the fact that it was not forwarded to Rome, as was usual, through normal correspondence, so as to avoid the risk of it being casually read by members of the Society unfamiliar with the situation in Japan. Nevertheless, the work was established as mandatory reading for the missionaries in Japan, at least up to 1592.

nary instruction about the missionary approach they would be expected to adopt if they decided to travel to Japan; and, most importantly, it was meant as an instrument to promote the importance of the mission in the eyes of the Jesuit authorities (and more generally of the members of the Jesuit colleges in Europe), so as to gain support, both in terms of money (in light of the above mentioned pressing need for funds) and manpower.[23]

The *Sumario* was largely used as a basis for the section on Japan of the *Historia del Principio y Progresso de la Compania de Jesus en las Indias Orientales (1542-64)*, Valignano's summa on the missions in the East Indies. Three sections of the work were compiled during Valignano's lifetime: the first and second volumes, which covered the history of the mission under Xavier (with an heavy focus on the matter of his sanctification) and in the subsequent years, up to 1564, were sent to Europe, respectively, in 1584 (probably along with the emissaries of the *Tenshō shisetsu*) and 1588; the third one, meant to cover the history of the mission from 1564 up to Valignano's time, was actually never completed. The work focused mainly on Jesuit activities, but reserved attention also to the description of the costumes and 'qualities' of the inhabitants of the regions in which the missionaries were stationed. In this sense, while not as informative as the *Sumario* itself, it was one of the earliest European works to provide

> a sophisticated framework for the comparison of different peoples under the concept of rational behavior, enshrining an idea of civility (not yet 'civilization') which was nevertheless combined with racial and religious forms of classification. (Rubiés 2002, 6)

This was actually, as we will see, one of the key elements in the Jesuit cosmographical approach. Much as the *Sumario*, however, the work was never published in the sixteenth century.[24]

Similarly unpublished was another work by Valignano specifically focused on Japan, *Del principio y progresso de la Religion Christiana en Japon*. The work, intended as a general history of the mission in Japan, was abandoned, incomplete, in 1601.[25] The project had actually been devised by Valignano after his own veto on the publication of Frois' history

23 For a commented edition of the *Sumario*, see Alvarez-Taladriz 1954. Excerpts in the English language are also included in De Bary and Kurata Dykstra (2005, 155-62) and in the anthology by Cooper (1965).

24 On the other hand, Maffei (1588) relied heavily on the work in compiling his (published) general history of the missions in Asia. A modern edition of Valignano's work is included in Wicki 1944.

25 A manuscript copy of the work can be found in the collection *Jesuitas na Asia*, at the Ajuda Library in Lisbon (Codex 49-IV-53). See Braga 1942.

of Japan, the *História de Japam* – of which 215 chapters (describing the history of the mission in Japan up to 1593) had been completed in Frois' lifetime. The history had been commissioned specifically to Frois, at the time the central chronicler of the Jesuit enterprise in Japan, sometime between 1583 and 1585, upon suggestion by Maffei, who was at the time working on his own general history of the missions (and was in search for reference works). The aim of the work would be to reunite the somewhat scattered information that had been included in the Jesuit reports up to that moment in a coherent collection, more immediately available to the European readership. Frois embarked in his monumental work in the hope that it would be circulated in unaltered form in Europe, but Valignano ended up speaking against its publication, on the grounds that its scope was too big ("opus immensum") and that, while it could be very useful for the missionaries in Japan, a more concise, possibly one-volume wok would be needed for the sake of European readers (Moran 1993, 40).[26]

The project of the history was not, on the other hand, abandoned, even after the decision not to publish Frois' work and after Valignano's death. As Cooper (2001) underlines, the pressure exerted by the competing Christian orders that reached the archipelago by the end of the sixteenth century made it, actually, even more urgent. In the end, the history was commissioned only in 1620, to João Rodrigues (1561 or 1562-1634), who had spent more than thirty years in Japan, between his arrival in 1577 and his (forced) departure for China in 1610.[27] The initial project for the work, titled *Historia da Igreja do Japão*, included a prologue, ten introductory books on Japan and ten books on the mission, from its beginnings to 1634 (plus four further books on the missions in China, Korea, Cambodia and Siam, which would be the main focus of the Jesuit evangelization effort, after the forced departure of the mission from Japan). The project, however, was never completed, nor it was given to print – also due to the

26 A manuscript of Frois' history can be found at the Ajuda Library (lacking the first thirteen introductory chapters on Japanese life, which have been lost). For a Portuguese edition, see Wicki 1976-84. A Japanese translation is included in Matsuda, Kawasaki 1977-1980. In conjunction with the history, in 1585, Frois also worked on the *Tratado em que se contem muito susinta e abreviatamente algumas contradições e differenças de costumes antre a gente de Europa e esta provincia de Japão*. The treatise, as suggested by the title, was structured as a lists of comparisons and contrasts between costumes and matters everyday life – moral, customs, behaviours, techniques – in Europe and Japan, given in a simple juxtaposition of short sentences (without any effort to give an actual historical explanation of the differences). As Lach (1965, 687) suggests it may actually have been compiled for his personal use only (of for him to use for the instruction of the new missionaries arriving in the country), seeing as no contemporary source reports about it. The first published edition of the work is Schütte 1955. A more recent French translation is included in De Castro, Schrimpf 1993.

27 Rodrigues was commonly known as *Tçuzzu*, from the Momoyama-period Japanese word for 'interpreter'. For an overview on his activities in Japan, see Cooper 1974.

forced closure imposed to the mission.[28]

What was circulated among the more general European readership consisted, therefore, mostly in the (usually lengthy) reports sent regularly by the missionaries from Japan to Europe – which, unlike the *Sumario*, were given to print. The reports were not dissimilar from the *Sumario*, both in contents and spirit, as they were meant, as we will see, as tools of publicity. Not by chance, Valignano's influence marked an evolution in the forms and contents of such reports – which developed from narrations more strictly focused on mission-related matters, to more all-encompassing descriptions, reflecting the Fathers' strive to gain a thorough understanding of the linguistic, cultural and religious background of the people they aimed at converting.

Before proceeding to an analysis of the reports, it should be noted that the desire for publicity was also, at least in part, what motivated the *tenshō shisetsu*, as made quite explicit by both the careful instructions given by Valignano to Father Nuno Rodrigues,[29] who travelled with the young Japanese boys as their escort and tutor, and by the contemporary published literature on the embassy. One of the most complete contemporary works relating about it, the *Relationi della venuta degli ambasciatori giapponesi a Roma*, stated for example, in the chapter "Le cagioni della venuta di questi Ambasciatori a Roma" (Reasons for the coming of these Ambassadors to Rome):

> Father Alessandro approved […] so that His Holiness and the others in Europe could have an assay of those lands, and could experience with their own eyes what they had read in letters about the value and good nature of the Japanese, and similarly learn that every struggle and effort to cultivate that Lord's vineyard was very well employed.[30]

28 How many of the books were actually completed by Rodrigues' death is not sure. So far, the first four books on the mission and the first two introductory books on Japan – relating about a variety of matters ranging from etiquette, the tea ceremony, flower arrangements, painting, calligraphy, social habits – have come to light. Cooper 2001 includes an annotated and commented edition of João Rodrigues' history. The work has also been translated into Japanese in Doi 1967-70. An incomplete manuscript copy of the history is preserved in the Ajuda Library, in the *Jesuítas na Asia* series.

29 The instructions are included in an unpublished document titled *Regimento e Instrução do q hadi fazir o Padre Nuno Rois q vay por Procurador à Roma*, dated 1583 and now preserved in the Archivio storico della Compagnia di Gesù in Rome (Japonica Sinica 22, fl. 52). A sample of the document, and in particular of points 13, 14 and 15 (in the original Portuguese and in French translation) is included in Abranches Pinto, Bernard 1943, 395-7.

30 "Approvò il P. Alessandro […] accio che sua Santità, & gli altri in Europa, havessero come un saggio di quei paesi, e per esperienza vedessero quel, che più volte havevano inteso per lettere, del valore e buona natura de Giaponesi, con che parimente conoscessero infatti,

In other words, Valignano intended to

> parade living examples of Jesuit success in the Christianization of Japan through Catholic Europe. He knew that a demonstration of influence attained among the Japanese ruling classes was an important if not indispensable part of the presentation of that image of success, and he fully intended to have his specimens subjected to inspection in the highest of European circles. (Elisonas 2007, 32)

The embassy was, at least in theory, a success for Valignano in all respects. The four Japanese emissaries were received with all honours in the cities they travelled to, and, heavily monitored by their tutors (as per Valignano's instructions), they were shielded from any kind of information about Europe that, if relayed to Japan, could turn out to be harmful for the mission.[31] The greatest accomplishment of the embassy was, surely, the fact that Pope Gregory XIII, even before his encounter with the Japanese boys, promulgated the Brief *Ex pastorali officio* (January 28, 1585), which designated Japan as exclusive Jesuit mission territory – temporarily dispelling Valignano's fears about the competition of different Christian orders. Valignano, however, was not able to reap the fruits of the embassy in Japan as he had hoped to. In 1590, after meeting with the boys in Macao, he accompanied them back to the archipelago, travelling both in his usual position as Visitor, and as ambassador for the Portuguese Viceroy of India. He was received by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (who, after Oda Nobunaga's death in 1582, had risen to power), but received only superficial cordiality from him, and managed to obtain little to no practical advantage for the mission in Japan.[32] The political climate had, in fact, radically changed in

che ogni stento e travaglio in coltivar tal vigna del Signore era molto ben impegnato". (Gualtieri 1586, 22; translated by the Author). The text then proceeded to illustrate the other fundamental aim of the embassy – which was to impress the greatness of Europe in the minds of the young ambassadors, and have them report about it to Japan. The embassy would also have to work, in this sense, as a means of persuasions towards those *daimyō* who seemed to doubt the true intentions of the Fathers, and presume that they were travelling to Japan in search of a fortune and an esteem that they somehow lacked in their native countries.

31 The tutors of the boys were supposed to make them "see all the noble and remarkable things of Rome and of the other principal cities of Italy. It should be made sure that they are always guarded, so that they'll learn and see only what is good, and will not learn anything that is bad […] For this reason, in no way they will have to treat with people who could scandalize them, or be told about the disorders in the court and among our prelates, or of other similar things". ("ver todas as cousas nobres e grandes de Roma e de algunas otras ciudades pnncipaes de Ytalia advertendose advertendose [sic] sempre q seam guiadosd e man ra q saibaõ e vejaõ somõte o q he bem e não saiba nada do mal […] por ysso en hua [sic] maneira hã de tratar con pessoas q lhe possam dar escandalo, ne conten los desordines q van na corte e nos perlados e outras semelhantes cousas"). Abranches Pinto, Bernard 1943, 401).

32 The audience is accounted for in detail in Frois 1595.

the years intervening between his two visits to Japan. The shift in power from Nobunaga to Hideyoshi had not immediately affected the mission.[33] After the campaign for the conquest of Kyūshū, however, Hideyoshi's attitude towards the missionaries had taken an abrupt hostile turn. In 1587, in the brief succession of two days (July 23 and 24) the *kanpaku* had issued two edicts, inflicting an hard blow against Christianity. The first one, directed to Japanese converts, reflected his worry over the rebelling potential of the Christians, ordering the *daimyō* to avoid taking up Christianity and to prevent mass conversions of their subjects (and only allowing individual conversions of members of the lower classes). The second one, more directly addressed to the Fathers, declared Japan to be "the land of the Gods" and Christianity to be a "pernicious doctrine", whose diffusion in the country was to be considered undesirable. It concluded that the *bateren* could not be allowed to remain on Japanese soil, taking care of specifying, however, how such restriction should not involve the *kurofune* – i.e., the Portuguese *náo* – and, more generally, the foreign merchants operating in Japan.[34]

Still, the need to give (the right kind of) visibility to the mission, and the more general approach of Valignano's missionary strategy are aspects to be taken into close consideration, in order to understand the Jesuit sources on Japan and their impact in Europe.

33 In 1586, Coelho had actually been granted an audience in Osaka, with a group of other Fathers (including Frois, who had acted as an interpreter), and had been received in a fairly benevolent way, obtaining permission to preach the Gospel in Japan. Coelho, on the other hand, acted rather imprudently during the audience – promising to Hideyoshi to obtain for him military support from the part of the Christian *daimyō* of Kyūshū (which may have well been part of the motivation for Hideyoshi's subsequent opposition to Christianity, as it surely alerted the *kanpaku* as to how the Fathers might possess the potential influence to elicit a rebellion). An account of the audience is given in Frois 1588.

34 The Fathers' only warning before the issuing of the edicts had been a brief letter exchange between Hideyoshi and Coelho, which Coelho had handled rather clumsily (as reported in Zanetti 1590). For an in-depth analysis of the edicts and the motivations behind them, see Boscaro 1973b. Hideyoshi never actually pressed for the enforcement of the second edict, and the Jesuits were allowed to continue to live on the archipelago, even if a more demure fashion. As Berry (1989, 87-93) illustrates, moreover, Hideyoshi's victory in Kyūshū did not lead to a massive rearrangement of the power forces of the area and the Kyūshū Fathers could, consequently, continue to rely on their previous protectors. Still the edicts were a turning point for the fortunes of the mission.

