

# From the ineptitude to a higher capability: the Jesuits and the formation of a Christian community in Brazil and Japan (16th-century)

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## Abstract

The Society of Jesus was officially established in Rome in 1540. From the repercussion the group achieved, right in the next year some missionaries were sent to Lisbon by order of King John III. Being promptly incorporated into the Portuguese empire, in less than one decade the Jesuits founded a mission in the geographical edges of the Portuguese Patronage authority: Brazil and Japan. Even though their primary goal was the evangelisation among the non-European populations and their subsequent conversion, the conditions they encountered in these territories were completely different, making the possibility to create a genuine local Christendom more or less reachable. Considering the cases of the Jesuit mission in Brazil and Japan during the 16th-century, this article intends to work on some reflections the missionaries registered about the possibility to establish and consolidate a local Church. The reality showed different demands and struggles, making the creation of a native Christian community too far to be accomplished. For this purpose, it will be analysed letters and reports writing in both missions by its most important leaders - as José de Anchieta and Luis Fróis - during the first decades of their activity, corresponding to the second half of the 16th-century.

**Keywords:** Jesuits, Mission, Evangelization, Brazil, Japan

## 1. Two faces of the same project

The Society of Jesus was officially founded in 1540, having started the evangelising campaign outside Europe as soon as 1541, when Francis Xavier departed from Lisbon to Goa - where he arrived in 1542. In less than one decade, in 1549, with only a few months of difference, the Jesuits founded a mission in the geographical limits of the Portuguese Patronage activity: Brazil and Japan. What is to say, the Order reached this amplitude in an embryonic stage, counting with not much information neither experience and with no previous religious work in these territories before their arrival. Even so, the Jesuit missionaries were promptly and wholly incorporated into both the Patronage and the Portuguese Empire, and as such, they followed the flow of their ships and trades, which were mainly focused on Asia.

Even though Brazil was considered a Portuguese territory since 1500, when the fleet commanded by Pedro Álvares Cabral (1467-1520) arrived for the first time in the territory, it would take a few decades until an administrative structure of the Crown was settled to control and explore its lands. The first General-Governor delegated to Brazil, Tomé de Sousa (1503-1579), arrived in 1549, being accompanied by the first group of Jesuit missionaries. As until that moment, the territory was marginalised within the other regions of interest to the empire, especially in relation to Asia, no religious order was established there before the institution of the General-Government.

In its turn, the first contact with Japan was only made in 1543, when a Portuguese ship accidentally reached the south of the Archipelago, in the island of Tanegashima. In 1549, when the first group of missionaries arrived in Japan intentionally, there still was no effective interaction with the archipelago, not existing any power or support from the Portuguese crown in these lands, only the sporadic presence of merchants who would temporally stay. With a reduced number of people, with little knowledge of the territory, and no previous contact with this population - not only in what concerns the religious activity -, the Jesuits encountered in Japan a socio and cultural condition never experienced before.

These were utterly distinct realities, which, with no direct contact between each other, were connected through the religious campaign promoted by the Jesuit missionaries and the Portuguese empire. Even responding to entirely different dynamics, both missions were still seen as part of the same project and ideal promoted by the Society of Jesus, which was expected to be as harmonious and equally possible. As defended by Daril Alden, the idea the Society of Jesus was "a finely tuned machine whose parts always worked together smoothly and efficiently in response to the dictates of the chief engineer" is rooted in the collective imaginary (1996, p. 229), but it is not in accordance to the reality.

Thus, in front of a cultural diversity never confronted before, as the Jesuits rapidly spread through the most part of the territories the

Portuguese were in contact with, the missionaries were responsible for filtering and transmitting to Europe who and how were the other people and cultures of the world. Facing such a diversity of customs and cultures, without having a precise guideline to follow, and with a deep mismatch in what concerns the communication of the many regions with Europe, the Jesuits came to classify the various populations in a higher or lower degree of civility. This effort to distinguish the people from the world would inevitable condition the evangelisation itself since it was promoting distinct strategies of approach, feeding assorted interests, and permitting different forms of interaction.

