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*Encuentros? El diálogo De mission y sus discursos cosmográficos como proyección global de la presunta superioridad de la Europa Cristiana*

Angelo Cattaneo

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**Introduction**

The work entitled *De missione legatorum Iaponesium ad Romanam curiam, rebusque in Europa, ac toto itinere animadversis dialogus ex ephemeride ipsorum Legatorum collectus* («A dialogue concerning the sending of the Japanese legates to the Roman Curia, on European matters and the itinerary they observed, composed from the notes of the Legates») was written in Spanish by Alessandro Valignano S. J. (1539-1606) between 1588 and 1589, immediately after the landing in Macau of Chijiwa Seizaemon Miguel (1569?-1633), Itō Mansho (1570-1612), Nakaura Julião (1568-1633), and Hara Martinho (c. 1570-1629), the four Japanese legati, accompanied by their tutor and mentor Diogo de Mesquita S. J. (1553-1614) and two Japanese Jesuit brothers (irmãos) Jorge de Loyola (1562-1589) and Constantino Dourado (1567?-1620) who served as their attendants. The notes were transformed into a dialogue, divided into 34 colloquia (or dialogues) and translated into Latin by Duarte de Sande S. J. (1531-1600), probably the most skilled Humanist in the missions in Southeast Asia¹. The *De missione* was
The De missione... dialogus (from here onward De missione), is a text of missionary politics, diplomacy, propaganda and pedagogy, in the form of an imaginary dialogue. Its main character and speaker, Michael, that is Chijiwa Seizaemon Miguel, plays the part of one of the two boys, the other is Itō Mansho, who were sent to Europe to pay homage to the pope, on behalf of three Christian daimyō (feudal lords) of the Kyūshū: Ōtomo Sōrin (1530-1587, baptized in 1578), Ōmura Sumitada (1532-1587, baptized in 1563), and Arima Harunobu (1567-1612, baptized in 1579). Two fictional characters, Leo, in reality Arima Sumizane, the cousin of Michael and the younger brother of Arima Harunobu, and Lino impersonate two Japanese boys, of the same age of the legates, who have never left Japan and, by raising all kinds of questions to Michael, set the narrative mechanism in motion. The long title of the work claims that the De missione had been written by adapting the travel notes made by the Japanese boys over the course of some six years, between February 1582, when they left Nagasaki, and 1588, when they reached Macau again, after visiting the main Catholic courts in Portugal, Spain and the Italian peninsula, and sailing through Macau, Melaka, Cochim (Kochi), Goa, and circumnavigating Africa twice, on the outward and return journeys.

The richness and precision of the details reported in the De missione certainly suggests the existence of a detailed diary which, combined with texts published in Europe – in particular in Italy – at the very time of the visit of the legati, such as Guido Gualtieri’s Relazioni della venuta degli ambasciatori giapponesi a Roma sino alla partita di Lisbona (Rome, F. Zanetti, 1586; Venice, Giolito, 158; Milan, P. Ponzio, 1587), provided the contents with which Valignano and Sande composed the work. As in the case of a second, very detailed, account of the long journey drawn up by Luís Fróis S. J. in the years immediately following the publication of the De missione, which remained in manuscript form, it is very likely that at the origin there was a diary or daily account composed by Diogo de Mesquita S. J., unfortunately now lost. Only a well-educated European who had participated in all phases of the long journey such as Mesquita was in fact able to grasp and describe precisely what is narrated in both the De missione and in Fróis’s work.

The uniqueness of the event, the abundance of archival, printed and visual documentation available in all the cities visited by the legates, contributed greatly to the celebration of the event, which was certainly exceptional. And yet, it is often remarked that critical voices were not lacking. Immediately after the visit of the legates on the occasion of the return to Rome from China of Michele Ruggieri S. J. who carried a proposal for a pontifical embassy to China, the Jesuit general Claudio Acquaviva wrote that such a burden of official commitments, engagements, organization, time and resources, including economic ones – the visit cost as much as the entire budget of a year of missionary practices in Japan – should not be repeated.

The pleasantness, the luxury surrounding the encounters at the European courts, the enthusiastic atmosphere of warm welcome reserved for the Japanese legates, contrast with the decidedly propagandistic tone of the De Missione. Altogether, the 34 colloquia affirm, explain and justify to the Japanese interlocutors the reasons for the cultural and moral superiority of Christian Europe over all the other civilizations on the globe. The
intrinsic truth of the Christian religion and its wide diffusion in Europe were, according
to Valignano, the basis of European cultural superiority. This «dialogue», written in the
style of a didactic humanistic textbook, was primarily directed to Japanese students of
the Jesuit schools. According to Valignano's original plan, the Latin text had to be
accompanied by a Japanese translation, which would have allowed a double reading, in
Latin and Japanese. The hypothesis of the internal use in Jesuit schools, for the
education and persuasion of Japanese boys, could explain the tones – very emphatic in
supporting an alleged cultural and material superiority of Christian Europe – that
contrast with those of other works of Valignano (for example, the Advertimentos e Avisos
acerca dos costumes e catangues de Jappão, written in 1581 and known as Cerimoniale³),
more attentive or at least aware of the enormous asymmetry of power and material
means of the Jesuits involved in the mission, compared to those at the disposal of
Japanese political and religious elites.

In the light of these introductory remarks, this essay focuses on the analysis of the way
Valignano structured and justified his defense and promotion of the superiority of
European culture and civilization also by resorting to topics related to cosmography
and geography. The De missione has a clear spatio-temporal narrative structure: the
colloquia follow step by step the long journey made by the Japanese legates, initially
describing the Portuguese routes and the main port cities of the Portuguese Empire,
from Nagasaki to Lisbon (Colloquia I, II, VI, XXXII and XXXIII). Once in Europe,
numerous Portuguese, Spanish and Italian cities are described (Colloquia VII-XXI). Within
the broad narrative framework of the De missione, the first, sixth and last
colloquium of the voluminous work aimed also at disclosing to the Japanese
interlocutors of the Jesuits the complete orbis terrarum, resulting from the long process
of the European expansion, while at the same time showing them that the Japanese
imago mundi, prior to the arrival of Christian Europeans, just encompassed a small
portion of the globe. It was only a «miniature world» in Valignano’s words.

My concern is not with geography itself, but in the meaning, goals and implications of
the use of geographical discourses in missionary and diplomatic contexts in Japan at
the end of the sixteenth century. I will analyze the epistemological foundations of the
De missione as well as the functions of cosmography, geography and cartography in the
plural contexts of the early modern missions in Asia, as powerful lenses with which to
observe and decode early modern missionary strategies, with respect to the
interactions with local political and cultural elites.

Through geography, cartography and cosmography, Valignano assigned the De missione
the goal of convincing the Japanese political and cultural elites about the worth and
positivity of their religious proselytism whose legitimacy rested on the cultural
supremacy of Christian Europe over all the peoples of the Earth. In this context,
missionaries had the responsibility of spreading the Christian message of salvation to
all the people in the wide space encompassed by the Iberian Empires, in continuity with
the foundation of the Roman Empire, the arrival in Rome of Christianity and its ancient
expansion through the Empire. The spreading of Christianity to the whole globe not
only implied the diffusion of a spiritual message and the salvation of souls, but
according to Valignano it also provided access to a superior civilization, including its
refined customs and material habits. Furthermore, since the padre visitador outlined the
geographical discourse of the De missione by explicitly referring to Abraham Ortelius’s
Theatrum orbis terrarum (first edition, Antwerp 1570), this study will allow us to analyze
a specific way and context of use, interpretation and reception of the *Theatrum*, two decades after its publication serving missionary purposes.