3.2 The Published Jesuit Reports on Japan

The published sources on Japan produced by the missionaries in the second half of the sixteenth century include letters and reports, circulated in hundreds of translations and editions, singularly and in collections, or incorporated (often in edited – and not always referenced – form), into historical, cosmographical or political works, as well as into travel collections.

A wide number of bibliographies and studies exists, providing listings (and sometimes information) on the materials. Some of the works are focused on sources more generally related to the Jesuit missions in Asia. In particular:

- Sommervogel 1885;
- Correia-Afonso 1955;
- Carayon 1894;
- Streit 1916-55;
- Ternaux-Compans 1841.

Some bibliographies are instead devoted documents related to Japan:

- Cordier 1912;
- Oliveira e Costa 2007, 43-107;[35]
- Japan Institut 1940;
- Matsuda 1965;
- Von Wenckstern, Pages 1895.

Finally, a number of reference works focus exclusively on sources on Japan/related to Japan in some ways connected with the Christian missions:

- Boscaro 1973a;[36]
- Laures 1940 – and its subsequent, enlarged editions and supplements. The contents of the work have been made available in electronic form in a fully revised and updated version in the *Laures Rare Book Database*.[37]

35 João Paulo Oliveira e Costa's work combines information not only from most of the previous bibliographies, but also from anthologies (such as the one in three volumes Kapitza 1990) and more general catalogues listing works published in different European countries in the sixteenth century, cross-checking it, and reporting cases in which a document is only mentioned on one source (even though not going as far as verifying the existence of actual copies).

36 The work, including a complete listing of the works connected with the *Tenshō shisetsu*, has the merit of not simply including information about the documents, cross-checked from several sources, but also verifying consistencies (underlining which works are included in bibliographies but could not personally be accessed by the author).

37 URL `http://digital-archives.sophia.ac.jp/laures-kirishitan-bunko/category/kirishitan_bunko/01` (2018-03-15) The work is, as stated in its foreword, a bibliography of *Kirishitan* literature, in the broad sense of "documents […] relating to the Christian missions

The overwhelming majority of the missionary sources on Japan produced and circulated in the sixteenth century are to be ascribed to the Society of Jesus.[38] This does not surprise, considering how the Jesuits exerted an exclusive influence in Japan for the greatest part of the sixteenth century – while competing Christian orders only reached the archipelago at a time when the mission had begun its decline. Part of the reason for such an overwhelming production of sources, however, lied also in the inner workings of the Society of Jesus: by the mid-sixteenth century, the order had developed an institutionalized system for correspondence, with which no form of organized communication or intelligence system set in place by the Franciscans, the Dominicans or the Augustinians could aspire to compare.

The system for correspondence was initially devised for Europe by the founder of the Society, Ignatius of Loyola. In the later years of the 1540s, it was perfected by Juan de Polanco (appointed permanent secretary since 1547), and its scope was extended also to the overseas missions. In the following decades it was remodelled, according to changing needs, as the result of a discursive process between the administrative centre and the peripheries of the order (Delfosse 2009, 71-2). The system consisted of the regular dispatch of official reports (quarterly at first, and later annually) from the different centres of the missions to the Father General of the Company in Rome and to the Jesuit College of Coimbra in Portugal.[39] The letters were a way for the missionaries to communicate with each other and with their Superiors in Coimbra and Rome. They responded, in this sense, to the need to convey information and to help the bureaucratic machine of the Society. However, their purpose went also far beyond that. They were meant, as seen in the case of Valignano's *Sumario*, to connect

from their beginnings to the first years after the reopening of Japan to foreign intercourse". It is divided in three sections, the first devoted to "The ancient Japanese mission press" (i.e., *kirishitanban*) the second to "European works on the early missions in Japan", and the third to "The mission press of the period of the restoration of the Catholic missions". The second part is, clearly, the most relevant to the scope of the present works and very useful if one aims at narrowing the scope of research to Christian materials. For a bibliography focused on sources in Japanese and Chinese on Christianity in Japan, see instead Ebisawa 1960.

38 Noteworthy non-Jesuit sources on Japan include, actually, only a handful of titles, that even when based on information collected during the sixteenth century, were given to print in the seventeenth century. The earliest one is the general history compiled by the Franciscan Friar Marcelo de Ribadeneira, and published in Barcelona in 1601, the *Historia de las islas del archipielago* (De Ribadeneira 1601). The work, a precious eye-witness account on the activities of the Spaniards in the Philippines and in the neighbouring countries, included an in-depth narration of the Franciscan activities in Japan, as well as of the martyrdoms. It did not, however, add much to the corpus of knowledge on Japan developed by the Jesuits.

39 The letters from the East Indies were usually sorted in Goa, the administrative and religious centre of the mission in Asia. Together with official reports, other private forms of correspondence travelled between singular members of the Society, usually in separate sheets known as *hijuela*. The structure of the system is described in detail in Lach 1965, 314-31.

Jesuit communities, spread apostolic models and edifying news, and, in the final instance, build a common religious identity for the Society (Palomo 2005, 59-60). In this spirit, copies of the reports were forwarded from Rome and Coimbra to the various Jesuit colleges of Europe, as a guide and inspiration for future missionaries and other members of the Society. Given the amount of work required to sustain this system, to speed up the process of reproduction and circulation, manuscript copies soon gave way to printed ones (Palomo 2005, 74).

The reason why such a regular system of communication and publication of the reports was arranged by the Jesuits in the first place, and not mirrored (at least not to a similar extent) by different Christian orders, can likely be ascribed to the fact that no other order of the time accorded as much importance to the practice of letter-writing as the one founded by Loyola. One peculiar element of the Jesuit missionary approach was the way in which it combined Christian belief with humanist moral values. Jesuit thinkers highly valued the mastery of *eloquentia* (that is, proficiency in the language arts and, more specifically, in the rhetorical practice, including the composition of letters); it was considered a means, in itself, to moral perfection and a strategic tool to propagate the Christian message, edify the audiences, and, more prosaically, win the patronage of the ruling classes. Letter-writing was, in other words, instrumental to that pursue of publicity that, as seen in describing Valignano's approach, was vital to the very survival of the missions. To quote Boswell,

> The cultivation of rhetorical prowess was also strategic in enlisting the patronage of the elite. The overall success of the society depended significantly on the benefices of the ruling classes, as Jesuits did not accept fees for preaching or for celebrating Mass, and because they were not a mendicant order. They therefore had to depend on the liberality of others to establish and sustain their colleges. Although some among the mendicant orders likewise distinguished themselves by rhetorical skill to obtain important offices or to win patronage, the Jesuit strategy [… was] to win favor by demonstrating results to the ruling classes in the rhetorical practices of preaching and teaching. The Jesuits demonstrated that they could effectively propagate the Catholic faith by taking an active role in society among the ignorant, the lapsed, and the heretical. The Jesuits' success in preaching and teaching was crucial to the effectiveness of this religious activism. As a result of their accomplishments, the society was able to secure the benefices of the wealthy and powerful to establish yet more colleges and to further their cause. Thus the Jesuit pursuit of eloquence was instrumental to their growth and renown**.** (Boswell 2003, 248)

The constant flow of information from the overseas missions was, on the other hand, very welcome to the central authorities of the Catholic Church. By the mid-sixteenth century, the Roman Church was facing, in full, the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation. The Council of Trent, held between 1545 and 1563, marked the beginning of the Catholic response to the Protestant threat, setting in place a set of measures – both passive (i.e., the enactment of a strict censorship) and active (the movement known as 'Catholic Revival') – that fell under the policies of the 'Counter-Reformation'. In this climate of religious controversy, the news of the conversions of faraway populations, and more generally of the successes of the Catholic faith overseas, could work as a powerful ideological instrument, to be spread throughout Europe, and set against the losses locally suffered by the Catholics. Printing the letters was, in fact, also a way of exposing them to a wider public. That this was a conscious intent is reflected in the fact that the letters were not merely printed, but published and placed in a circuit of commercial distribution. In this sense, printed Jesuit reports became vehicles through which the European public gained information about the missions, as well as, collaterally, about the geography, climate, culture and contemporary political events of the countries in which the missionaries were stationed. The published letter-books, with their wide accessibility, made knowledge about Eastern Asia available to the European readership in a way previously unthinkable.

Reports from Japan retained a prominence among published Jesuit missionary reports throughout the second half of the sixteenth century – so much so that, as Lach points out (1965, 321), many later writers gave the Jesuit letters from this period the generic title of *Japan letters*. This fact should not be surprising. The prominence of 'Japan letters' was connected to the centrality of the Japanese mission during this phase of the Jesuit enterprise in Asia: as seen above, unlike in India, the Jesuits were the first Christian order to reach Japan, and they retained exclusive influence over the archipelago, as per open Papal instructions (included in the *Ex pastoralis ufficio*, dated 1585) until the 1590s, when the first Spanish Franciscans made their way to the archipelago from the Philippines (Massarella 1990, 15-24). Moreover, as seen above, the mission achieved promising results, at least up to the death of Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582) and the rise of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598), when the first persecutions against Christians began in Japan. It makes sense, therefore, that the Jesuits deemed the reports about the mission as appropriate edifying material. The Jesuit writings came therefore to offer a steady and rich source of information about the Japanese archipelago, actively contributing, for the first time, to the construction of a coherent European imaginary of Japan.

3.3 Francis Xavier's Reports: Laying the Foundations of the Mission

The earliest Jesuit reports on Japan to be dispatched to Europe were the ones written by the founder of the Japanese mission, Francis Xavier: a total of ten letters composed before, during and right after his trip to Japan from 1549 to 1551: one letter in Cochin before his departure, five in Kagoshima upon his arrival and four in Cochin, after his return.

A selection of the letters was circulated in published form in Europe very shortly after its reception. It included

- a letter from Cochin, written by Xavier on January 14, 1549, before his departure from Japan, and accompanied by a letter by Father Nicolao Lancillotto, reporting the information relayed by Yajirō on Japan; the letter, titled "Copie et estratto delle lettere di M. Francesco Xauier con la informatione di Paolo di Giapan, et alcuni capitoli della lettera di Nicolao Lancillotto del Cocin. Estratto di certe lettere dell'India, et d'una di Maestro Francesco Xauier di Cocin à dodici di Gennaro 1549. Alcuni capitoli di una lettera di Nicolao Lancillotto di Cocin à uentisei di Decembre 1548", was included in a collection by Michele Tramezzino (Xavier 1562); the report was also later reprinted in the second edition of the first volume of Ramusio's collection of travel literature, *Navigationi et viaggi* (Ramusio 1554).
- a report from Kagoshima, addressed to the Jesuit college of Coimbra in Portugal and dated November 5, 1549; it was first included, with the title "Copia de una lettera del Padre Maestro Francesco Xauier dal Giapan indrizata al Colleggio della scolari de detta Compagnia in Coymbra di Portugallo" in a collection by Dorico and Bressani (Xavier 1552),[40] and subsequently reprinted both in Ramusio (1554), although wrongly dated October 5, 1549, and in a collection by Michele Tramezzino (Xavier 1558a);
- one report written by Xavier, again from Cochin, upon his return from the archipelago, and addressed to the Society of Jesus; it was included, under the title "Copia d'vna lettera del P.M. Francesco Xauier, preposito provinciale della Compagnia di Iesu nell'Indie, per tutti quelli di essa Compagnia in Europa, riceuuta nel mese di Marzo. 1553" included in the same collection by Tramezzino (Xavier 1558b).

40 The letter is preceded by a brief introduction relating about the discovery of Japan, grouped with the letter under the title: "Copia de alcune littere del Padre Maestro Francesco Xauier & altri padri della Compagnia de Iesu del Iapon nuovamente scoperto & de Maluco tradotte in Italiano riceuute l'anno 1552".

The first report from Cochin illustrates the events that prompted Xavier to travel to the Japanese archipelago. The Father relates about his encounter, in Manila, with Paolo (Yajirō) and two other Japanese natives, and about the promising attitudes all of them showed towards learning in general, and the Christian doctrine in particular:

> [Giapan] is an island close to China, where everyone is gentile, and not Moor, nor Jew; and they are very curious people, and eager to learn new things about God. […] Three young men from that island of Giapan are in the College of Holy Faith in Goa, and they are people of good costumes, and of great intellect, especially Paolo. […] Paolo, in eight months, has learned to read, write and speak Portuguese […] I have great hope in God Our Lord that we will manage to make many Christians in Giapan, and I am resolved to go. (Xavier 1562, f. 15)[41]

Xavier proceeds to illustrate his plans for the voyage, accounting, in particular, for how he intends to travel first to Japan's "King" and then to Japanese Colleges, where they preach, allegedly, a doctrine imported from China. He adds that he will send, together with the manuscript of the letter, a sample of Japanese writing by the hands of Paolo (which is not, however, reproduced in any form in the published work).