At first, the missionaries' main purpose of promoting the evangelisation outside Europe was directed to the conversion of the non-European populations. As such, the image they sustained about the native people of Brazil and Japan conditioned the kind of relationship they came to establish with them, dictating the possibilities of their work. After all, the missionary's reaction to the natives in the two regions was remarkably contrasting, as it was the reality of their presence in these lands.

With a Portuguese community settled in the American territory, which was substantially and rapidly growing, the Jesuits had their attention and time divided between the Europeans and the indigenous. Consequently, their activity was more controlled, as they should respond to their fellow countryman - almost all priests were from Portugal. Experiencing the opposite situation, the missionaries in Japan were confronted with a local power able to resist any imposition, what forced them to adapt their expectations and strategies to the Japanese universe. What is to say, even if the first reaction was a manifest excitement and the recognition of both populations as the best and most promising to build a local Christendom, their characteristics and the confrontation of the missionaries' work with the context they found soon came to show clear and deep discrepancies.

In this sense, even though the American territory was much closer to Europe in relation to East Asia, what in theory would make the region more attractive to the Portuguese intents, the indigenous of Brazil were considered as having a lower degree of civility, and as consequence too distant from the ideal condition to truly become Christians. On the other side, Japan was the most distant territory to be reached from Portugal, but the Japanese people were recognised as having a stage of civility similar

to the European one, what would make them propitious to become Christians.

This is to say, in what concerns the religious intents, that even having a culture and behaviour that caused much strangeness and confusion, the Japanese had a writing system, a hierarchical society, and religious sects that were intelligible to Europeans eyes. The reaction to the natives of Brazil was in many senses the opposite, as the priests openly defended that they had no religious knowledge or culture, living in a lack of humanity that only much and continuous work could amend. If the lack, the condition of blank paper (*tabula rasa*) in which the missionaries recognised the indigenous were, could be a good way to start the religious work with 'open space', from zero, it soon showed to be a huge obstacle to surpass. Exposing this concern, the Father José de Anchieta (1534-1597) wrote in a report in 1585:

After becoming Christians they have some remarkable things, and the first is that they are *tanquam tabula rasa* to print on them all the good, nor there is any difficulty to take from them the rites or worship of Idols because they do not have it [...] they understand very well the Christian doctrine and the mysteries of our Faith, the catechism and apparatus for confession and communion, and they know these things as well or better than many Portuguese. (Anchieta, 1933, p.435).<sup>1</sup>

This was an idea the missionaries nurtured at the beginning of the Brazilian mission, which, even though confronted with the reality they were living, served to report the good possibilities they had to the other members of the Order in Portugal and Rome. However, to become a proper Christian, the Indians should be able to engage their precepts and embrace the Christian life, which showed to be hard to achieve. This idea still was emphasised in the 17th-century as demonstrated by the well-known discourse of Father António Vieira (1608-1697) in 1657 the "*Sermão do Espírito*", about the condition of the indigenous as a myrtle (Viveiros de Castro, 1992). What is to say, a plant that was easy to shape, but that needed continuous and careful maintenance to be kept in the 'right path', to follow 'the truth'. Reinforcing that this idea was fed for a long time, we have this fragment of a report written by Anchieta in 1584 (*Informação do Brasil e de suas Capitánias*):

The impediments to the conversion and perseverance in the Christian life on the part of the Indians are their inveterate customs, as in all other nations, as the fact of having many women, their wines they abuse off, and taking them off there is usually more difficult than