Finally, on the basis of Grace Vlam’s path-breaking research on the circulation of western iconography in Japan, including a discussion of the role of the *De missione* in the appearance and production, since the late sixteenth-century, of a hybrid pictorial corpus of images depicted by Japanese painters on folding screens (the so-called nanban byōbu), I will analyze the *De missione* in comparison with two late sixteenth-century ’world map’nanban folding screens (sekai chizu byōbu) which display on their planispheres the maritime routes linking Japan to Portugal as well as those that circumnavigate the entire world crossing the Pacific Ocean. In particular, I will focus on the so-called Jōtoku-ji byōbu, named after the homonym temple in the Fukui region on the Sea of Japan. It is currently preserved there, and a very similar world map byōbu currently held at the Fukui Prefectural Wakasa History Museum. Both are considered among the oldest byōbu of the corpus of about 30 still preserved Japanese cartographic screens whose planisphere derives from Portuguese models. My hypothesis is that the design of both the Jōtoku-ji and Fukui Prefectural Wakasa History Museum byōbu, including the details of the sea routes circumnavigating the whole globe, is culturally linked to the geography described by Valignano in the *De missione* on the basis of Ortelius’ *Theatrum orbis terrarum*.

**The shattered mirror**

Much has been written in the last few years on the fundamental role of missionaries, especially of the Jesuits, in building channels of communication and interpretation among literate classes in Europe, Asia and the New World. Literate classes of Christian Europe had access to first hand descriptions of Asian, African and Amerindian peoples and kingdoms, written or collected by missionaries in the form of printed letters, reports and maps; at the same time, Chinese and Japanese political, military and cultural elites had access to missionaries’ descriptions of Europe, Christianity, Africa and the New World, explicitly drawn up for them by the missionaries. Valignano’s *De missione* is generally regarded as one of the clearest examples of the latter genre.

In current historiographical debates, this written communication is often interpreted in commendatory tones, emphasizing its role in creating prototypal processes of globalization, which include the learning of languages and dynamics of cultural, scientific and technological transfer. There is no doubt that missionary practices have been fundamental in creating long distance networks of knowledge connected to the development of Empires; at the same time, however, it is necessary to remember that these communications developed within strategic frameworks, which had political ends that heavily influenced their contents. *De missione* is a clear example of these dynamics.

Just a few decades after the very moment in which the (already precarious) institutional religious unity of Christian Europe had definitely collapsed under the pressure and violence of both the Protestant and Catholic Reformations, Valignano structured the *De missione* around the trope that an (allegedly) unified, peaceful, and prosperous Christian (Catholic) Europe could disclose the whole world to all civilizations, through its true and revealed religion, its refined culture, science and arts, and the composite agency of European missionaries, scholars, merchants, and cartographers.
During his three stays in Japan (1579-1582, 1590-1592 and 1598-1603), Valignano carefully and purposely kept hidden from the Japanese elites all political and religious conflicts that were ravishing Europe, not to speak of the social deviances which were part of the social landscapes of early modern Europe. Also his detailed written instructions in 55 points for the confrères Nuno Rodrigues S. J and Diogo de Mesquita S. J. (1553-1614), the tutors and mentors of the four Japanese boys during the whole travel to and, in the case of Mesquita, also from Europe back to Japan, firmly prescribed to avoid any possible interference and contamination with the multifaceted social urban realities of early modern Catholic Europe. «They should know nothing about what is bad», Valignano wrote, including the seminars and the «disorders of the courts and among prelates», de facto confining the legati to the theatrical ambiances of the courts, palaces, monasteries and churches of the wealthiest political and religious (Catholic) elites, under the strict control of their Jesuit tutors.

Around the same years, also Matteo Ricci S. J. (1552-1610) indulged in the same trope while describing Europe to his Chinese interlocutors, in his monumental planisphere, the *Kunyu wanguo quantu* («Complete map of the myriad nations of the world») designed in collaboration with the astronomer and mathematician Li Zhizao (1565-1630) and printed with woodblocks in Beijing by the printer Zong Wentao in 1602. In one cartouche placed close to Europe, Ricci explicitly conveyed the idea and image of a unified, peaceful, and prosperous Christian Europe ruled in harmony and justice under the religion of the Lord of Heaven:

The continent of Europe contains more than thirty kingdoms, all of which follow the rule of the Ancient Kings. They do not follow any heterodox doctrine, but are reverent adherents of the holy religion of the Lord of Heaven [Tian zhu] and of the Highest Deity [Shang di, the «Supreme Deity», or «Emperor»]. There are three classes of government officials. The highest promotes religion, then comes the one that judges worldly affairs, and finally the one that dedicates itself exclusively to arms. The land produces the five cereals [rice, millet, hemp, wheat, peas, or legumes], the five metals [gold, silver, copper, tin and iron] and all sorts of fruits. Wine is made with the fruit of grapes. All the crafts are excellent. They are skilled in astronomy and philosophy. The customs are honest and the five relationships [sovereign-subjects, father-son, older brother-younger brother, husband-wife, and universal friendship] are important. All kinds of products are very abundant. Sovereigns and subjects are peaceful and wealthy. In all seasons it [Europe] communicates with foreign countries: travelers and merchants travel to all countries of the world. It [Europe] is 80,000 li far from the Middle Kingdom, with which has had no relationships since Antiquity; now communication has been established for seventy years and more.

Near the Italian peninsula, a cartouche even describes the Pope, called «the king of [spiritual] education», as the religious chief of the unified and peaceful Christianity, respected by all countries:

Here [in Italy] the king of [spiritual] education does not marry and concerns himself solely with the religion of the Lord of Heaven: he is revered in the state of Rome and in all the countries of Europe.

The diffusion and use of these ideas, tacitly considered by the Jesuits to be unverifiable by Chinese and Japanese interlocutors, were evidently a common practice in the missions in Asia. The alleged unity and harmony among the seasoned European kingdoms and conflictual Christian confessions were (fake) *loci communes* used in the attempt to convince the political and cultural elites of China and Japan of the nobility and adequacy of their European interlocutors. In the case of Japan, this strategy soon
turned out to be somewhat clumsy and counterproductive. Soon after 1596, the joint arrival of the mendicant orders and of the Spanish, Dutch and English merchants, would have revealed to the Japanese the profound rivalries between Portuguese and Spanish merchants, soldiers and missionaries, the rivalries between the Iberian empires and the Dutch and British commercial companies, as well as those between the mendicant orders – landed in Japan from the Philippines and New Spain – and the Jesuits, with whom they disagreed and competed on almost every aspect of the missionary practices. After the so-called «San Felipe incident», caused by the shipwreck of a Spanish galleon off the coast of Urado in the Shikoku Island, while it was en route from Manila to Acapulco, the Japanese soon became acquainted with the Imperial and conquering projection of the (then united) Iberian Empires that fully contradicted the image of Europe as a peaceful and united continent, created artfully by the Jesuits. The illusionistic image of a superior, united, concordant, noble and peaceful Europe had been clouded and contradicted by unexpected events that in the course of a few years put an abrupt end to missions in Japan. The project conceived by Valignano and the fictional image of Europe reflected by the De missione shattered almost immediately after its publication. Valignano, who died in Macau in 1606, did not notice, or preferred not to notice.