The letter is followed by Nicolao Lancillotto's account of Yajirō's report on Japan, that represents one of the earliest full-fledged description of the archipelago to have been circulated, in print, in Europe. The account opens with a rough description of the political system of the country – presented as an island governed by a single "King", who commands fourteen "Lords similar to Dukes, and Counts"[42] (who in turn exert control on dominions passed on in hereditary fashion, from first-born to first-born). The King, called *Voo* (in all probability a rendition of the term Ō)[43] possesses, much like the Pope in Europe, spiritual authority over Ja-

41 "[Il Giapan] è una isola presso alla Cina dove sono tutti gentili, non Mori, né Giudei, & gente molto curiosa, & desiderosa di sapere cose nuove di Dio […] Sono tre gioveni nel Collegio di Santa Fede di Goa di quell'isola di Giapan […] & narrano gran cose di quelle parti del Giapan, & sono persone di buoni costumi, & grande ingegno, spetialmente Paolo. […] Paolo in otto mesi imparò a leggere, scrivere, e parlar Portughese […]. Ho grande speranza e questa tutta in Dio Signor Nostro che s'habbiano da fare molti Christiani nel Giapan, & sono risoluto di andare". Translated by the Author.

42 "Signori simili a Duchi, & Conti" (Xavier 1562, f. 18).

43 In this case, the term seems to be referred to the Emperor, while the title *Gozo*, which, as Lach (1965, 661) suggests, could be a rendition of *gosho* (the term indicating the imperial palace, which had come to be applied to the ruler himself) is probably referred to the shogun. Actually, the problem of the double sovereignty in Japan, touched upon in several passages of the Jesuit reports, is not treated with much terminological coherence. De Torres (1565) would write of the dichotomy between the *Zazzo* (the spiritual authority,

pan, but leaves all practical matters of government, such as war and the administration of justice, in the hands of the man called *Gozo*. In spite of being in all respects the effective ruler of the island, the *Gozo* remains, nonetheless, subject to the *Voo* and can be stripped of his power by him at any moment.

The report proceeds to give some examples of the workings of the Japanese justice system, as applied to both life in the court and the common population.[44] The rest of the account is devoted to a (pretty miscellaneous) description of Japanese religion – in the sketchy and for the most grossly inaccurate terms in which it had been relayed by Yajirō. Three kind of religious groups (composed of both men and women) are said to exist in Japan,[45] and to conduct a monastic kind of life,[46] both inside and outside the cities. They are celibate, shave their heads and beards, eat in communities and refrain from eating meat, so as to avoid temptation (and sometimes completely abstain from food, much as the Fathers). They preach frequently, in a way much similar to the Europeans. Their prayers, apparently unintelligible to the ones who are not educated among their ranks (such as Yajirō), are described as, nonetheless, able to move their hearers to deep emotion. They "preach only one God, creator of all things, and they preach Purgatory, Paradise and Hell [...] and that [God] they call Doniche".[47] Such teachings have been delivered to them by "Xaqua" (Shaka), the founder of Buddhism, and carried from China to Japan, together with five main moral precepts ("the first, not to kill, the second,

i.e., presumably the emperor) and the *Voo* (the shogun), who in turn delegated his power to the *Gunge*, *Enge* and *Doxo*. In the "Lettera Annale del Giapone..." (1591), the emperor would instead be referred to as the *Dairi*, whose sovereignty in Japan had been stolen "500 years ago". On the representation of dual sovereignty in Japan in European literature, see Baty 1951, 24-39.

44 The letter relates, for example, about the legitimacy of murder from the part of the husband in case of adultery. (Xavier 1562, ff. 19-20).

45 Only a superficial description is given of the three religious groups, who are distinguished on the base of the colour of their clothes (black and grey) and of the enumeration of their alleged virtues and vices (such as the addiction to sodomy, or the tendency of the priest and nuns to entertain sexual intercourse). The text does not leave, in this sense, much way for the identification of the Buddhist sects it may be referring to. It might be noted, as Ellis (2003) underlines, that the accusation of sodomy was one that was often addressed by the Spaniards, and by Spanish literature on the New World, to native Americans, so as to justify their territorial conquests on a moral ground. It made sense, therefore, that the Jesuits would employ the same accusation so as to disqualify their religious opponents. The same allegation would be repeated, as we will see, by Xavier himself, as well as by many later Jesuit writers.

46 "They have monasteries, like friars" ("Hanno monasterji à modo di frati") (Xavier 1562, f. 20).

47 "Predicano un solo Dio creator di tutte le cose, predicano il Purgatorio, Paradiso, & Inferno [...] il quale [Iddio] chiamano Doniche" (Xavier 1562, ff. 20-1).

not to steal, the third, not to fornicate, the fourth, not to be disturbed by things without remedy, the fifth, to forgive insults").[48]

The report proceeds to the description of a number of Buddhist practices (such as the performing of prayers and penances) as well as of other Japanese costumes supposedly bearing strong resemblances with European ones – which leads the writer to conclude that "in their costumes, and vivacity of mind, they [the Japanese] are really similar to us".[49] The resemblance is both intellectual and physical: the Japanese are described as "white", as the Europeans, and sharing similar costumes and the same way of conducting government, as well as a love for virtue and literary arts. The author even ventures to express the idea that the Gospel might have been preached in the country in the past, by some of the "Armenian missionaries" that had spread primitive Christianity in China during the Middle Ages. The report closes, consequently, by evaluating the chances of the diffusion of Buddhism in Japan with great optimism.

The report from Kagoshima relates of the events leading to the establishment of the Jesuit mission in Japan. It opens by narrating the tortuous navigation of the small group of missionaries from Malacca to the Japanese archipelago. According to Xavier's report, the Chinese captain of the ship procrastinated the navigation to Japan with a number of unarranged detours, so that the missionaries ran the risk of having to spend the winter in China (Xavier 1552, 282-7). The letter then proceeds to discuss Xavier's arrival in Kagoshima, and the warm reception he and the other members of his group were granted in the city. Xavier illustrates his resolution to learn the Japanese language and his intention to travel to Meaco (Miyako, i.e., Kyoto), the main city of Japan – where the "King" and the most important Lords reside, and where the Buddhist "universities" can be found.[50]

The letter includes also Xavier's earliest first-hand assessment of the Japanese population. Much in accord with the tone of his previous letter, his description sounds remarkably optimistic and admiring. He describes the Japanese people as "the best that have yet been discovered":[51] good in conversation, righteous and not malicious, and respecting honour more than anything else – even more than richness, as the Japanese are generally poor, but neither the noblemen nor the members of the lower classes

48 "Il primo che non ammazzassino, il secondo che non rubassino, il terzo che non fornicassino, il quarto che non si pigliassero passione delle cose che non hanno remedio, il quinto che perdonassino l'ingiuria". (Xavier 1562, f. 22).

49 "Ne' costumi,& vivacità de ingegno sono molto conformi à noi". (Xavier 1562, f. 24)

50 Xavier writes about a main university inside the city, hosting the five main Buddhist colleges and more than two hundred Buddhist houses, and of five more, located in the outskirts of the city (Xavier 1552, 303-4).

51 "La gente che habbiamo conversato, è la migliore che in sin'adesso si sia scoperta & fra gli infideli me pare non se troveria altra migliore" (Xavier 1552, 288).

are shamed for that. The noblemen are, apparently, held in great esteem and only marry among themselves. They always carry swords and daggers, and so does every member of the population, ever since the age of fourteen. They are moderate in eating and drinking, and very healthy, so that they usually live up to old age. The majority of the population is literate and can read and write. They only take one wife, and rarely steal, as their justice system is really strict. Xavier expresses optimism in regard to the possibility of evangelization, as the Japanese seem open and curious towards the Christian doctrine, and better disposed toward it than any other infidel population he has met. They "take pleasure in hearing things congruent with their reason, and while they are not exempt from vices and sins, when they are shown reason and it is demonstrated to them that they are acting wrong, they accept it".[52] Xavier only has reproaches to make when it comes to the country's religious groups, that are held in great esteem by the common population, but are prone to vices such as sodomy and promiscuity, and unapologetic about it. [53] Even in relation to Buddhist monks there are, on the other hands, exceptions. Xavier relates, for example, of his friendship with the Buddhist priest Ninxit (Ninshitsu, abbot of the Fukushōji), in whose conduct he finds no reproach.[54]

Very similar in tone and content is the later account from Cochin – if only slightly more moderated in its enthusiasm, and reflecting, conversely, a deepened knowledge of the archipelago. Xavier reports once again of the warm welcome he received in Kagoshima, and proceeds to a narration of what followed that first encounter with the Japanese population, and with a detailed narration of the earlier phases of the Jesuit mission in Japan. He reports about his departure from Kagoshima (where Paolo was left behind to preach), his visit to Miyako, the establishment of footholds for the mission in Hirado and Yamaguchi and the encounter with the "Duke of Bungo". He intersects the narration with accounts of contemporary political events in Japan, such as the shift in power in Yamaguchi, which led to the establishment of the brother of Ōtomo Yoshishige as *daimyō*. He dispels the belief expressed in Lancillotto's account that the Japanese might have been converted to Christianism before, declaring that no one there seems to possess any kind of previous knowledge about Christ.

The report includes also a new general description of the country, "discovered eight or nine years before by the Portuguese". Xavier depicts it

52 "Si dilettano de sentire cose conforme a la loro ragione, & benché siano vitii e peccati fra loro, quando lo danno ragione, mostrando essere mal fatto quello che fanno, l'accettano" (Xavier 1552, 290).

53 "[Quando vengono ripresi] ridono di quello, non si vergognando di essere ripresi di tanti brutti peccati" (Xavier 1552, 290).

54 On Ninshitsu's relationship with Xavier, see Laures 1952, 407-11.

as a large archipelago, united by a common language, which (in spite of his own difficulties) he deems as "not hard to learn".[55] He describes the Japanese as honourable, exceedingly skilled in war (and with weapons in general), and very civil towards each other, if not always towards strangers. He reports that they have but one king,[56] who, however, has not been obeyed for 150 years, so that the country is affected by a state of continuous internecine war.

The major section of the report is, once again, focused on religion. Xavier describes the Buddhist monks and nuns as divided into two main groups (respectively dressed in black and grey, and generally hostile towards each other). A total of nine sects exists, among which the population is allowed to choose freely, so that sometimes members of a same family belong to different sects. The doctrine professed by the monks and nuns is said to have been imported from China, where it was preached by men, who "were great penitents, more than 1000, 2000 and 3000 years [ago] and whose names are Xaca and Amedia".[57] Every sect has different moral precepts, but all of them preach a number of common rules of behaviour, which are not to kill, not to eat anything that is dead, not to steal, not to fornicate, not to lie, not to drink wine.

Xavier reports of several doctrinal confrontations with the monks, as well as of the main doubts and objections addressed to him by the common population.[58] The overall judgement of the religious groups is not better than it was in the first letter. They are said to be prone to vice, and also to enrich themselves at the expenses of the common population, falsely promising to liberate them from their sins, and save their souls from hell, in exchange for money donations – so that those who are poor are not put in the condition of being able to save themselves.[59]

On the other hand, his general good impression on the Japanese population is not shaken. He insists, once again, on their diffused literacy, remarking on how the majority of the population, men and women, can read and write, especially the aristocrats and the merchants. And he describes them as "more obedient to reason, than any other Infidels I have met, and

55 "In tutta questa terra non c'è più d'una lingua: e questa non è molto difficile da apparare". (Xavier 1558b, f. 120).

56 Probably referring, in this instance, to the shogun, more than the emperor.

57 "Huomini, che fecero gran penitentie, piu di 1000, 2000, & 3000 anni li cui nomi sono Xaca & Amedia [Shaka and Amida]". (Xavier 1558b, f. 121).

58 In particular, the incompatibility of the idea of an all-mighty Lord and the existence of evil in the world (and, consequently, of a Hell without return) (Xavier 1558b, f. 122). This, as seen above, had appeared as a recurring object of debate with the 'gentiles' also in earlier narratives, such as Rubruck's.

59 Xavier was referring to the practice of almsgiving (Xavier 1558b, f. 122).

so curious and ready to ask, so eager to know, that they never cease to question".[60] Such assessment leaves him, upon his departure for China, optimistic about the chances of success of the Christian religion in Japan.

While offering a punctual narration of the early developments of the mission, Xavier's writings can't be relied upon as an in-depth source of information on Japan per se. Xavier's sketchy depiction of the Japanese population, traced in the form of a list inherently attributed qualities, does not really do justice to the complexity of Japanese culture and society in the Sengoku era. In spite of the reports' insistent focus on religion, moreover, what emerges from the letters is merely a superficial knowledge of the Japanese religious background: while Xavier attacks the Buddhist bonzes on a moral level, he never truly challenges them on a theological level. Moreover, he does not seem to take notice of Shinto, either as a separated cult, or as an element of Buddhism.[61] Xavier's letters are, however, highly informative in another respect. They are a fundamental instrument to understand the basic premises on which missionary activity was being settled in Japan. They, moreover, point to how the Jesuits – and through them European readers – came to conceive Japan, and provide the first sketch of an imaginary that would influence the European literary production on the Japanese archipelago well into the seventeenth century. They highlight, in other words, how the Jesuits perceived both Japan and themselves, in relation to the archipelago and their mission.

Caputo (2016) underlines how Xavier (1552) has a founding value in this regard. It was the first 'Japan letter' to appear in print in Europe, and its publication contributed both to the consecration of Xavier as an "*exemplum* dell'*Ecclesia Militans*" (Caputo 2016, 156) in the eye of the European public, and to the creation of a "model narrative" that would influence the representation of Japan in subsequent published letters. This narrative is based on the dramatization of the opposition between good and evil. Through the letter, Xavier's voyage to Japan is projected into the realm of divine providence: the specific reality of Japan and of Xavier's mission is inscribed in eternal dimension of God's Will, where the conversion of the 'Gentiles' is inevitable, much as the conversion of the pagans of Europe's past. In this perspective, all obstacles to the good outcome of the voyage are construed as enemies to God's will. Such is the case of the captain of the ship leading Xavier to Japan, who, in delaying the trip and in confiding in Idols, becomes the incarnation of an impersonal pagan alterity (Caputo 2016, 168-9). And such is the case of Japan's religious groups, who are

60 "Più obbedienti alla ragione, che gente infidele, che già abbia mai visto, e tanto curiosi e importuni in dimandare, tanto desiderosi del sapere, che mai finiscono di interrogare" (Xavier 1558b, f. 126).

61 Possibly, as Ellis (2003, 160) suggests, because the idea of religious syncretism was alien to a man whose background lied in Reformation Europe.

presented as the antihitetis of Christians, in a way that is rendered all the more evident by their superficial similarities to the European clergy.

Xavier's letter becomes a model for future writings on Japan also in the sense that it establishes a series of recurring traits attributed to the Japanese by Jesuit writers: their (external and internal) similarity to Europeans, their honour and virtue; all characteristics that, in spite of religious differences, make them ideal actors in the Divine Plan carried out by the Jesuits.

As Caputo (2016, 185) underlines, Xavier is not always consistent in his narrative. In some cases, as with his friend Ninshitsu, the 'factuality' of his experience overcomes the 'mythical' dimension of his narration, while in other the narrative simply becomes dominated by his intellectual curiosity towards the cultural reality of Japan – something that would recur also in later Jesuit writers and sometimes incur in censorship. However, his letters reveal "as much about mid-sixteenth-century Europe, in the throes of religious reformation and imperialist expansion, as about Japan itself" (Ellis 2003, 156).

3.4 The Published Jesuit Letter-books: Shaping an Imaginary of Japan

The idea of the Japanese as a people in possess of 'reason', one that recurs in Xavier's writings, carried a philosophical weight deeply rooted in the Christian tradition, and, in particular, in the thought of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). The concept of 'reason' functioned, in Thomist thought, as an element of distinction between populations that had to be converted. 'Reason' was identified by Aquinas as the defining characteristic of 'humanity' – the absolute element that distinguished human beings from animals. All people possessing the 'right reason' shared a common intellectual and moral framework, identified as 'natural law', from which the Christian religious system was assumed to directly derive. The logical consequence to this assumption was that all beings deemed as rational were considered naturally prone, if shown the way by means of rational instruction, to convert. On the contrary, people conceived as not 'rational' should, in order to be saved, be forced into the adoption of civil customs, and into conversion.[62]

62 The notion of 'right reason', as expressed by Thomas Aquinas, had come to play a central role in the debate that had aroused, in the aftermath of Da Gama's and Christopher Columbus' voyages, among the various Christian orders engaged in evangelisation overseas. The confrontation had first sparked in the New World – precisely, in the American island of Hispaniola, in 1511 – between the Dominican Order, and the Franciscan Order, that detained religious monopoly under the Spanish settlers. The Dominicans had accused the Spaniards, and the Franciscans that supported them, of maintaining an inexcusably tyrannical attitude towards the natives. They had remarked that the natives were loaded with such amounts of

This theoretical framework functioned as a fundamental background for the elaboration of Jesuit cosmography in the second half of the sixteenth century. As Massarella (1996) illustrates, this influence clearly emerges in the writings of one of the most important Jesuit theorists – the missionologist José de Acosta. In his 1588 work, *De procuranda indorum salute*, Acosta classified the "barbarian" inhabitants of the world outside Europe according to three different categories: those who lived in stable and settled societies, and used letters; the unlettered, who nevertheless lived in organized societies; and, lastly, nomadic tribes, lacking both orderly cities and literacy, and living in an unsettled and ungoverned fashion – in other words, in an almost bestial state. In the first category, he included most of the populations residing in the East Indies, including the Japanese. He described such populations as not departing much "from right reason and the common usage of humanity", and having

> a stable form of government [respublica], public laws, fortified cities respected magistrates, secure and prosperous commerce, and that which is most important, use and knowledge of letters, for wherever there are books and written monuments, the people are more humane and politic. To this class belong in the first rank the Chinese. […] Following them are the Japanese and many other provinces of East India. (Massarella 1996, 144)[63]

Acosta's categorization referred also to the notion of paganism – or the concept of 'gentiles' – that, in the Renaissance period, had become a well established 'inclusive' category of otherness in European intellectual discourse, in the framework of a basic opposition between the civilized and the uncivilized (or barbarian), that could be traced back as far as Aristotle.

> The appeal of paganism also lay in the fact that there was an enormous body of literature on the subject going back to Patristic antiquity. This

work, that they did not even have them the time to receive a proper Christian instruction. Fray Montesinos, spokesman of the Dominicans, had backed his accusation by appealing to the basic humanity of the natives, arguing that their possess of 'right reason' put them on the same grounds as the Spanish conquerors. The Spanish settlers and Franciscans, from their part, had refuted the stance of the Dominicans, precisely by diminishing the humanity of their subjects: they deemed them as natural slaves, who could not be guided to conversion by instruction, but only by coercion. They even openly compared them to animals, saying they would only repeat prayers mechanically, "like parrots". By the 1550s, the confrontation had been taken to Europe, were it had also come to revolve around the newly encountered Asian populations. See in this regard Massarella (2008).

63 In the last category, Acosta numbered instead most of the populations of the New World, and some of the Moluccas. In the second, the Aztecs and the Incas, and some lesser kingdoms and principalities.

> literature, which grew to epidemic proportions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was rich and broad enough to embrace the new peoples in Asia and the Americas. It provided a vocabulary for understanding and describing not simply pagan religion but paganism as an entire organization of life: Since the eighth century, the term *gentiles* had been used synonymously with *barbari* by a Christian Europe still quite vulnerable to barbarian invasion. There was no problem in seeing exotics through this lens since paganism, like Christianity, was a transhistorical category. It was thus more than a merely self-validating category like 'barbarian' or 'wild man' or 'savage'. Finally, the fact that exotics were pagans served to guarantee their humanity in a crucial way: They could and, according to Biblical prophecies, would be converted to Christianity. (Ryan 1981, 525)

However, paganism did not work as the only distinctive element in Acosta's rank of civilizations. In a way that called back to the humanist moral values that were at the core of the Jesuit approach to religion (and that, in many ways, singled them out among the Christian orders) he also pointed to political and social structures, as well as to literacy, as signs of civilization.

Corollary to this hierarchical vision of world civilizations was also the idea that different strategies had to be applied for the conversion of different populations. Acosta underlined that the only way to bring societies of the lowest level to adhere to natural law was to force them to adopt civilized manners and then coerce them into the "true" religion. Illiterate communities with more complex social organizations, while being submitted to a strict regime, in order to be brought to the Christian truth, should instead not be forced into conversion: compromises could be made with their customs, as long as they did not depart from "natural law". Societies belonging to the highest level of civilization, on the other hand, had already, in Acosta's eyes, basically everything in common with Europe in terms of adherence to natural law. The only step to be taken with them would be to guide them to the Christian Revelation by means of reason. That did not mean that missionaries were supposed to overlook the existence of differences. Quite the contrary, it meant that they had to acknowledge them: accept that natural law identified with a universal ideal of humanity that could not be strictly equated to European costumes, and which, on the contrary, could find expression into different societal forms. The missionaries operating in the East Indies were supposed to learn about the specific forms they were dealing with, coming to understand the languages and customs of the people they aimed at converting, in order for their efforts to bear success.

This was also, to the core, the moving principle behind the strategy of adaptation adopted by Valignano (as described above): the fact that Japanese society responded in all ways to natural law meant that the Japanese were already as apt as Europeans to receive the Christian Revelation; that

they shared with the Europeans a common intellectual framework, where arguments favourable to Christianity could be presented, discussed, and understood as true. The Japanese people, therefore, did not need to be induced to adopt European manners, in order to be converted. On the contrary, it was up to the Jesuits to accommodate and compromise with local customs. Missionaries were to acquire knowledge and understanding of the Japanese language and manners, in order to grasp the best ways to rationally demonstrate to the Japanese people the Christian doctrine.

While, in concrete, not all the Jesuit missionaries stationed in the East Indian colleges smoothly adhered to this line of thought, this stance became the basic premise for the management of the Japanese mission in the sixteenth century. Much of Acosta's evaluation of Japan, actually, relied on what other missionaries, who had experienced life in the archipelago and direct contact with the Japanese, had written before him – including Xavier and Valignano.

Xavier was no theorist of the mission like Acosta, but his descriptions of the Japanese deeply resonated with the assessment of the archipelago included in the *Procuranda*: the stress on the Japanese political and justice system, the focus on the complexity of social structures and usages, the insistence on the literacy of the Japanese and on their rational and inquisitive nature – all elements that, in the eyes of Xavier, put Japan on the high ranks of an hypothetical hierarchy of civilization, and that led him to deem the Japanese as the "best people that have yet been discovered".

As seen above, in Xavier's (and his contemporaries') reports, Japan is not (or not mainly) described for itself: the stress in the writing is put on confronting Japanese practices, manners and customs with European ones. And, in the framework above presented, it should not surprise, as we've seen, that similarities are highlighted as much as, if not more than differences. This attitude is best exemplified in a quote from the report by Nicolao Lancillotto on Yajirō's description of Japan:

> These people, being in the same climate as we are, are white like us, and of the same stature; they are discreet, noble people, and they love virtue and the literary arts, and hold scholars in great consideration. Their costumes, and their way of conducting government both in peace and war are similar to ours. [64]

Later missionaries' writings (while reflecting a progressively deepening knowledge of Japanese culture and society) seem to operate in a very

64 "Questi popoli trovandosi sotto il medesimo clima che noi, sono ancora bianchi, & della medesima statura, è gente discreta, nobile, & che ama la virtù, & lettere, e tenendo in gran venerazione i letterati. I costumi, & modo di reggere la republica in pace, & in guerra sono conformi à nostri" (Xavier 1562, f. 25).

similar mind-set. In a 1554 letter, for example, Pietro d'Alcacena, once again narrating of the religious debates in which the Jesuit Fathers usually engaged with the Japanese Christians, concluded that the Japanese were "such Christians that […] I could not tell the difference between them and our brothers". [65] In a 1561 letter, father Cosme de Torres, compared the Japanese inclination towards honour to that of the Ancient Romans, commenting on how such attitude was what made them respect parents and friends, in spite of their lack of fear in God.[66] Alessandro Valignano, in his unpublished work, the *Historia del Principio y Progresso de la Compania de Jesus en las Indias Orientales (1542-64)*, stated that the Japanese excelled "not only all other Oriental people, but surpass the European as well".[67] This quote would be a much cited one in contemporary published literature on Japan. Giovanni Pietro Maffei, for example, would include it in his *Historiarvm Indicarvm Libri*, first published in 1588 (which, as seen, largely drew on Valignano's manuscript). Very similarly, in his work focused on the *Tenshō shisetsu*, Guido Gualtieri would define the Japanese as people of "good reason" ("buona ragione"), and declare that "it can't be denied that those people are all of good and courteous nature, and have such good disposition that they are superior not only to the Indians [i.e., the inhabitants of the East Indies] but to Europeans as well".[68] Gualtieri also commented on the "natural" Japanese rapidity in learning and on the general civility that, among them, characterized even the members of the lower classes – an observation that frequently recurred in Jesuit writings.[69]

That did not mean that the Japanese were absolutely singled out among East Asian populations. As a result of the centrality of the Japanese mission for the Society of Jesus in the sixteenth century, Japan indeed became

65 "Christiani tali, che […] non potrei far differenza da loro à nostri fratelli" (Alcacena 1558, f. 177).

66 "La gente è molto bellicosa, simile agli antichi romani per le questioni d'onore. Proprio l'onore è il loro principale idolo, e ne derivano guerre e uccisioni, tanto che arrivano anche a uccidere se stessi quando ritengono di averlo perso. Per lo stesso motivo evitano di fare cose come rubare e portare via la donna d'altri, e dunque, nonostante non temano Dio, poiché non credono esserci altra vita la di là della presente, nondimeno per via dell'onore hanno rispetto per parenti e amici" (De Torres 1565). The comparison – a subtle way to underline the basic similarity between Japanese and Europeans, where the fundamental element of distinction, as it had been in the case of Ancient Romans, was the lack of access to the "true" faith – held even more weight considering how the Jesuits looked up to the Ancient Romans as models of eloquence.

67 The quote is reported as cited in Kowner 2004, 755.

68 "Non si può negare, che quella gente non sia tutta generalmente di natura nobile e cortese, e abbia sì buon naturale, che quanto a questa parte faccia vantaggio non solo agli Indiani, ma anco a nostri Europei" (Gualtieri 1586).