The Theatrum orbis terrarum in the De missione

Among its contents, the De missione creates a literary imago mundi through which a fully fictional, literary orbis terrarum was displayed to the Japanese, through the rhetorical intermediacy of Abraham Ortelius’s Theatrum orbis terrarum, whose first edition was printed in Antwerp by Gillis Coppens van Diest in 1570. A copy of the Theatrum orbis terrarum was donated to the Japanese legati by Melchior Ghilandino (Melchior Wieland, Königsberg, ca 1520-Padua, 1589), director of the Botanic Garden of Padua (Orto Botanico) on 8 or 9 of July 1585, during the legati’s short visit of Padua, on their way to Venice. Ghilandino also gave them the first three volumes of the Civitates orbis terrarum published by Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg in Koln in 1572, 1575 and 1581, respectively. The four volumes, «valued at a hundred ducats», were brought back to Lisbon and accompanied the Japanese boys during their long return journey to Macau and Nagasaki. Their copy of the Theatrum and the three volumes of the Civitates orbis terrarum were probably the first to reach South-East Asia though the agency of the Society of Jesus.

Abraham Ortelius (Antwerp, 1528-1598), initially an engraver and colorist, of notable antiquarian culture, close to Gerard Kremer (Mercator, 1512-1594), became from 1575 the geographer of Philip II of Augsburg. His major work, the Theatrum orbis terrarum, collects and displays a conspicuous set of 70 maps covering the whole world. The maps selected and printed by Ortelius were derived from original manuscript or printed maps, which Ortelius had managed to acquire in the whole European book market. Ortelius redrew the maps to standardize their heterogeneous graphic and textual styles with that of the Theatrum and ordered them to create a coherent narrative. The work, originally in Latin, was soon translated into French, Dutch and in German (before 1572), Castilian (1588), Italian (1593, the Theatrum epitome, and in 1598 the whole work) and English (1606). New maps were constantly added to the original corpus of 70 maps of the editio princeps and throughout its 31 editions in six languages, the Theatrum and its...
187 maps became a widespread reference work for scholarly geography and cartography all over Europe\(^9\).

Ortelius introduced his *opus magnum* and explained the importance of geography with respect to history through a motto that became famous: *Historiae oculus Geographiae* ("Geometry is the eye of History"). According to Ortelius, Geography was an interface to situate History in a well-defined space, as well as to locate and visualize the places mentioned in ancient literary and historical texts. Together with cartography, geography was also a fundamental interpretative apparatus to better understand and explain historical events: wars and battles, processes of expansion, from Ancient History (i.e. the conquests of Alexander the Great, the history of the Roman Empire, the pilgrimages of Saint Paul) to contemporary events, including the recent Iberian global expansions.

For Ortelius, space is both a decisive historical agent as well as factor, and this accounts for the intimate connection between History and Geography (the same that exists between words and images). Ortelius’s work is paradigmatic for an understanding of early modern epistemology with respect to the study and use of Geography. While looking at and analyzing the shape of seas, mountains, islands, gulfs, the course of rivers – Ortelius writes –, History is explained and deployed.\(^{26}\)

The use of the *Theatrum* made by Valignano fits precisely into the paradigm traced by Ortelius in the *Proemium* (Foreword). For the Padre Visitador the *Theatrum orbis* is the device that provides a visual dimension not only of the complex, long journeys of the Japanese legati described in the 34 *colloquia* of the *De missione*, but also of the Christian western image of the world as compared to the Buddhist one. In this regard, it is worth reporting the initial parts of the first *coloquium*, involving Leo, Linus and Miguel, where the image of the western globe is compared to the Japanese conceit of the *sangoku*, the Three Realms:

Leo: [...] to help us understand it [Europe], could you please explain what region is meant by the name Europe?
Michael: This is a very good question and very relevant to what I’m going to be talking about. Since the Japanese live in these islands, at an enormous distance from that, so to speak, other world, and have had little commerce or other contact with its peoples, we have until now had definite and reliable information only about our own Japan, and about kingdoms near to it, China and Siam [...] But now that we have been there our eyes are opened, as it were, as if the darkness surrounding them had been dispersed, and we know that there are many other kingdoms and many provinces all over the world. They are known for their size and almost infinite in their number, so that the three regions of Japan, China, and Siam seem by comparison like portions of some miniature world.\(^{27}\)

Michael’s reflection is a critical questioning of the Japanese traditional tripartite cosmology and ideology of the *sangoku* (Three-Realms) – *Wagacho* (our country), *Shintan* or *Kara* (which included both China and Korea) and *Tenjiku* (India) – the three greatest civilizations in South Southeast Asia, from a Japanese point of view. The *sangoku* was integrated into the Buddhist cosmological image of the world. The Three-Realms were located on the surface of a cylindrical disc of oceans contained by a ring of mountains at whose center there was Mount Sumeru. The Jesuits were quite familiar with this image of the world that contrasted the spherical, earth-centered Christian Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmos. The Jesuits engaged the *bonzos* in theatrical public discussions, as recorded in Jesuit letters and annual reports dispatched to Europe from India, Japan (since the very beginning of the mission, by Francisco Xavier S.J.\(^{28}\), and later by Luis
Fróis, João Rodrigues Tçuzzu S. J. and Carlo Spinola S. J. among others) and China (by Matteo Ricci S. J.).

As an example, Fróis wrote that, in 1580, Oda Nobunaga visited the residence of the Jesuits to hear about the Christian belief (a nossa ley) and asked Father Organtino and Brother Lourenço to show him a globe once again. Fróis noticed that, when looking at the globe, Nobunaga expressed his discontent with Buddhist cosmology. Then, he looked back at the globe again, asking to be shown the route between Japan and Portugal. From Fróis's account, two specific forms of cartographic operations emerged that involved the use of globes and planispheres. On the one hand, globes were used to epitomize and visualize a significant part of the Christian cosmological and cosmographical discourse to counteract Buddhist, or Daoist, or, in the case of China, Confucian cosmology. On the other hand, globes and maps were used to display sea routes as well as the reciprocal positions of the kingdoms in the global geographical framework of the planispheres. As will be seen later in this essay, these two integrated forms of cartographic operations – the cosmological and the practical – are also found in the narrative structure of De missione.

These real or imaginary cosmological debates or discussions form yet another topos in Jesuit writings and are reported also in Japanese anti-Christian pamphlets, such as the Hai-Yaso («The Anti-Jesuit»), a fictional dialogue, supposedly dated to 1606 and attributed to the Japanese Neo-Confucian philosopher and advisor to the Tokugawa bakufu, Hayashi Razan, also known as Hayashi Dōshun. This concise dialogue stages the dispute between Hayashi and an unnamed Japanese convert to Christianity who also became a Jesuit (Fucan Fabian). The first part of this anti-Christian controversy in the form of a dialogue concerns the sphericity of the earth and the consequent apparent relativity of the cardinal points, all concepts opposed and ridiculed by Hayashi. In a recent critical study, Kiri Paramore put forward the convincing hypothesis that the short dialogue is actually a literary construction, probably fabricated a few decades later than 1606, as part of an ideological anti-Christian campaign that took advantage of Hayashi’s reputation and name to reinforce anti-Christian sentiments. Whatever the actual date of the dialogue, it is however very significant that cosmography has been chosen as the object of the dispute, in the wide gamut of possible Christian themes, to the goal of discrediting both Jesuit Christian teachings and those Japanese people who converted to them, as it was the case of Fucan Fabian, before he apostatized.
Western cosmographic concepts were still critically discussed even after the expulsion of the missionaries, as exemplified in a work such the *Kenkon Bensetsu* (‘Treatise and Critic on Earth and Heavens’), a treatise on Aristotelian cosmology and cosmography, translated into Japanese in 1643 by a former Portuguese Jesuit, Christovão Ferreira (1580-1650), who apostatized and took the Japanese name of Sawano Chūan. The *Kenkon Bensetsu*, translated by order of Inoue Masashige (1584-1661), Inspector General against the Pagans (that is the Christians), was commented on by Mukai Genshō (1609-1677), a distinguished Confucian scholar of Nagasaki, who discussed and compared Aristotelian theory in the light of Confucianism.