69 See for example the "Lettera scritta di Bungo…" (1565, f. 9).

central to the Jesuit writings (both in quantitative and qualitative terms).[70] On the other hand, however, by the final decade of the century a growing number of authors – Jesuits and non-Jesuit alike – had come to write of the archipelago in association to its neighbouring countries. Much as Acosta had grouped Japan with the "provinces of East India", several writers pointed to the resemblance between the Japanese and the neighbouring populations, above all in terms of physical appearance. [71] This was the case, for example, of Juan González De Mendoza, the Augustinian author of one of the earliest full-fledged published European works on China, the *Historia de las cosas más notables, ritos y costumbres del gran reyno de la China* (De Mendoza 1585). In the one chapter of his work focused on Japan, Mendoza, while drawing largely on the published Jesuit sources for everything else, added a personal speculation on the origin of the Japanese, that linked them directly to the Chinese population, precisely on the ground of physical similarity.[72]

It is worth noting that the Japanese, as well as the neighbouring populations to whom they were physically compared, were equated to the Europeans also in terms of skin colour. The description of the Japanese as 'white' (that traced back to Garcia Escalante De Alvarado's account, as well as, as shown above, to the earlier Jesuits) was a recurring element in the representation of the Japanese population in both the sixteenth and the seventeenth century, not only in missionaries' writings, but also in the works of early Dutch and English writers Kowner (2004, 754).

Nicolao Lancillotto associated the whiteness of the Japanese people to climate. The argument recalled an intellectual debate which was in full

70 As well as in practical matters such as the formation of a native clergy, a 'privilege' reserved in the beginning only to the Japanese (and only later extended to the Chinese and Koreans). See Kowner 2004, 756.

71 For a collection of quotes, see Kowner 2004, 754-6.

72 The Japanese were said to have originated from a group of Chinese, exiled to the archipelago from the continent after a failed attempt at rebellion: "These islands are many (as aforesaid), yet are they populated with much people, who in their bodies and faces differ very little from the Chinos, although not so politike: [by the which it seemed to be true, that which is found written in the histories of the kingdom of China, saying that these Japones in old time were Chinas, and that they came from that mightie kingdome unto these ilands. Whereas they do now dwell, for this occasion following. A kinsman of a king of China, a man of great countenance and valour, having conceived within his brest for to kill the king, and thereby to make himself lorde of the countrie, the better to put this in execution, he gave to understand of his evill intent unto others of his friends, requesting their favour to execute the same, promising that he would do his best. This being done, […] they did promise him […]. Their treason came to be discovered unto the king. […] He comanded they should not die, but be banished for ever out of the kingdome, with precise band, that they, their wives and children, and all that should come of them, should for ever live on those ilands that are now called Iapon, which were at that time desert and without people". The quote is taken from the 1588 English translation of the work, as included in Staunton 1854, 294-302.

heat in Europe by the time of the arrival of the Jesuits on the archipelago: the one between supporters of a 'polygenist' theory of humankind and supporters of the idea of 'human unity'. The debate was part of the European intellectuals' way to cope with the new 'reality' of the populations of the African, Asian and American continents. Theorists of the first group argued that the 'new' populations encountered, displaying such a different range of physical characteristics from the Europeans, had to be part of a different ancestry altogether: they had to be, in other words, not "sons of Adams", and therefore not truly part of the human race. Opponents of the theory insisted instead on the unity of humankind, attributing differences in physical appearances to the effects of climate and environment. It made sense for Jesuits theorists to fall in the second group, considering the view of the world and humanity expressed in Acosta's writings. And, indeed, the polygenist theory had officially been rejected by the Roman Church with a Bull issued by Pope Paul III in 1537, asserting the humanity of the populations of the New World.[73]

On the other hand, environmental motivations were often coupled, by the same Christian writers, with less 'neutral' explanations connected to biblical tradition – the 'Ham' curse and the idea of divine punishment were used, for example, as an explanation for the skin colour of black Africans.[74] In the same way, the idea of 'whiteness', associated with the Japanese, did seem to be imply an inherent (positive) value judgement for the Jesuit writers. At least, enough for Valignano to write

> Withal there is this difference between the Indian and the Japanese Christians […] each one of the former was converted from some individual ulterior motive, and *since they are blacks, and of small sense*, they are subsequently very difficult to improve and turn into good Christians; whereas the Japanese usually become converted, not on some whimsical individual ulterior motive (since it is their suzerains who expect to benefit thereby and not them themselves) but only in obedience to their lord's command; and *since they are white and of good understandin*g and behaviour, and greatly driven to outward show, they readily frequent the churches and sermons, and when they are instructed they become very good Christians, albeit the lords who have an eye on the main chance and are so preoccupied with warfare are usually the worst.[75]

73 For an overview of the debate and in general on sixteenth-century European views on race, see Leupp 2003, 14-16.

74 For an in-depth analysis of environmental theories and the use of Bible references to explain diversity, see Hodgen 2011, 207-94.

75 Emphasis added. The excerpt, from the *Historia del Principio y Progresso de la Compania de Jesus en las Indias Orientales (1542-64)*, is quoted in Boxer 1951, 94.

Of course, in the embryonic ethnical constructions built by late sixteenth/early seventeenth century Jesuit writers, physical characteristics were a factor still too largely overshadowed by cultural and religious considerations to constitute a 'racial' discourse, in the modern sense of the term.[76]

Surely, though, the writings were a rudimentary expression of the mechanisms of representation highlighted by Edward Said in his well-known critical essay on the European orientalist literary tradition: they typified a "way of coming to terms with the Orient […] based on the Orient's special place in European Western Experience" (Said 1979, 1).[77] The 'Japan' pictured by the Jesuits was very different from the mythical land of Marco Polo – it was now a representation born of factual, direct observation. But it was still, in a different way, also an intellectual product, that took part in a fundamental process of self-definition from the part of the Jesuit missionaries, and through them, of their European readers. The letters did not respond (nor aimed to respond), in the first place, to objectivity in the modern sense of the term. As already mentioned, they were not conceived simply as a way to transmit information, but as rhetorical devices – meant to attract the interest and support of the European lay and ecclesiastic authorities toward the mission. Moreover, they interpreted and assimilated Japan through categories that, as illustrated above, were still deeply rooted in the Christian religion (and largely stemmed from a Eurocentric kind of vision).

On the other hand, the Jesuit reports do provide some of the most rich and informative accounts to have survived to our date (in any language) on both the history of Christian mission, and the history of sixteenth-century Japan. Each of the annual letters includes detailed accounts of the number of conversions, of the names of new, eminent Christians, of the deaths and acquisitions of new members in the mission, of the construction of houses, colleges, churches and seminaries, and of the intercourse between the missionaries and Japanese authorities – which came to include, at a later date, also the narration of the persecutions.[78]

76 I.e., in the sense attributed to 'race' by the discourses of Social Darwinism, where "race refers to alleged biological and physical characteristics, the most obvious of which is skin pigmentation. These attributes, frequently linked to 'intelligence' and 'capabilities' are used to rank 'racialized' groups in a hierarchy of social and material superiority and subordination" (Barker 2011, 253).

77 Of course, the dynamics between the Jesuit writers and the Japanese population were very different from those between the 'Orient' and the 'West' described by Said. The Jesuits operated in a context were they held no material power, and from an intellectual standpoint that advocated "reciprocity not hegemony". In a way, the Jesuit literary corpus on Japan anticipated the seventeenth and eighteenth century tradition of European Sinophilism, which, as underlined by Ho-fung Hung contradicts much of Said's assumptions about the centrality of the idea of Western superiority in European Orientalist tradition as a whole. See Ho-Fung 2003.

78 From around 1610, basically only information about the persecutions would be relayed to Europe. From 1610 to 1615 little to no report was produced, and the letters from 1615 are

At the same time, the letters provide also a rich source of collateral information about Japan per se. The longer and more thoroughly the strategy of adaptation was applied, the more the missionaries came to know about Japanese culture and society – a knowledge which was mirrored in the way the reports sent to Europe were composed. Letters from the 1550s, 1560s and 1570s, written by the Fathers who took charge of the mission in Japan immediately after Xavier's departure in 1551,[79] appear to be of a more informative nature. They include, along with the narration of matters more strictly related to the mission, in-depth observations of Japan's geography, politics, society, language, religion and art, as well as descriptions of customs, ceremonies, cities and fortresses. The range of the matters treated by the accounts was further expanded under the influence of Valignano, particularly in the case of the letters by Father Luis Frois (1532-1597). Ever since 1579, the length of the annual letters significantly increased and the reports came to focus singularly on all the different regions in which the Jesuit seminaries and residences were located.

Offering a complete overview of the information about Japan contained in the reports is not easy – scattered as it is among narrations of more strictly mission-related matters. A most useful instrument to grasp the quality and amount of such knowledge is provided however in Cooper (1965), a collection of excerpts extracted from the missionaries reports,[80] aimed at providing "a picture of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Japanese life as seen through the eyes of foreign merchants and missionaries" (Cooper 1965, X). The selected passages, indeed, open a big window on life in Japan in the Azuchi-Momoyama and early Togukawa periods, as depicted through the words of the missionaries. The work, moreover, provides a useful working model to catalogue the information included in the reports.

Basing loosely on such model, the contents of the reports may be grouped into six main categories:

1. General assessment of the Japanese population, of Japan (information about the geography, climate, resources and political structure of the archipelago). For example, the annual letter of 1579, which

heavily focused on the arrests, the martyrdoms, the occasional apostasies, without adding much to the already formed corpus of information about Japan made available to Europe. An overview of the contents of the later reports is included in Lach, Van Kley 1998b, 1842-3.

79 The published letter-books from this period include reports by Cosme de Torres (1510-1570), Balthasar Gago (1520-1583), Gaspar Vilela (1715-1572), Luis De Almeida (1525-1583), Francisco Cabral (1528-1609), Organtino Gnecchi Soldo (1530-1609) and Giovanni Francesco Stefanoni (1540-1603), as well as one report by Brother Lourenço (1521?-1592), the first Japanese layman to have been received inside the Society of Jesus.

80 As well as a, more limited, number of excerpts of merchants' reports. The work does not limit itself to published works, but includes also excerpts of unpublished histories, such as Frois' one.

somehow sets up the tone and structure for the reports in the 'post-Valignano' era, includes a long description of Japan's political outline, introducing the reader to the warring state of Japan, and to the internal power divisions in the three main islands of the archipelago (Carrion 1584).

2. Descriptions of Japanese religion – in considerably more complete terms than in the earlier reports by Xavier. Already by 1561, Father Cosme De Torres could provide a much more in-depth picture of Buddhism, and an introduction to the beliefs of Shinto.[81] Several letters reported also of religious customs, such as funeral rites.[82]
3. Descriptions of Japanese cities, ceremonies and art forms. One significant example, is the annual letter by Father Gaspar Vilela of 1561 (Vilela 1565), which provides an extensive description of the city of Kyoto, and of the celebrations for the Gion *matsuri* and the Obon *matsuri*. Another rich description of Kyoto is included in Frois (1584).
4. Information on Japanese society: descriptions of political structures, family relationships and the justice system (as seen above), as well as information about the different social classes, with their customs (eating habits, clothes, housing, etiquette) and mutual relationships. The reports are not particularly informative in regards to the marginalised classes of Japan, even though they do mention them.[83] Much more weight is given to the warring aristocracy, with whom the missionaries maintained a regular intercourse (in accord to their strategy of approaching the authorities first, so as to get through to the common population). The annual letter of 1580 (included in Zanetti 1584) contains a description of the castle of Azuchi. The report of the years 1583 (Gioliti 1586) includes a lengthy description of Nobunaga's character, of his history of conquest, and of his relationship with his vassals – with a description of the embryonic form of the *sankinkōtai* practice. The annual letter of 1586 narrates, as already mentioned, the audience granted by Hideyoshi to Coelho, including an in-depth description of Hideyoshi's character, as well as a description of his palace in Osaka and its history (Zanetti 1588).
5. Narrations of Japanese history before the arrival of the Fathers on the archipelago. In reality, though, the reports show little interest in giving an historicized account of Japan. Even if brief historical excursions are included in some of the reports, most of them are

81 See De Torres 1565. For an overview on the encounter between early modern Christians and Shinto and Buddhism, see Thelle 2003 and Breen 2003.

82 See for example the "Lettera scritta di Bungo..." (1565).

83 Frois writes, for example, of the Eta as the "lowest social class of Japan", whose job is to "skin dead animals and to act as executioners" (quoted in Cooper 1965, 54).

completely devoid of references to the history of the archipelago before the sixteenth century. This is coherent with the 'atemporality' of the dominant narrative on Japan, as established by Xavier.[84]

6. Information about the Japanese language. This was not one of the main objects for the works meant to be circulated in Europe. Passing remarks about the Japanese language are included in the reports by Balthasar Gago (as already mentioned), Alessandro Valignano, Gaspar Vilela, and João Rodrigues, but most of the full-fledged studies on the Japanese language were meant for use in Japan, or more generally among the missionaries, rather than for diffusion in Europe. This was for example the case with *kirishitanban* literature, which offered what are surely the most meaningful sources on the Japanese language produced by the Jesuits in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but was not generally circulated in Europe at the time. Rodrigues, renowned, as seen above, for his command of the Japanese language, was, in particular, author of the two earliest comprehensive grammars of Japanese, the monumental *Arte da Lingoa de Iapan*, printed in Nagasaki between 1604 and 1608, and the more concise *Arte Breve da Lingoa Japoa*, printed in Macao in 1620 (both with the Jesuit mission press). The works, however, were never printed in Europe.[85]

84 There are, however, some exceptions. For example, the annual letter of 1589, that hints to the Genpei war and to the rise to power of the military aristocracy at the expense of the emperor: "The Dairi (called also with other many names) for more than two thousands and two hundred years, according to their histories, has been the supreme Lord, from them revered; until, five hundred years ago, a most cruel war erupted among them, and the two Quubi, called Guenei and Fryim (of whom most of their histories report about) upset the whole country, stripping the Dairi of his dominion; and the Lords now called Iacati gradually occupied these kingdoms". Original text: "Il Dairi (chiamassi ancora questo con altri diversi nomi) ha più di duemila e duecento anni, che si trova nelle loro storie, che egli fu sempre Signore sommamente riverito, e venerato tra loro; finche già sono cinquecento anni che nascendo tra essi crudelissime guerre, i due Quubi, detti Guenei, & Fryim (de quali anco trattano la maggior parte di queste historie) misero sosopra tutto il Giappone spogliando il Dairi del suo dominio, & andarono di poi di mano in mano occupando questi regni [...] i Signori che hora chiamano Iacati"; see "Lettera Annale del Giapone..." (1591, 148).

85 Doi (1955) edited a commented Japanese edition of the *Arte da Lingoa*. Studies and editions of particular sections of the grammar are included in Cooper 1971, Moran 1975, and Lamers 2001. This last work translates and comments, specifically, the section of the grammar focused on the Japanese epistolary style (*sorōbun*) and on how its forms, particularly those applied by the Buddhist clergy, could be adapted for use by the missionaries in Japan. A handful of non-Jesuit sources on the Japanese language also exists, but they were printed in the seventeenth century. The Dominican Diego Collado, who lived in Japan between 1619 and 1622 was the author of a grammar of the Japanese language (Collado 1632a) with two companion works: Collado 1632c, a collection of formulas for the sacrament of Confession, written in rōmaji, with parallel text in Latin and with added grammar annotations; and Colldo 1632b, a Latin-rōmaji dictionary, created at the scope of providing a basic vocabulary for the missionaries in Japan. The works were, however, similarly intended

A major aspect of the reports (consciously disregarded in Cooper's anthology) is, moreover, their focus on contemporary Japanese history. The accounts include extensive narrations, sometimes in the order of a hundred or more pages, of contemporary political events, at both the local and central levels. Casual mentions of local shifts in power – such as the one that involved the extension of the power of the Ōtomo family in Yamaguchi – were included in the reports ever since the early years of the Jesuit presence in Japan. It is, however, since the end of the 1570s that detailed accounts of the wars that involved the Christian *daimyō* became a constant in basically every annual letter. The 1577 letter sent from Kyoto by Francesco Stefanoni mentions Nobunaga, mainly reporting about his policies towards the Christians in the city (Stefanoni 1580). The annual letters from the years 1579 (Carrion 1584), 1580 (Mexia 1584) and 1581 (Cabral 1584) extensively narrate the rise of Oda Nobunaga. The 1979 letters reports of Nobunaga's war campaign against the *daimyō* Araki Murashige ("Araque", in the account), lord of the Itami castle – accused of having allied with the Mōri *daimyō* of Yamaguchi, enemy of Nobunaga. It focuses in particular on the involvement of the Christian *daimyō* Takayama Ukon ("Giusto Ucondono"), a vassal of Araki, loyal to Nobunaga, who was forced to send his wife and son as hostages to Itami to assure his subservience (and who saw them released when the castle finally fell, in 1579). The narration is picked up in the 1580 letter, which reports of the ongoing war between Nobunaga and the Yamaguchi *daimyō*. The reports of the years 1583 and 1584 relate Nobunaga's death and the subsequent political turmoil (Gioliti 1586). The annual letter of 1586 includes a lengthy account of the rise of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (Frois 1588) while the 1597 report by Francesco Pasio narrates of his demise (Ciotti 1601). There are even letters devoid of information related directly to the mission, like the one written by Father Luis Frois in 1595, which relates the death of the newly nominated *kanpaku* (imperial regent) at the hands of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (Zannetti 1598).

Given the amount of information they collected, and given the regularity with which they were composed, surely the reports potentially opened a wide window on Japan for the European public of the sixteenth century. What was, however, their effective impact on the European readership? While much has been written about the logic behind the Jesuit system for correspondence and about the mechanics of the circulation of the reports inside and outside the Society, the manner in which the letter-books fit into the European book market of the sixteenth century is still unclear. Were they pushed into the catalogues of printers from the Society of Jesus, or did they fit into a more independent editorial policy on the part of

for circulation inside the religious orders, as demonstrated by the very limited number of copies that have survived to our day.

publishers? What was the response to their publication? Did they pass by unnoticed, or can one presume that they truly helped put the 'Indies' on the map, not only for students in Jesuit schools but for a wider European public? If so, for which public, and to what extent? Given the lack of data about the number of sales, obtaining these answers is not easy. Clossey (2008, 197-215) approaches the questions by focusing on the writings of Nicholas Trigault (one of the best-selling authors within the order). The following explores them by using Italian editions of sixteenth-century Jesuit letters from Japan as a case study. It discusses them in light of the cultural and economic processes that led to their production and circulation, and analyses their place in the Italian book market of the sixteenth century. The "Appendix" provides a bibliography of the editions.

3.5 The Impact of the Reports in Europe: Italian Editions in the Sixteenth Century

I've already underlined in the introduction of the present work how Vernacular Italian editions are of particular interest from the perspective of distribution and reception. In fact, several factors suggest that in the second half of the sixteenth century they were the most popular among European editions of 'Japan letters'. From the above mentioned bibliographies related to Jesuit material, a pattern emerges in the publication of the letter-books that favours the Italian editions, up to at least the 1580s. Many *editio princeps* are Italian, and Italian collections, as underlined by Lach (1965, 674-5), constitute about 50% of the publications. This provides the basis for many subsequent translations in Northern European languages (published in Paris, Louvain, and Dillingen).

This popularity of Italian editions is a bit of a puzzle. As early as 1563, Valignano advised against the use of Italian in published letter-books, suggesting a preference for Spanish and, later, for Latin (Asami 2002, 5). Valignano did not clarify the reasons for this request. Possibly, he prioritised the needs of the missionaries stationed in Asia (most of whom would find Latin easily accessible) over the Society's need for publicity. However, in spite of his request, the production and circulation of Italian editions was not discontinued; on the contrary, it flourished throughout the second half of the sixteenth century. Many presume that Jesuit authorities in Europe decided in favour of vernacular editions as a conscious effort to expose the public to the letter-books. Sixteenth-century Europe was a context in which Latin, while still a common denominator for the Roman Church (Eisenstein 2005, 185), was losing its international character (Kristeller 1990, 119-38), and where the "revolution" brought about by the printing press was promoting a standardization of vernacular languages (Eisenstein 2005, 91-2). As Hirsch (1977, 41) underlines, a "new reader", one

belonging to social groups once excluded from access to books and unable to understand Latin, was essential to the printing industry's expansion. In other words, by the end of the sixteenth century, a growing European readership was relying less on Latin.

Using Venice as a case study, Grendler (1992, 213-14) estimates the percentage of Italian readers at around 33% of the adult male population and 13% of the adult female population, and underlines how, despite the fact that many readers came from the upper strata of society (including rich merchants and professionals), only about half the men (the learned population of university professors and students, aristocracy, clergy, doctors or jurists) and a small percentage of the women had access to Latin. In this context, the use of the vernacular in publishing was rapidly spreading. In the case of Italy, in the second half of the sixteenth century, about 46,8% of an estimated quantity of 12.724 published books was written in the vernacular (Santoro 1994, 107). If the Society of Jesus meant to promote the letter-books related to Japan, the use of vernacular would certainly enable wider distribution.

Why the Society would allow – or wish to divulge – the books outside the circles of the clergy can be understood not only in light of the Society's need for publicity, but also in light of the Counter Reformation's policies. As Barbier (2004, 227-72) underlines, after the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis of 1559 and the end of the Council of Trent in 1563, the Counter Reformation influenced the book market in Catholic Europe both by means of coercion – through censorship and the *Index librorum prohibitorum* (Index of banned books, 1564) – and by means of a concurrent Catholic Revival that stimulated interest in new kinds of publications. News about the conversions of far-away populations could inspire public interest and, in the face of the defeats that Catholicism suffered in Europe after the Protestant Reformation, foster the notion of Catholic Church's greatness and world-wide predominance.

Still, as tools for the propagation of the faith, Spanish and Portuguese editions worked just as well as Italian editions did. In this sense, the popularity of Italian editions cannot, in my opinion, be ascribed only to the efficacy of Catholic propaganda; it is better understood in light of the entrepreneurship of Italian publishers and, more generally, of the dominating trends in the contemporary Italian book market. As Caputo (2016, 140) underlines, the fact that Italy, as opposed to Spain and Portugal, was excluded from the commercial and territorial competition in the East Indies gave Italian publishers more liberty, within the limits imposed by Jesuit censorship, to divulge the contents of the reports related to the missions in Asia. This, I argue, allowed the reports to become part of their response to the general crisis that hit the Italian book market in the second half of the sixteenth century.

To illustrate my point, I have chosen to focus on the Venetian book market, which works as a mirror for the Italian market as a whole, as

throughout the sixteenth century Venice accounted for 48,6% of the total production of Italian *cinquecentine* (Santoro 1994, 108). The policies of the Counter Reformation, as I've mentioned above, deeply affected the publishing landscape of Catholic countries. Publishers negotiated their way through the change by seeking new commercial opportunities through literary genres that the Church approved and promoted. This trend emerged clearly in Venice in the second half of the sixteenth century; works related to religious themes amounted to 25-33% of the totality of the production of Venetian printers, when in the first half of the century religious production had amounted to only 13-15%. This change in editorial policies was at the root of a new expansion in book production after an initial crisis brought about by the announcement of the Index of banned books in 1564. The plague of 1575-77 only temporarily reversed this trend; after 1585, the number of emitted print permits started growing again, though it never reached pre-plague levels (Grendler 1983, 193-5).

By 1564, the earliest editions of letter-books from Japan had appeared in the Venetian book market. They had been published by Michele Tramezzino, who cultivated ties with both the Roman publishing world (through his brother Francesco) and the Society of Jesus (through Cesare Elmi, rector of the Jesuit house of probation in Venice).[86] Caputo (2016, 243) suggests that the publication of the letters might have initially been delegated by the Society of Jesus to commercial publishers such as the Tramezzino as a means of avoiding direct involvement in commercial transactions. In this light, one may presume that, during an initial phase, editions of 'Japan letters' were not meant to be issued in a predetermined number of copies and that, instead, they were meant to be included in a more 'private' circuit of distribution.

Still, giving up the letters to commercial publishing meant, at least in part, compliance with the laws of commercial distribution. The demand for books steadily increased in Italy since the fifteenth century, in connection with an expansion of the reading population. As Santoro (1994, 96-7) underlines, at the root of the publishing industry's expansion was the ability of publishing houses to replace the logic of demand with the logic of supply, at least in quantitative terms. Editions needed high circulation figures to amortise the fixed costs associated with the printing process. For example, we know from a letter by Michele Tramezzino himself[87] that an average edition in Venice had to consist of at least 1000

86 This was not uncommon in a context in which, as Romani (1992, 524-5) illustrates, Venetian publishers handled the typographical and commercial aspects of their production, though in many instances Rome exerted a strong direct influence on the editorial process.

87 Quoted in Grendler 1983, 11.

copies, as the printing privilege was not conceded for fewer than 400 copies, and with fewer than 1000 copies, production costs would not be covered. Michele Tramezzino may have decided to publish the reports from Japan more as a consequence of his personal connections with the Society of Jesus than as the result of a qualitative evaluation of the materials in light of his editorial policy. However, one can presume that he meant to profit from the books. In this sense, his involvement in the distribution of the materials probably became, in sheer quantitative terms, a turning point.

However, as Caputo (2016, 237) illustrates, the impact of the works on the Italian intellectual landscape was still relatively small, at least up to 1585. This makes sense in light of the distribution of the editions. As the bibliography provided in the appendix indicates, the overwhelming majority of Italian letter-books on Japan saw the light in the last two decades of the sixteenth century. Moreover, reports from Japan published up to the 1570s were primarily inserts in works more generally devoted to 'India' (in the general meaning of both Brasil and the territories in Asia that the Treaty of Tordesillas had assigned to the Portuguese); however, after the publication of the first letter-book centered wholly on Japan (Zanetti 1578), works focusing on Japan – or more rarely on Japan and China – became the rule. Books published from the 1580s onward also tended to appear in multiple editions.