Altogether, these real or fictional dialogues and works demonstrate the implicit importance of cosmography in the context of the contrasted interactions between the missionaries and the Japanese Buddhist and neo-Confucian cultural elites. The derogatory notion of a ‘miniature world’ used by Valignano to refer to the Japanese image of the world evidently touched a sensitive point in the cultural rivalry with the Japanese elites. Valignano explained the greatest nobility of Europe with respect to all the civilizations encountered in the process of the European expansion, also on the basis of the criterion that Europe, unlike all other civilizations, had a complete knowledge and awareness of the whole globe.

After discussing the *sangoku* as a miniature world, Michael displays to his Japanese interlocutors the planisphere of the *Theatrum orbis terrarum*, one of the most eloquent, diffused and relevant images of the early modern European *imago mundi*. Before discussing the five parts of the world, Michael undertakes, in the Colloquium VI, a long discussion on the astronomical nature of the globe aimed at explaining to the Japanese how Iberian sailors managed to sail their ships around the globe. The globe and its two-
dimensional representation, the planisphere, are described in astronomical terms, by detailing the basic notions of degree, scale, longitude and latitude, the main astronomical circles, the equator and the tropics, accompanied by a brief analysis of the astrolabe and the compass and their integrated use in navigation. Finally, in the last colloquium, entitled «A summary description of the whole world, and a statement as to which is its principal and noblest part», Leo reminds Michael to try and speak more about the «world as a whole». The central part of the last dialogue and the whole geographical description based on the *Theatrum orbis terrarum* aim at making a clear statement regarding the superiority of Europe with respect to all the other regions of the world, through a cosmographic analysis. The words put in the mouth of Michael are extremely eloquent in this respect and are quite revealing of the Jesuits' Catholic cosmography.

28 *Colloquium* XXXIV begins with a discussion of the small space allocated to Japan in the planisphere of the *Theatrum orbis terrarum*. Michael explains to Lino and Leo that this apparent smallness depends on the geometric properties of the image, more precisely on the way the degrees of latitude and longitude are arranged in the geometry of the image. After overcoming Lino’s perplexities, the long journey from Nagasaki to Lisbon is reconstructed with the aid of the planisphere. An ideal line is traced on the planisphere, deploying the long maritime route sailed by the Japanese legates from Nagasaki to Macau, then from Macau to Malacca and, by skirting Indochina, from Malacca to Goa, and finally, by circumnavigating Africa, up to Lisbon. Also the European part of the journey to Rome and then the return by ship to Macau, with a stop in Mozambique, before reaching Goa and Malacca again, are quickly mentioned.

29 Then follows a detailed explanation of the causes of the European superiority over all other peoples of the world that is worth reporting. According to Valignano, there were three main causes that sanctioned the superiority of Europe over the other continents. The first cause was astronomical and briefly relied upon a commonplace of Medieval and early modern natural philosophy: Europe was in fact included in the so-called «temperate zone», between the Tropic of Cancer and the Arctic Polar Circle. This localization protected Europe from excessive heat and cold, favoring the temperance of its inhabitants, the possibility of traveling and developing industrious activities:

> Michael: [...] In the first place Europe is outside the circles called the Tropics, and is therefore not exposed to fierce or torrid heat from the sun. Moreover, the greater part of it, and perhaps all of it with the exception of the most distant islands, is outside the Arctic Circle, so neither is it subject to being frozen by the biting cold, but is always agreeably temperate, the cold and heat varying within a tolerable range, something which cannot be said of the other parts [...].

30 This belief was paired by the racist assumption of the natural superiority of white people over peoples with darker skins:

> Michael: In the second place if we compare Europe with Asia and Africa we find the inhabitants of Europe to be white in color, fair of face, and with comely features, but the Africans mostly black, and the Asiatics at least dark, on the whole, and blackish. This means that although there are some who are endowed with a white color and who can be said to be clever, all the others, who are almost black, are by nature crude and unrefined.

31 Finally, the main characteristic that distinguishes Europeans from other peoples of the world, making them better and more refined, is the moral enhancement induced to
Europe by the intrinsic truthfulness of Christian religion, which openly contrasts with the vices and weaknesses induced by idolatry:

Michael: [...] In the third place the true and Christian religion, which is so flourishing in Europe, contributes above all else to the more refined civilization of the people of Europe. [...] It is manifestly clear that the Christian religion, which illuminates the mind most brightly with the light of truth, promotes understanding, and imbuces the mind with a knowledge of eternal things, greatly conduces to human refinement and civilization. [...] Thus, since idolatry and false religion is the mother of all errors and vices, those who are given over to it are inhuman, barbarous, superstitious; they are often poisoners, and are enveloped in other innumerable evils. It follows also that their princes are despots, imposing unjust laws, harassing the people, giving in to their own unbridled cupidity, and carried off with a blind impetus towards whatever strikes them as desirable.\(^31\)

Valignano and Sande made a further statement to reinforce the justification of the superiority of Europe: the celebration of Rome as *caput mundi*. They openly stressed the direct contiguity between Rome as the capital of the Ancient Roman Empire and Rome that eventually became the center of Christianity. At the end of the sixteenth century, through the global projection of the Iberian Empires, as well as under the auspices of the papacy, Rome had become the center of an alleged worldwide Christian republic, much wider than ancient Christianity at the time of the Roman Empire:

Michael: the all-provident God has set the capital of an empire formerly secular but now sacred in the city of Rome and in Italy and Europe. Whereas in times past a good part of the world was conquered from there and put under the yoke of the Romans, in our time the worldwide Christian republic recognizes the Supreme Pontiff as its supreme moderator and prince, and we should believe that the best and most suitable part of the world has been appointed to him by God, the greatest and best.\(^42\)

Soon after, Leo begins a conclusive heartfelt speech to declare the global superiority of Europe in every field of human action:

Leo: I judge and frankly declare that Europe is the most excellent of all the parts of the world, the part on which God with most generous hand has conferred the most and the best good things. Accordingly it stands out among all the other regions for its climate, for the abilities, the industry, and the nobility of its nations, for its organization of life and of government, and for the multiplicity of its arts.\(^43\)

The celebration of Rome as *caput mundi* of Christianity, then leads to the definitive recognition by Leo and Linus of the superiority of Christian Europe on even the Chinese civilization, traditionally considered by Japanese people as the most important of the three kingdoms of *Sangoku*:

Leo: You win, Michael, and I declare myself entirely convinced by the reasons you give, for if the kingdom of China, to which we used to concede first place, yields it wholly to Europe, no further reason remains for doubt, especially when we consider the fruits which, as you have demonstrated, grow from the Christian religion.\(^44\)

With these peremptory statements, which Valignano and Sande put in the mouth of Leo and Linus, the *De missione* concludes and the ideological framework that governs the entire work is revealed. On the one hand, the Japanese boys in Jesuit schools and seminars in Japan would have an overwhelming literary reference that while celebrating Christian Europe, reassured them about how desirable it was to become part of it. On the other hand, prospective European readers, in particular the prelates of the Roman Curia, the conflicting religious orders engaged in the missions, and the officials of the imperial apparatuses of Lisbon, Madrid and the other European Catholic
courts, would receive evidence of the Jesuits' success in convincing the idolatrous, and yet in terms of civilization very advanced Japanese peoples about the superiority and desirability of Christian Europe.