One factor that was probably crucial in stimulating demand for the reports – and interest in Japan in general – was the fact that the already mentioned Japanese embassy reached Lisbon in August 1584. It was received by the Holy Father and the King of Spain in 1585 and seems to have had a considerable impact on the contemporary public, as records of the time report the enthusiastic reception the envoys received in the various cities they visited.[88] Some researchers, such as Brown (1994), have actually questioned the real significance of such a reception for the general European population. What is certain, however, is that the embassy in itself spurred the publication of a number of titles – at least 80 works produced in the brief span of two years.[89] They included primarily booklets – pamphlets and gazettes reporting on the voyage of the ambassadors, their meetings with various members of the European aristocracy and the public hearing that the Pope granted to them. Sometimes they provided short descriptions of Japan (based mostly on the Jesuits' published first-hand accounts). In addition, the works related to the embassy included at least one more organic work, the *Relationi della venuta degli Ambasciatori*

88 The reception of the embassy is discussed in Moran 1993, 9-16.

89 The works related to the embassy have been catalogued by Boscaro 1973a.

Giaponesi a Roma by Guido Gualtieri,[90] which collected and reorganized all the somewhat repetitive information that had been scattered throughout previous publications. A growing interest in Jesuit writings on Japan is more easily understood in light of this editorial boom.

In my opinion, this editorial boom also prompted a number of resourceful publishers to integrate the books on Japan into their editorial policies in a more structured way. Such was the case with the Giolito publishing house. The Giolito family, active between 1536 and 1606, was one of the giants of the Venetian publishing industry. Since 1585, it had been responsible for publishing most of the Japanese reports issued in Venice. Quondam (1977, 76), through his work based on the annals of the Giolito house compiled at the end of the nineteenth century by Salvatore Bongi (1825-1899), underlines how the Giolito family embraced, from the start, a very definite identity as vernacular publishers, with only 49 titles in Latin – a meagre 4,8% of their total production. Unlike smaller publishing houses (where, in the absence of modern strategies of publicity, demand was the primary factor determining editorial policies), the Giolito family was able to drive production to a measure, through rational editorial planning, and publish an average of more than 30 titles per year (Quondam 1977, 67). They were also among those publishers able to ride the wave of the Catholic revival in qualitative terms. Their production before 1560 was almost exclusively devoted to contemporary Italian literature. When the general Italian book market was hit by the crisis associated with the Counter Reformation, the Giolito were among those publishers who found new commercial opportunities in it, and did so in an innovative way. As Quondam (1977, 74-88) underlines, while other publishers resorted to devotional literature as a response to the crisis, the Giolito devised a new editorial policy, giving birth to the form of the *collana editoriale* (editorial series). A religious editorial series was developed in accord with the trends of the post-Council Venice book market. However, hand in hand with the religious series, the publisher inaugurated a new series of *historie*. The purpose of this series was very different from that of the religious

90 The full title of the work is *Relationi della venuta degli ambasciatori giaponesi a Roma sino alla partita di Lisbona. Con le accoglienze fatte loro da tutti i principi christiani, per doue sono passati. Raccolte da Guido Gualtieri*. Several editions of the work were published in Italy: one in Rome, in 1586, by the Francesco Zanetti publishing house; two in Venice, both in 1586, by the Giolito publishing house; and one in Milan, in 1587, by the Pacifico Ponte publishing house. Another lengthy and organic account of the embassy was included in the *De Missione Legatorum Iaponensium ad Romanam curiam*, published in 1590 in Macao. However, the work, as explained in its preface, was not intended for a European readership, but rather was to be used in Jesuit seminaries as a text for Latin studies and as a sort of guide to Europe for Japanese readers. (This was one of the reasons why the book was not sent to Rome for an *imprimatur*, as was customary). An annotated English translation of the work is found in Massarella 2012. A more recent Italian translation is included in Di Russo 2016.

series, though also somewhat complementary. While the religious series was meant to be edifying, the historical series openly appealed to curiosity, the pleasure of reading and what Eisenstein (2005, 108) identifies as a reader's growing desire to vicariously take part in faraway events.

The choice of *historie* as a countermeasure for the crisis proved to be a sound publishing decision in a context like the late sixteenth-century Venetian book market. The sixteenth century could rightly be called the first age of information. *Avvisi*, *relationi*, *fogli di notizia* and other newspaper-like publications circulated in all the major printing centers of the time, relating both national and international events with a regularity that has induced researchers such as Monaco (1992) to trace back to them the birth of modern periodical publications. A similar role in the book market was played by travel literature, in particular the *historie* about the new worlds that the Great Discoveries had brought to the public's attention. The *historie* enjoyed great fortune throughout the century, and found in Venice one of its main points of diffusion (Pallotta 1992, 347).

The decision to include the Japanese letter-books in their catalogue appears to align with both dominating trends in the editorial policy of the Giolito. The reports matched the edifying purpose of the religious series while simultaneously appealing to the thirst for 'curious' news from faraway lands, which was at the root of the historical series' popularity. For reasons already mentioned, the 'curious' nature of the narration was particularly pronounced in the lengthy 'Japan letters' published in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, turning them into materials that were fit to respond to a precise demand from readers after the 1585 embassy, and to be integrated into ampler editorial policies such as those of the Giolito.

Even in light of such considerations, defining the readership of the letter-books from Japan is not easy. Big publishing houses can indicate the type of public for which the publications were meant, as they tended to follow a definite editorial line and address a specific public. In the case of the Giolito house, publications were intended mostly for an upper, educated middle class (Quondam 1977, 88). However, one must consider that, as Eisenstein (2005, 37) underlines, the actual readership and hypothetical targets that publishers devised did not always coincide. Moreover, smaller houses often worked on commission and published materials of a more disparate nature. Outside the big publishing centres, such as Venice and Rome, defining the type of public that had access to the books has proven to be an arduous task.

Certainly, the letter-books were devised for easy and wide circulation. In fact, all editions were in the small 'octavo' format[91] first adopted by publisher Aldo Manuzio at the beginning of the sixteenth century as a man-

91 In the octavo format, the full sheet of printing paper (about 19 x 25 inches) was folded to form eight leaves (sixteen pages) (Reitz 2004, 96).

ageable format that would prove convenient to scholar-diplomats and patrician councillors of state (Eisenstein 2005, 295). As Petrucci (1977, 140) illustrates, given its manageability, the format was also meant to attract a new public. This public, as Montecchi (1992, 355) reports, would come to include less-traditional groups of readers, primarily non-professionals, in the range of the upper middle class.[92] In time, popular books would also adopt octavo, along with other small formats. However, as Grendler (1992, 211-37) underlines, books designed for lower, uneducated classes also shared a recurring set of physical characteristics – such as the use of Gothic characters – that are not common to letter-books devoted to 'Japan letters'. In this sense, reports about Japan do not appear to fall under the flag of 'popular' literature.

As already illustrated, use of the vernacular in the letter-books can itself be deemed an indicator that the books were not exclusively addressed to a learned, professional readership. On the other hand, one must keep in mind that while not all readers knew Latin, all readers, including learned readers, knew the vernacular, and that, as Eisenstein (2005, 48) states, 'traditional' readers were still a main target for publishers and a strong driving force in the production of books.

It was through the learned readership that the letter-books came to influence a wide range of contemporary literary genres. The Jesuit reports were widely exploited not only as sources of religious histories (the most notable of which were those authored by Giovanni Pietro Maffei),[93] but also for a number of lay histories, cosmographies and collections of travel literature. For example, the Italian popular historians Mambrino Roseo (1500-1580?) and Cesare Campana (1540-1606) included extensive accounts of the progress of the Christian mission in Japan in their world histories (both titled *Delle Historie del Mondo* and dated, respectively, 1573 and 1598). The geographer Giovanni Lorenzo d'Anania (1545-1609) included, in his cosmographical work, *L'Universale fabrica del mondo* (1573), lengthy

92 Nor were popular books as often conserved in libraries, nor did they usually circulate in places far from the one in which they were produced, as only educated readers with sufficient financial resources could afford the shipping expenses. The fact that letter-books published in Rome, Naples or Brescia are available today in libraries throughout Europe can, in itself, indicate the type of public that used to read them – although library consistencies, as Caputo (2016, 257) underlines, are not always a reliable indicator of diffusion.

93 The *Rerum a SocietateIesu in Oriente gestarum volumen, continens historiam iucundam lectu omnibus Christianis, praesertimijs, quibus vera Religio est cordi. In qua videre possunt, quomodo nunquam Deus Ecclesiam suam deserat, & in locum deficientium a vera fide, innumeros alios in abditissimis etiam regionibus substituat*, dated 1571, and the *Historiarvm Indicarvm Libri XVI. Selectarum item ex India Epistolarum eodem interprete Libri IV*, dated 1588. The first was the first attempt at an official history of the mission in Asia (particularly in Japan), while the second, which devoted four of its sixteen volumes to Japan, is probably the most complete and reliable sixteenth-century historical account of the Japanese Jesuit mission. Maffei is discussed in Asami 2002, 14-19.

chapters about Japan and China that relied heavily upon the Jesuit sources. Giovanni Battista Ramusio (1485-1557), as already underlined, added to the 1554 edition of his *Navigationi et viaggi* the Italian translation of some of the earliest Jesuit letters on Japan. Richard Willes (1558-1573), editor of the *History of Travayle* (1577), included in his work a discussion "Of the Island Giapan" based on Jesuit sources, while Richard Hakluyt (1553-1616), author of one of the greatest collections of travel literature in the English language (*The principal navigations, voyages and discoveries of the English nation, made by sea or over land*, first published in 1590) incorporated in his work most of the letters of Father Luis Frois on Japan.

On a more indirect level, the reports, in a way that anticipated later writings on China and the current of seventeenth-century sinophilism, fed universalistic theories that were already surfacing in European political thought. Lach (1977, 235-52) has underlined, for example, how the Jesuit writing on both Japan and China added to an interest in cultural alternatives that found its expression in the writings of such thinkers as Giovanni Botero (1544-1617).

This influence was particularly significant after 1585. Of course, Jesuit writers did not doubt the privileged status of Christendom, and the perspective of their representations of Japan remained extremely partial. Letters did not respond to objectivity in the modern sense of the term, but were conceived as rhetorical devices. As such, they interpreted and assimilated Japan through Eurocentric categories. However, by presenting Christianity as an integration rather than an alternative to Japanese culture, they set a comparison between cultures that helped open the space to a sense of cultural relativism previously unknown to Europe – one that calls for further study.

4 Appendix
Sixteenth-Century Vernacular Italian Letter-Books about Japan: a Bibliography

In Italy, the following books including letters by Jesuit missionaries stationed in Japan were published between 1552 and 1601. These include both first editions, and reprinted editions of earlier works. Some books consist in but one letter, but most of them are collections. As a whole, the letter-books include a total of about a hundred letters.

All texts listed below are, as already mentioned, in the octavo book-format.

Avisi particolari delle Indie di Portogallo. Ricevuti in questi doi anni del 1551. & 1552. da li reverendi padri de la Compagnia de Iesu, dove fra molte cose mirabili, si vede delli paesi delle genti, & costumi loro & la grande conversioue di molti populi, che cominciano a ricevere il lume della santa fede & relligione christiana.

Rome: Valerio Dorico, et Luigi fratelli Bressani, 1552
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 11

Nuoui auisi delle Indie di Portugallo riceuuti questo anno del 1553. doue si tratta della conuersione di molte persone principali & tra li altri d'un re signore de 11000. isole, con vna descrittione delli costumi de i giaponesi nostri antipodi & come loro riceuono la nostra santa fede.

Rome: Valerio Dorico, et Luigi fratelli Bressani, 1553
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 2

Avisi particolari delle Indie di Portogallo. Nouamente hauuti questo anno del 1555 da li R. padri della Compagnia di Iesu doue si ha informatione delle gran cose che si fanno per augmento de la santa fede. Con la descriptione e costumi del Regno de la China, & altri paesi incogniti nouamente trouati.

Rome: Antonium Bladum, 1556
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 5

Diversi avisi particolari dall'Indie di Portogallo ricevuti, dall'anno 1551. sino al 1558. dalli Reverendi padri della compagnia di Giesv. Dove s'intende delli paesi, delle genti, et costumi loro, et la grande conversione di molti popoli, che hanno ricevuto il lume della santa fede, et religione Christiana. Tradotti nuouamente dalla lingua Spagnuola nella Italiana.

Venice: Michele Tramezzino, [1558][1]
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Venice: Michele Tramezzino, 1565
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Nuovi avisi dell'Indie di Portogallo, ricevuti dalli Reverendi Padri della compagnia di Giesu, tradotti dalla lingua Spagnuola nell'Italiana.

Venice: Michele Tramezzino, 1559.
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 22

Venice: Tramezzino, 1568
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Nuovi avisi dell'Indie di Portogallo, Riceuuti dalli Reuerendi Padri della compagnia di Giesu, tradotti dalla lingua Spagnuola nell'Italiana, Terza parte. Col priuilegio del Sommo Pontefice, et dell'Illustrissimo Senato Veneto per anni XX.