Valignano and Sande's ideological writing also allows us to emphasize a specific way of interpreting and using Ortelius's *Theatrum orbis terrarum*. If Giorgio Mangani's studies have highlighted the moral, stoic dimension of Ortelius's cartography, which aimed at the contemplation and the universal pacification of all the people of the world, the *De Missione* inserts the *Theatrum* in a missionary and political project that affirmed the cultural, moral and scientific superiority of Christian Europe over all the civilizations of the earth. The encounter with and conversion to Christianity, through the intermediacy of missionaries, could have raised all civilizations to the level of Europe. Therefore, and far beyond Ortelius's intentions, the *Theatrum* was used as a key intellectual tool in the broad process started by the Iberian monarchies and performed by religious orders to rewrite the history of the peoples of the entire globe by placing them in a geometric space conceived and designed through European geography and cartography. This strategy also applied to the peoples of Asia, which, unlike those of the New World, the Europeans had not conquered in the modern age. Valignano's ideological attitude seems more aligned with the image of the frontispiece of the *Theatrum* in which the personification of Europe, seated on a throne and with a scepter in the right hand, dominates from above the personifications of Asia, Africa and the New World.

*Fig. 2: Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598), Frans Hogenberg (1535-1590), [Frontispiece]*

Indeed, the opposite could be also argued: where it was not possible to hypothesize a conquest *manu militari*, as in Japan or China, there was no other solution left than to try to influence the consciences and begin a slow work of persuasion. Through the years, both the moral persuasion and Christian education of selected cohorts of Japanese boys would probably make Christian Europe closer and desirable to local political and cultural elites. The creation of encomiastic literary images of Christian Europe was therefore part of a broader political strategy, eloquently and openly made explicit in the *De missione*. This literary fantasy, conceived by the then coordinator of the Jesuits in Asia, is significant to the Jesuits’ dream of (an unlikely) triumph of Christianity in Japan.

**Homologies: the *De missione* and the Japanese ‘world map’ folding screens**

Despite being without images, the *De missione* develops a very rich visual kind of writing. The writing style of Valignano and Sande privileges and highlights the visual aspects of the long journey of the legates; the 34 *colloquia* deploy and display detailed ekphraseis of the numerous cities and places visited by the legates, contextualized through specific references and quotations of the cartographic contents of the *Theatrum orbis terrarum*. They also provide vivid portraits of the kings and remarkable people they met during the journey.

In 1973, Grace Vlam advanced the convincing hypothesis of a possible visual reception in Japan of the *De Missione*, through the intermediacy of the *schola pictorum* («school of painters») of the Jesuits. Vlam argued that its ekphrasis and visual narrative style were among the sources of inspiration for the emergence in Japan, in the first decade of the seventeenth century, of a specific extraordinary pictorial corpus of Japanese *nanban* folding screens that depicted armored kings and knights and European cities. As an example, Vlam emphasized the homology between the textual description in the *De missione* of the exceptional meeting between Philip II and the four Japanese legates, at the Palace of the Escorial on 12 November 1584, and a famous *nanban* five-fold screens byōbu known as the «European King and his Court», held at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, representing a king (Philip II of Spain), a noble woman and four knights, one of whom depicted with a wall clock. During Philip II’s reception, the Japanese legates met his family and high-ranking members of his court. The *De missione* emphasized the presence of Juan de Borja, Duke of Mayalde-Ficallo, the future General of the Jesuits, and of a noble Portuguese woman, Leonor de Mascarenhas, who had taken care of Philip’s education when he was a boy⁴⁸. Undoubtedly, the topic treated on the byōbu of Boston, depicted by Japanese painters trained at the *schola pictorum* of the Jesuits, echoes the royal reception of the legati that took place at the Escorial and makes the case for a visual reception of the *De missione* in the years after its publication.

More recently, in the afterword to the Italian edition of the *De Missione*, Marisa Di Russo has resumed Vlam’s research and called attention to the cultural links between the experience of the legati’s journey to Catholic Europe, the publication of the *De missione* and the corpus of Japanese ‘world-map’ folding screens⁴⁹. She mainly focused on the representations of cities and knights or kings in arms, such as those represented in the «Map of the World and Views of Four Cities byōbu», displaying Lisbon, Seville, Rome...
and Constantinople, together with eight kings and armed knights, currently kept at the Kobe City Museum⁴⁰, or the so-called «Twenty-Eight Cities byōbu», preserved at the Imperial Household Agency in Tokyo⁴¹, as well as the famous «Battle of Lepanto byōbu», currently preserved at the Kösetsu Museum, near Kobe, displaying, beside a colorful manuscript reproduction of a Willem Janszoon Blaeu’s printed planisphere (1607), the sea battle of Lepanto, also recalled by Valignano in the De missione⁵². The unnamed Japanese painters, trained in the schola pictorum of the Jesuits, that is the «school of painters» established by Valignano and founded by the Jesuit Giovanni Niccolo⁵³, also known as João Nicolao, Cola, Nicolao (c.1558-1626) in Japan in 1583, represented the epochal event as a field battle, by adapting and transforming the «Battle of Scipio against Hannibal» engraved by Cornelis Cort around circa 1570 from a painting by Giulio Romano in the Vatican, and some engravings from the series of the «Twelve Roman Emperors» (in particular the «Triumph», c. 1590) by Adriaen Collaert (1560-1618), published by Philips Galle (1537-1612), based on original drawings by Jan van der Straet (or Giovanni, 1523-1605), readapted to represent Philip II of Spain⁵⁴.

The celebration of monarchs, armored knights, European urban realities, events of arms and the memory of the Battle of Lepanto, are undoubtedly themes well treated in the narrative of the De Missione. However, the depiction of the screens that represented these topics occurred at least circa twenty years after the printing of the De missione. This is demonstrated by the dates of the planispheres that pair the iconographic representations of the cities, based, in the specific case of the screens of Kobe and Tokyo, on Dutch cartographic sources of 1607 and 1609, at the earliest⁵⁵. If, on the one hand, this temporal framework arguably indicates a cultural persistence of these themes in the cultural relations carried out through artistic works by the Jesuits with their Japanese interlocutors, until nearly their expulsion from Japan in 1614, in this essay, I would, on the other hand, call attention on a possible almost simultaneous visual reception of the De missione by analyzing the cartographic contents of two ‘world-map’ byōbu designed between 1591 and 1598, currently preserved at the Jōtku-ji temple in Fukui and in the Fukui Prefectural Wakasa History Museum, perhaps the oldest extant nanban ‘world map’ folding screens.

Before developing this analysis, it is worth briefly presenting the corpus of the Japanese ‘world-map’ byōbu. Known in Japanese as sekai chizu byōbu, they were designed by Japanese painters from circa 1590s onward until circa 1640s. The topic of cartography – in particular world cartography, accompanied by city views, representations of western kings and knights, and several peoples of the whole world, or huge representations of Japan – was one of many nanban or foreign topics treated by Japanese painters on the broad surfaces of folding screens (byōbu), of which there are circa 30 known and extant copies⁵⁶.

At the time the legati reached Nagasaki accompanied by Valignano, Japanese painters – at first, probably, in the context of the Jesuit schola pictorum, later independently from it – addressed the new geography of the world that resulted from the «European irruption», in the words of Ronald Toby⁵⁷, by re-elaborating works from three main cosmographic and cartographic genres that reached Japan between c. 1570 to c. 1650. These genres included Western maps of the world (in particular, Portuguese manuscript planispheres, and Flemish and Dutch printed planispheres, like those of Ortelius (1570 onward), Blaeu (1607) and Peter van der Keere (1609), together with western representations of cities as displayed in the same Dutch world cartography and
in the first three volumes of the *Civitates orbis terrarum* by Braun and Hogenberg, or in city views engraved by Collaert, as it is the case of the view of Rome, designed in 1575 and reprinted in 1610 in the *Vita beati patris Ignatii Loyolae religionis Societatis Iesu* (Antwerp: Theodore Galle, 1610), used, as seen above, in a world map screen held at Kobe City Museum.

A second major source are the planispheres written in Chinese and printed in numerous editions in the context of the mission in China by Matteo Ricci, in collaboration with the scholar and mathematician Li Zhizao (1565-1630) and the printer Zhang Wentao (c. 1585-1610)\(^4\), in particular the *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu* 坤輿萬國全圖 printed in 1602 and its re-editions and adaptations; finally, Sino-Korean cartography, in particular copies of the *Map of the Great Ming Nation*, which was used directly or indirectly to design the panels with China and Korea in a *byōbu* currently held at Kanshin-ji, a Shingon temple in Kawachinagano, near Osaka\(^9\).

The cosmographic and cartographic dimension of the *De missione legatorum*, as well as the books brought to Japan, in particular the *Theatrum* and the *Civitates orbis terrarum* mirrored and at the same time were part of the global circulation of cosmographic culture and knowledge, which resulted mostly from the Portuguese and Dutch expansions in Asia, Jesuit missionary strategies in China and Japan, as well as the circulation of material culture between Japan, Korea and China. In this latter case, independently from the agency of nanban-jin, in the context of the hundreds of years old cultural and diplomatic relations between China and Japan, including more recent Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s unsuccessful attempts at Japanese expansion in Korea between 1592 and 1598 and the successive Tokugawa Shogunate’s diplomatic efforts directed to re-establish peaceful relationships with the Joseon court from ca 1630s onward\(^6\).

I am not proposing that the *De missione* was, philologically speaking, the exclusive source at the roots of the emergence of the corpus of ‘world-map’ folding screens: as we have seen, the model of cartographic circulation was in fact much more complex than the simple, linear circulation between Europe and Japan. Furthermore, these *byōbu* might have been linked to families involved in maritime trade. I contend, however, that the first nanban planispheres, like the Jōtoku-ji *byōbu* (before the production of the *byōbu* derived from later Dutch planispheres (1607 and 1609), paired by city views and images of kings and knights) can be better understood, deciphered and contextualized in the light of the journey of the *legati* and in counterpoint with the travel narrative and the *ekphrasis* of the *De missione*. At the same time, I also suggest that the complex image of the world constructed in a literary form by the *De missione* and mainly conceived for the Japanese students of the Jesuit schools, could be better and more effectively appreciated and understood through the images of ‘world-map’ *byōbu*.

**The ‘world map’ folding screens of Jōtoku-ji and Wakasa History Museum**

In order to develop this theoretical point, the analysis of the cartographic *byōbu* held at the Jōtoku-ji temple (Fukui) and in the Fukui Prefectural Wakasa History Museum is particularly relevant.
Fig. 3: Planisphere derived from a European world map, the right screen of the so-called «Jōtoku-ji ‘World Map’ Folding screens»

Ink, color and gold leaf on Japanese paper, mounted on a pair of screens of six panels. Each screen 148.5 x 364 cm. Japan, late 16th-early 17th centuries. The map of Japan displays the sea route from Fukuoka to the southern coasts of Korea, a probable reference to the Japanese failed attempts to conquer Korea between 1592 and 1598.

Jōtoku-ji (浄得寺), Fukui

Before entering the Jōtoku-ji temple’s collection, the first byōbu belonged to the Uchida merchant family 内田 active in the port of Fukui, known as Mikuni Minato 三国湊. Not much is known about the provenance of the other byōbu, except that, before entering the Fukui Prefectural Wakasa History Museum, it was part of the Kawamura Heiemon Collection in Obama, in the same region as that of the Jōtoku-ji one. According to Unno and Loh, the Jōtoku-ji byōbu was designed around 1591 and 1598; a recent article suggested instead that the Wakasa byōbu – undoubtedly modeled on the Jōtoku-ji one, or on a byōbu belonging to the Jōtoku-ji typology – was seemingly designed at a later date, as some of its toponyms only appeared around 1630s41. The screens with the planispheres (consisting, in the Jōtoku-ji byōbu, of six panels, measuring 148.5 x 364 cm and in the Wakasa byōbu, of eight panels, measuring 117 x 375 cm) represent in pictorial form a western planisphere, either a Portuguese map of the world or a printed planisphere resembling Ortelius’ *Typus orbis terrarum*, with Japanese toponymy, in which a graduated equator (and also the tropics, in the case of the Jōtoku-ji byōbu) are traced.

The second screen of both byōbu, of equal size and structure, represents a large map of Japan, divided into the traditional 66 provinces and the profile of the southern coast of Korea.
In the case of the Jōtoku-ji byōbu, the sea route from Hakata, in Japan, to Busam, in Korea, that the Japanese military fleets sailed during the dominion of Hideyoshi Toyotomi, in the framework of two failed military campaigns to conquer Korea, between 1592 and 1597, is traced. Furthermore, unlike the very rounded and conjectural coastal profile of the major islands of Japan, the coasts of Kyūshū, where the European merchants and missionaries landed and were actually installed, are designed with more precision and with stylistic elements of western nautical derivation, which suggests a possible influence of western marine charts.

Of particular relevance for our analysis are the planispheres: the predominant elements of the representation are the seas and the oceans. The autoptic observation of the original documents clearly shows the routes traveled by the Iberian fleets in the two hemispheres demarcated by the treaties of Tordesillas (1494) and Zaragoza (1529). Taking Japan as an observation point, a particularly evident red line stands out against the blue background of the seas and highlights the Portuguese routes that connected the Japanese kingdom with the Indian Ocean, crossing the China Sea, passing through Macau, Malacca and Goa. After passing the Cape of Good Hope and going up the Atlantic Ocean to the north, up to the Azores, the red line finally reaches the Iberian Peninsula. Starting from the latter, however, another route, also marked with a red line, crosses the Atlantic longitudinally to the west and, passing a completely conjectural strait, supposedly placed in the isthmus of today’s Panama, resumes crossing the Pacific to the Philippines (Luson) to continue to Japan and China and integrate into the Portuguese routes forking towards the Indian Ocean and Japan. The second route represents the Spanish transpacific routes that since c. 1565 linked New Spain with the Philippines after Magellan’s and Elcano’s circumnavigation of the globe (1519-1522).

The routes linking the Iberian peninsula with Southeast Asia traced on the Jōtoku-ji and Wakasa planispheres correspond to the long itinerary that connected Lisbon to Nagasaki, which was also traveled by the four Japanese legates and described in the De missione. These ‘world-map’ screens, in homology with the textuality of the De missione, offer a visual representation, through cartography, of the global world (global in the...
specific sense of connected) revealed to and imposed on Japanese elites by the «European irruption». The Jōtoku-ji and Wakasa planispheres show how the arrival of the Europeans resulted also in a transformation of the Japanese spatial consciousness involving a process of destabilization of the Buddhist cosmography of the «three kingdoms» (sangoku) and revealing the discovery of new worlds, unknown to the Japanese before the arrival of the Europeans, as evidenced in an icastic way in several dialogues of the De missione legatorum.

Fig. 5: Detail of the southeast seas in the planisphere of the «Jōtoku-ji World Map' folding screens» displaying the Spanish transpacific route and the Portuguese sea route from Japan to Macau, Malacca, Goa and Lisbon designed as red lines that cross the ocean.

Conclusions

Whether this homology was inspired by the return to Nagasaki of the Japanese legati and the simultaneous publication of the De missione, or was just the expression of an interest by Japanese merchant families or clans in the representation of the world trade routes of the Iberian Empires, is an impossible question to settle at the current state of research and on the basis of the documents so far known. What can be instead highlighted, without a doubt, is a clear homology between the textual and visual narrative of the documents under analysis: the oceanic routes traced in both the Jōtoku-ji and Wakasa planispheres show a great affinity with the journey described in the De Missione and make it a coherent visual complement to the narrative of this work that was explicitly a textual rendering of the cartographic contents of the Theatrum.
orbis terrarum, integrated with precise knowledge of the Iberian sea routes around the
globe.