Venice: Michele Tramezzino, 1562
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Nuovi avisi dell'Indie di Portogallo, Venuti nuouamente dalli R. Padri della compagnia di GIESV, & tradotti dalla lingua Spagnuola nella Italiana. Quarta parte. Col priuilegio del Sommo Pont. Pio IIII. Et dell'Illustriss. Senato Veneto per anni XX.

Venice: Tramezzino, 1580
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Lettere del Giapone de gli anni 74, 75, & 76. Scritte dalli reuerendi padri della Compagnia di Giesu, & di portughese tradotte nel volgare italiano.

Rome: Zanetti, 1578
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 5

1 The publication date is tentative, derived from the preface.

Rome: Zanetti, 1579
(included in some of the bibliographies, but no actual consistencies found)

Naples: eredi di Matteo Cancer, 1580
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Lettere del Giappone scritte dalli reuerendi Padri della Compagnia di Giesu. Dell'anno 1577.

Brescia: Giacomo e Policreto Turlini, 1580
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 8

Naples: eredi di Matteo Cancer, 1580 (with the alternative title *Lettere del Giappone dell' anno MDLXXVII scritte dalli reuerendi padri della Compagnia di Giesù*)
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Lettere dell'India orientale, Scritte da' Reuerendi Padri della Compagnia di Giesv'. Nelle queli si scopre la grande arte vsata de gli istessi, per liberar l'anime degli infideli Indiani dalla potestà del nimico infernale, et ridurle alla nostra santa fede. Nouamente stampate, & ampliate in molti luoghi, & ricorrette con diligenza.

Venice: Antonio Ferrari, 1580
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 11

Alcvne lettere delle cose del Giappone. Dell'anno 1579. Insino al 1581.

Rome: Zanetti, 1584
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 15

Rome: Zanetti, 1584 (with the alternative title *Alcune lettere delle cose del Giappone. Scritte da' reuerendi Padri della Compagnia di Iesu. Dell'anno 1579. insino al 1581*)

Rome: Zanetti, 1584
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 20

Naples: Orazio Salviani e Cesare Cesari, 1584 (with the alternative title *Alcune lettere delle cose del Giappone. Scritte da' reuerendi padri della Compagnia di Iesu. Dell'anno 1579 infino al 1581*)
Consistencies found in Italian libraries:1

Brescia: Vincenzo Sabbio, 1584 (with the alternative title *Alcune lettere delle cose del Giappone, paese del mondo nouo, dell'anno 1579 insino al 1581*)
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 6

Milan: Pacifico Ponte, 1584
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 7

Venice: Giolito, 1585
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 5

Lettera annale portata di novo dal Giapone delle cose ivi successe l'anno M D LXXXII.

Venice: Giolito, 1585
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 11

Milan: Pacifico Ponte, 1585 (with the alternative title *Lettera annale delle cose del Giappone del 1582*)
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 11

Rome: Zanetti, 1585 (with the alternative title *Lettera annale delle cose del Giappone del 1582*)
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 17

Avisi del Giapone de gli anni MDLXXXII, LXXXIII et LXXXIV. Con alcuni altri della Cina dell'LXXXIII e LXXXIV. Cauati dalle lettere della Compagnia di Giesù.

Rome: Zanetti,1586
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 13

Rome: Zanetti, 1586
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 29

Milan: Pacifico Ponte, 1586
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 5

Venice: Giolito, 1586 (with the alternative title *Nvovi avvisi del Giapone con alcvni altri della Cina, del LXXXIII, et LXXXIV cavati dalle lettere della Compagnia di Giesv'*)
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Venice: Giolito, 1586 (with the alternative title *Nvovi avvisi del Giapone con alcvni altri della Cina, del LXXXIII, et LXXXIV cavati dalle lettere della Compagnia di Giesv'*)
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Viaggio nell'India Orientale.

Venice: Andrea Muschio, 1587 (included in some of the bibliographies, but no actual consistencies found)

Avvisi della Cina et Giapone del fine dell'anno 1586. Con l'arriuo delli signori Giaponesi nell'India. Cauati dalle lettere della Compagnia di Giesù. Riceuute il mese d'ottobre 1588.

Rome: Zanetti, 1588
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 12

Rome: Zanetti, 1588 (with the alternative title *Auuisi della Cina et Giapone del fine dell'anno 1587. Con l'arriuo delli signori giaponesi nell'India. Cauati dalle lettere della Compagnia di Giesù. Riceuute il mese d'ottobre 1588*)
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 5

Rome: Zanetti, 1588
(included in some of the bibliographies, but no actual consistencies found)

In Roma e poi Verona: Discepolo Girolamo, 1588
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 3

Milan: Pacifico Ponte, 1588
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 2

Naples: Horatio Salviani, 1588
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 2

Venice: Giolito, 1588 (with the alternative title *Auuisi della Cina, et Giapone del fine dell'anno 1587. Con l'arriuo de' signori giaponesi nell'India. Cauati dalle lettere della Compagnia di Giesù, riceuute il mese d'ottobre 1588*)
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 7

Anversa: Christoforo Plantino, 1588 (included in some of the bibliographies, but no actual consistencies found)

Brescia: Vincenzo Sabbio, 1588 (included in some of the bibliographies, but no actual consistencies found)

Milan: Pacifico Ponte, 1589
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 3

Raguaglio d'vn notabilissimo naufragio, cauato d'vna lettera del padre Pietro Martinez, scritta da Goa al molto reuerendo P. generale della Compagnia di Giesu alli 9. di Decembre 1586

Rome: Zanetti, 1588
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 8

Venice: Giolito, 1588
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 7

Milan: Pacifico Ponte, 1588
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 3

Raccolta di molti auuisi del Giapone dell'anno 1582 fin all'87. Doue si tratta del progresso della fede christiana, delle varie riuolutioni, e mutationi de' Stati di quel paese, d'vna gran persecutione contra i fedeli, & altre cose notabili. Con alcun'altri auuisi della China dell'anni 83. & 84. Cauati dalle lettere della Compagnia di Giesu

Rome: Zanetti, 1590.
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Lettera annale del Giapone scritta al padre della Gompagnia [sic!] *di Giesv alli XX. di Febraio M.D.LXXXVIII.*

Rome: Zanetti, 1590
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 20

Palermo: Giovanni Antonio De Franceschi, 1590
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Brescia: Vincenzo Sabbio, 1590 (with the alternative title *Lettera annale del Giapone scritta, al padre generale della Compagnia di Giesù alli 20 di febraio 1588. Con l'auiso ancora dell'arriuo delli signori giaponesi, all'isola di Macao, del regno della China*)
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 5

Milan: Pacifico Ponte, 1590 (with the alternative title *Lettera annale del Giapone scritta al padre generale della Compagnia di Giesù Alli 20. di febraro 1588*)
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 6

Lettere del Giapone, et della Cina de gl'anni M. D. LXXXIX & M. D. XC. Scritte al r.p. generale della Compagnia di Giesu.

Rome: Zanetti, 1591
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 18

Milan: Pacifico Ponte, 1592
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 3

Venice: Giovanni Battista Ciotti, 1592
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 8

Brescia: Vincenzo Sabbio, 1592
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 4

Ragguaglio d'alcune missioni delle Indie Orientali, & Occidentali. Cavato da alcun auuisi scritti gli anni 1590. et 1591.

Rome: Zanetti, 1592
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 10

Rome: Zanetti, 1592
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 7

Rome, Turin: Zanetti, 1593
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 3

Napoli: Giovanni Giacomo Carlino e Antonio Pace, 1593
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Bologna: Benacci, 1593 (with the alternative title *Ragguaglio d'alcuni auisi notabili dell'Indie Orientali, & Occidentali. Con l'arriuo delli signori ambasciatori Giaponesi alli loro stati. Cauato da alcune lettere scritte gli anni 1590. & 1591. Da i PP. Pietro Martinez prouinciale dell'India Orientale, Giouanni d'Atienza prouinciale del Peru, Pietro Diaz prouinciale del Messico*)
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 2

Copia di due lettere annue scritte dal Giapone del 1589. & 1590. L'vna dal p. viceprouinciale al p. Alessandro Valignano, l'altra dal p. Luigi Frois al p. Generale della Compagnia di Giesu. Et dalla spagnuola nella italiana lingua tradotte dal p. Gasparo Spitilli della Compagnia medesima

Rome: Zanetti, 1593.
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 12

Milan: Pacifico Ponte, 1593
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 3

Brescia: Policreto Turlino, 1593
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Brescia: Policreto Turlino, 1598
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Lettera del Giapone degli anni 1591. Et 1592. Scritta al R.P. generale della Compagnia di Giesu.

Rome: Zanetti, 1595
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 11

Milan: Pacifico Ponte, 1595
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 2

Venice: Giovanni Battista Ciotti, 1595
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 4

Mantova: Francesco Osanna, 1595
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Lettera annua del Giapone del marzo del 1593, sino al marzo del 94.

Rome: Zanetti, 1597
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 10

Milan: Pacifico Ponte, 1597
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Copia di due lettere scritte dal P. Organtino bresciano della Compagnia di Giesu dal Meaco del Giapone. Al molto r. in Christo p.n. il p. Claudio Acquauiua preposito generale. Tradotte dal p. Gio. Battista Peruschi romano della medesima Compagnia.

Rome: Zanetti, 1597
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 12

Milan: Pacifico Ponte, 1597
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 5

Verona: Girolamo Discepolo, 1597
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Ragguaglio della morte di Quabacondono, scritta dal p. Luigi Frois della Compagnia di Giesu, dal Giappone nel mese d'ottobre del 1595. Et dalla portoghesa nella lingua italiana tradotta dal P. Gasparo Spitilli di Campli.

Rome: Zanetti, 1598
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 11

Copia d'vna lettera annua scritta dal Giapone nel 1595. al r. p. Claudio Acquauiua generale della Compagnia di Giesu. Et dalla portoghesa nella lingua italiana tradotta dal p. Gasparo Spitilli.

Rome: Zanetti, 1598
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 11

Milan: Pacifico Ponte, 1598
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 5

Relazione mandata da don Francesco Teglio gouernatore, e capitano generale dell'isole Filippine, intorno al martirio de i sei frati spagnuoli, dell'Ordine di San Francesco dell'osseruanza. Crocifissi nel Giappone l'anno 1597, con venti altre persone giapponese che con esso loro morirono, animati e conuertiti da gl'istessi santi frati, nella loro predicazione. In lingua spagnuola castigliana stampata in Siuiglia, e nell'italiana fauella tradotta dal r.p. frat'Angelo Celestino theologo, e predicatore nel Duomo di Firenze.

Rome: Niccolò Muzi, 1598
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Venice: Marcello Iseppo, 1598
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Urbino: Bartolomeo e Simone Ragusi, 1598
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Roma: Francesco Osanna, 1598
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Napoli: Giacomo Carlino, 1599
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

Relatione della gloriosa morte di ventisei posti in croce per comandamento del re di Giappone, alli 5. di febraio 1597. de' quali sei furono religiosi di S. Francesco, tre della Compagnia di Giesu, & dicisette christiani Giapponesi, mandata dal p. Luigi Frois alli 15. di marzo al r. p. Claudio Aquauiua e fatta in italiano dal p. Gasparo Spitilli di Campli.

Rome: Zanetti, 1599
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 6

Rome: Zanetti, 1599
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 4

Bologna: eredi di Giovanni Rossi, ad instanza di Gasparo Bindoni, 1599
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 4

Milan: Pacifico Ponte, 1599
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 3

Trattato d'alcuni prodigii occorsi l'anno 1596. nel Giappone. Mandato dal p. Luigi Frois, della Compagnia di Giesu.

Rome: Zanetti, 1599
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 3

Milano: Pacifico Ponte
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 4

Lettera annua del Giappone dell'anno 1596. Scritta dal p. Luigi Froes, al r.p. Claudio Acquauiua generale della Compagnia di Giesù. Tradotta in italiano dal p. Francesco Mercati romano della stessa Copmpagnia.

Rome: Zanetti, 1599
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 11

Milan: Pacifico Ponte, 1599
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 2

Venice (Padua): Francesco Bolzetta, 1599
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 10

Relatione del martirio, che sei padri scalzi di San Francesco et venti Giaponesi christiani patirono nel Giapone l'anno 1597. Scritta dal R.P. fra Gio. di Santa Maria & tradotta dalla lingua spagnuola nella italiana, per ordine del R.P. fra Gioseppe di Santa Maria.

Roma: Niccolò Muzi, 1599
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 2

Napoli: Antonio Pace, 1600
Consistencies found in Italian libraries: 1

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The book focuses on the editorial fortune of and on the imaginary built by sixteenth-century European lay and missionary sources on Japan. The author examines the cultural and economic processes that led to the circulation, or, in some cases, lack of circulation of the sources. By exploring the interplay, in their contents, between ‘factuality’ and ‘myth’, between ‘classical imagery’ and ‘current observation’, she investigates the way their depiction of ‘Japan’ reflects ‘European’ self-images and desires. Finally, using the Italian editorial world – dominating the European book market at that time – as a case study, she analyses the published sources from the perspective of historical bibliography, evaluating their impact on the readership.

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