In addition, by integrating these reflections with the results of the former research on
nanban art and missionary culture of Grace Vlam, Alexandra Curvelo and Marisa Di Russo, and my personal findings on the Japanese world map screens, it emerges that the De missione had above all a visual reception in Japan, through the mediation of the schola pictorum of the Jesuits, rather than a textual reception. Although the abrupt interruption of the missionary presence in Japan in 1614 may have erased or dispersed the traces of a possible textual reception, however the specific ideological contents and the voluminous size of the De missione did not lend themselves to their fruition outside of the restricted sphere of the Jesuit schools. In open contrast to this difficult access to the text, the communicability of the nanban screens that originated from the schola pictorum, influenced by the ekphrasis of the De missione, was substantially wider: their communicative qualities and capacity to convey aesthetic experiences, well beyond the scopes and the intentionality assigned to them in their context of production, did not stop even at the time of the persecution of Japanese Christians, when most of the remains of Christian culture underwent a systematic process of iconoclasm. These qualities enabled them to cross cultures during many centuries. Their roots in, and link with, the De missione and missionary culture became obscure and faded for most of their spectators since the first decades of the seventeenth century: their visual bilingualism not only enabled them to escape destruction, but turned them into collectable objects, whose aesthetic hybrid qualities still fascinate viewers today.

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Ortelius [Ortels], Abraham [1572], « Abraham Ortelius au lecteur débonnaire », *Théâtre de l’univers contenant les cartes de tout le monde*, avec une brève déclaration d’icelles, Antwerp, Gillis van Diest, f. Aiiij r-v and the following unnumbered folio.


**Critical apparatus**


**NOTES**

1. On the transmission of humanistic knowledge in Southeast Asia, in particular of humanistic dialogues and the role of Duarte De Sande S. J., see Burnett 1996, pp. 425-71.


3. Üçerler 2005, pp. 1-18; on the Jesuit press in Asia, s. the Laures Rare Book Database, created by the Kirishitan Bunko of Sophia University on the basis of the research developed by Johannes Laures S. J. on the books published in Macau and in Japan by the Jesuit press between 1588 and 1614: https://digital-archives.sophia.ac.jp/laures-kirishitan-bunko/?lang=en/, consulted 14 July 2020.

4. Fróis 1942. The edition of La première ambassade du Japon en Europe 1582-1592 was based on a manuscript originally collected by Paul Sarda and described by Joseph Schütte S. J. and Dorotheus Schilling O. F. M., currently held in Lisbon. See Fróis 1532-1597; the manuscript on paper of the Tratado dos Embaixadores Japões que Forão de Japão a Roma no ano de 1582 was copied in Macau by José Montanha S. J., around 1742. This Tratado encompasses the journey from Nagasaki to Lisbon and the journey to Rome and the return to Lisbon, just before the legati started their return journey to Japan (Chapter 24 of Montanha’s copy of Fróis’s Tratado dos Embaixadores japões). Apparently, Fróis did not describe the return journey to Macau and Nagasaki, which is instead narrated in the De missione (Colloquium XXXII). Fróis’s Tratado and the final part of the De missione are studied and commented (but not edited, nor translated) in Cooper 2005. On the possible role of Mesquita as the author of the diary of the journey lasting eight years of the Japanese legati, s. Fróis 1942, pp. xxiv-xxx, and Cooper 2005, pp. 194-196 (the latter quite imprecise).

5. See Boscaro 1973, pp. 547-555.


7. In contrast to Valignano’s initial project, the De missione was not translated into Japanese: the Japanese Brother Jorge de Loyola, in charge of the translation, suddenly died in Macau in 1589. In later years, the preparation of a monumental and archetypal Latin-Portuguese-Japanese dictionary, published in Amakusa by the Jesuit press in 1595, absorbed almost all available resources. See Dictionarium 1979; Kishimoto 2006, pp. 17-26.


11. Fukui-city, 浄得寺 - Jōtoku-ji, Map of the World and Map of Japan, Momoyama period, late 16th century. Pair of six-fold screens, ink, color, and gold leaf on paper, each 148.5 x 364 cm. The original temple was destroyed in a bombing raid during the Second World War. The Jōtoku-ji byōbu escaped destruction.


13. Unno 1994, pp. 461-462; Fujii 2007, pp. 221-249. I am grateful to Akune Susumu (Kyoto University) for sharing this bibliographic reference.


15. This oval planisphere, comprising six panels, measuring all together c. 200 × 400 cm, derived from several revisions of the first map of the world designed in Chinese by Ricci, printed with woodblocks between 1584 and 1585 in Zhaoqing and entitled 興地山海全圖 Yudi shanhai quantu / Complete map of the mountains and sea of the earth. The Kunyu wanguo quantu, the most
famous of the ‘Ricci’s maps’ and the only one to have been preserved, was later reprinted and also copied several times in manuscript form by Chinese, Japanese and Korean scholars. In particular, it circulated pervasively in Japan, in both manuscript and printed copies and became one of the principal sources of Japanese world map nanban folding screens, including a pair of magnificent folding screens held at the Nanban Bunkakan, in Osaka. Vd. D’Elia 1938, pp. 73-93; D’Elia 1961, pp. 82-164; Foss 1984, pp. 177-96; Day 1995, pp. 94-117. For the most recent re-edition of the planisphere, translated into Italian, Mignini 2013.


19. The English East India Company had a trade station in Japan between 1613-1626, exactly at the time of the final expulsion of the Catholic missionaries. See Screech 2012, pp. 3-40.


21. For a detailed reconstruction of the San Felipe shipwreck and its consequences on the relationships among the Portuguese and Spanish merchants, the Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries and the Japanese political élites, during Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s rule, see Takekoshi 2003, vol. II, chap. 32; Zamora 1997; Mateo 2007, pp. 8-9.


24. It is documented that in 1608 at least another copy of Ortelius’s Theatrum orbis terrarum arrived in China, in Nanchang, but Ricci preferred Ortelius’s work to be sent to Beijing, and this because of the potentialities of that place to give it a far larger resonance, on account of the great number of Chinese people visiting the mission: « Il Theatrum Orbis che io voglio per tenere in questo capo del mondo Sinico, dove è maggiore il concorso » (« The Theatrum orbis [terrarum] that I want to keep (with me) in the capital of China, where more people can see it ») : D’Arelli 2001, p. 522.


26. I refer to the French edition of this work: Ortelius 1572, f. Aiiij r-v and the two following unnumbered folio.

28. For the letters in which, as early as 1551 and 1552, Xavier makes reference to his explanations on the notions of a spherical earth addressed to Japanese people, s. Schurhammer 1944-1945, Ep. 96, 110. See also Unno 1994, p. 377.
31. Fabian Fucan (c.1565-1621) was a Buddhist-turned-Jesuit-turned-Buddhist-again who authored the *Myōtei mondo* (« Myōtei dialogue »), 1605), a Christian disproof of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism, in the form of a dialogue between two Buddhist nuns. After recanting Christianity, Fabian Fucan wrote the *Ha Daiisu* (Destroying Deus, 1620), a satirical refutation of Christianity. See Fabian 2015 [1605]; Pomplun 2017.
33. For a critical discussion of the authorship and the date of Hai-Yaso, see Paramore 2006.
34. The planisphere, based on Gerard Mercator’s wall world map of 1569, was engraved by Franz Hogenberg and replaced only in 1586, after sixteen editions of the *Theatrum*.

Even though we do not know which one of the sixteen editions was actually donated by Melchior Ghilandino to the Japanese legates in the summer of 1585, the planisphere they could see and study was a copy of this one.
37. *De missione* 1590, Colloquium I, 5 (Massarella & Moran 2012, p. 46; Di Russo 2016, p. 71): « Michael : Let me put before you briefly the principal parts of the world : the world is divided, according to the most learned of scientists, into five principal parts, namely Europe, Africa, Asia, America, and lastly, that land which learned writers call terra incognita. [...] For the moment, then, it is enough to have spoken of these five parts of the world, though I shall have something to say later on about the form, so to speak, of the world as a whole ».
39. *De missione* 1590, Colloquium XXXIV, p. 402 (Massarella & Moran 2012, p. 440; Di Russo 2016, pp. 511-512): « Leo : Up till now, Miguel, you have told us, in the colloquia so far, about the different parts of the world. Today, however, we have come together to hear you speak about the world as a whole [...] Now that with your arrival here all the difficulties of your journey are at an end, it remains for you to put before our eyes the picture of the whole of the world [orbis terrarum] which we were promised in the first colloquium, and to tell us about the difference between its principal parts. | Michael : That is why I had the *Theatrum orbis* [Ortelius’s *Theatrum orbis terrarum*] brought. You will find it a great pleasure to study the various maps in it. First of all, then, take a look at this picture, which contains a representation of the whole of the world [...] ».
45. Valignano dispatched a few copies of the *De missione* to Europe; some of them are still held in libraries in Europe (i.e. at the Biblioteca Casanatense in Rome, at the Biblioteca Nacional in Lisbon and Madrid, at the British Library, in London).


47. Gruzinski 2018, p. 277.


50. Kobe City Museum, *Map of the World and Views of Four Cities*, pair of eight-fold screens, ink and color on paper, each 159x478 cm, Momoyama to Edo period (early 17th century).

51. *Map of the World and Twenty-Eight Cities*.


54. Kobe, Kösetsu Museum of Arts, Pair of nanban screens with the Battle of Lepanto, Momoyama to Edo period (early 17th century), color and ink on paper, each 153,5 x 370 cm. Remarkably, the flags and banners bear the Roman SPQR monogram (*Senatus Populusque Romanus*): Philip II of Spain, portrayed as a Roman emperor, is an echo of the political discourse developed by the Spanish monarchy to model the figure of the Spanish Emperor on the archetypal images of the good and heroic ancient Roman emperors. See Sakamoto 1966, pp. 30-44; Vlam 1977, pp. 220-250, fig. 21, 22, 23, 27. This topic has been recently discussed by Curvelo and by Loh in their dissertations, in 2008 and 2013 respectively.

55. As an example, the planispheres represented in the Kösetsu and Kobe museums are simplified manuscript reproductions of Blaeu 1607. See Schilder 1981, pp. 23-27.

56. For a list of extant ‘world-map’ folding screens updated until 1994, see Unno 1994, pp. 461-462. For the most recent contributions, s. Loh 2013; Cattaneo 2014; Raneri 2015; Mochizuki 2017.


58. On the collaboration between Ricci, Li Zhizao, and Zhang Wentao, see Aleni 2010, pp. 40, 55, 70-71. For a recent annotated and translated edition of Ricci’s and Li Zhizao’s planisphere, s. Mignini 2013.


60. Loh 2013, pp. 62-100; Cattaneo 2014.

61. Arima 2012, pp. 1-18. I am grateful to Akune Susumu (Kyoto University) for sharing this bibliographic reference.

62. On the Japanese reception of these events, s. Cattaneo 2020, pp. 41-76 (in particular, pp. 54-76).

63. On this concept, see Hioki 2011, pp. 23-44.

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**ABSTRACTS**

This essay analyses the epistemological foundations of the use and functions of cosmography, geography and cartography in the *De missione dialogus* as a way to sustain the European moral and...
scientific alleged superiority with respect to all other civilizations. Since the padre visitador Alessandro Valignano S. J. (1539-1606) outlined the geographical discourse of the De missione by following Abraham Ortelius’s Theatrum orbis terrarum (1570), this study will also allow to analyze a specific use of the Theatrum for Catholic missionary purposes. On the basis of extant research on the reception of Western iconography in Japan, we will discuss the possible role of De missione in the appearance and production, since the late sixteenth century, of a hybrid pictorial corpus of cosmographic images depicted by Japanese painters on folding screens (the so-called sekai chizu byōbu, or ‘world map’ folding screens), in particular of those of the Jōtoku-ji type, displaying the sea routes of circumnavigation of the whole globe.

Le présent article étudie les fondements épistémologiques de l’usage et des fonctions de la cosmographie, de la géographie et de la cartographie dans le De missione, tout particulièrement l’emploi du Theatrum orbis terrarum d’Abraham Ortelius (1570), dont Alexandre Valignano S. J. (1539-1606), Père Visiteur de toutes les provinces jésuites d’Asie, a suivi les grandes lignes dans le dialogue, à des fins de promotion de la mission catholique. En partant des recherches sur la réception de l’iconographie occidentale au Japon, nous discuterons le rôle possible du De missione dans l’apparition et la production à partir de la fin du XVIe siècle, par des peintres japonais issus de l’école de peinture jésuite, d’un corpus hybride d’images cosmographiques peintes sur paravents (ceux que l’on nomme sekai chizu byōbu ou « paravents ‘carte du monde’ »), en particulier de celles du type Jōtoku-ji (temple Jōtoku), lesquels représentent les routes maritimes de circumnavigation du globe.

Este artículo examina la base epistemológica del uso y las funciones de la cosmografía, la geografía y la cartografía en el De missione, en particular el uso del Theatrum orbis terrarum (1570) de Abraham Ortelius, del que Alessandro Valignano S. J. (1539-1606), padre visitador de todas las provincias jesuítas de Asia, siguió las líneas principales en el diálogo para la promoción de la misión católica. A partir de las investigaciones sobre la recepción de la iconografía y la imaginería occidentales en Japón, discutiremos el posible papel del De missione en la aparición y producción, a partir de finales del siglo XVI, por los pintores japoneses de la escuela de pintura de los jesuitas, de un corpus híbrido de imágenes cosmográficas pintadas en biombos (los conocidos como sekai chizu byōbu o «biombos mapamundi»), en particular los del tipo Jōtoku-ji (templo Jōtoku), que representan las rutas marítimas de circumnavegación del globo.

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**Mots-clés:** De Missione dialogus, Valignano (Alessandro), missions jésuites, Japon, ambassade Tenshō, Ortelius (Abraham), cartographie du monde, Theatrum orbis terrarum, paravents nanban, interactions politico-culturelles, XVIe et XVIIe siècles

**Keywords:** De Missione dialogus, Valignano (Alessandro), Jesuit missions, Japan, Tenshō Embassy, Ortelius (Abraham), world cartography, Theatrum orbis terrarum, Japanese nanban folding screens, political-cultural interactions, 16th and 17th centuries

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ANGELO CATTANEO

Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche

Angelo Cattaneo is a Researcher for the CNR - Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche - National Research Council of Italy, based at the Istituto di Storia dell’Europa Mediterranea. His primary research interests revolve around the cultural construction of space and forms of spatiality from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century. He is the author of Fra Mauro’s Mappa mundi and Fifteenth-Century Venice (Brepols, 2011) and the co-editor of the volumes The Global Eye. Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese Maps in the Collections of the Grand Duke Cosimo III de’ Medici (Florence, Lisbon 2019) and Interactions between Rivals: the Christian Mission and Buddhist Sects in Japan during the Portuguese Presence (c. 1549 - c. 1647), (Peter Lang 2022).

angelomaria.cattaneo[at]cnr.it