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1 "[...] Depois de cristãos têm algumas cousas notáveis e a primeira é que são tanquam tabula rasa para imprimir-se-lhes todo o bem, nem ha dificuldade em tirar-lhes rito nem adoração de ídolos porque não os têm [...] compreendem mui bem a doutrina cristã e os mistérios de nossa Fé, e

catecismo e aparelho para a confissão e comunhão e sabem estas cousas tão bem ou melhor que muitos Portuguezes [...]." All translations from Portuguese sources are the author's free translation provided for the benefit on non Portuguese readers.

in anything else, for they consider those are their provisions, and so the Fathers do not take it all away from them at all, but only the excess [...] (Anchieta, 1933, p. 333).<sup>2</sup>

The inconstancy of the indigenous behaviour, the incapability the missionaries understood they had to stay under the precepts of the religion, was partly a consequence of their attachment to the old customs. The priests tried to cut these 'bad behaviours'. But, due to the unsuccess they experienced, they started to work from the idea of only quit the 'excess' from the Indians, trying to guide their conduct, adapting some of the ceremonials to the native style, in villages controlled and distant from the Portuguese communities (*Aldeamentos*, vide Metcalf, 2014). Working on this direction, the missionaries invested on the formation of the children, since, as wrote Father Manuel da Nóbrega (1517-1570) in 1560, "the adults had the ears closed to listen to the Lord's word":

because the adults, to whom the bad habit of their parents are almost converted into nature, close their ears not to hear the word of health and convert to the true worship of God... (Leite, 1956-1968, vol. III, p. 249).<sup>3</sup>

Even with this measure, being given more attention to the evangelisation among the younger Indians, the missionaries in many occasions manifested that there was little hope in their evolvement as Christians. As Anchieta narrated in a letter from 1556:

[...] because not only the adults, men and women, do not bear fruit by not applying themselves to the Christian faith and doctrine, but even the same boys who we almost create by our breasts with the milk of the Christian doctrine, after being well instructed, they follow their parents first in habitation and then in their customs (Anchieta, 1933, p. 92).<sup>4</sup>

As the priests saw the indigenous from Brazil as of inconstant nature, even more after they experienced numerous cases of violence and deaths when dealing with the most resistant tribes, the missionaries started to assume that the interference of the local government by force would be a necessary tool given their uncivilised stage. This undoubtedly was a particular element of the mission in Brazil, as the territory was a proper Portuguese colony, which means it was submitted to its imperialistic attempts. Anchieta wrote in 1557

to those in Portugal:

Since I came to understand by experience the little that it can be done in this land in the conversion of the Gentile as they do not submit themselves, and they are a kind of people more of wild beasts condition than of rational people, and be servile people wanted by fear, and together with this to see the little hope on controlling the land, and see the little help and the many encumbrances of the Christians of these lands, whose scandal and example was enough to not convince, since it was people of another quality [...] (Leite, 1956-1968, vol. II, p. 402).

This means that, from the missionaries' point of view, the Indigenous were by nature more of a savage behaviour than of rationality, what undoubtedly was a huge obstacle to surpass. Even so, the bad examples of the Christians settled in the territory were also an inconvenience and even obstruction to their goals. After all, most of the Portuguese settlers never showed any interest or concern on the conversion or good treatment of the Indians, not valuing the missionaries' intents to convert and protect them. Thus, the bad habits and examples demonstrated by the Portuguese were recognised as a clear disturbance to the promotion and foundation of an indigenous Christendom. Emphasising these turbulent relations, Father Nóbrega wrote in 1558:

I repeat to say that the hatred is so great that the people from this land feel for the Indians, who by all means are taken by the enemy of all good by instruments of damning and hindering the conversion of the Gentile [...] (Leite, 1956-1968, vol. II, p. 452).

Even so, the presence of this Portuguese community together with the existence of an administrative and military apparatus from the Portuguese crown were crucial aspects of the Jesuit mission in Brazil in comparison with the Japanese one. As the fathers understood "they live without laws or government", and for this reason "they cannot keep themselves in peace and concord", the use of force and imposition eventually came to be understood as the only way possible to provide conditions for their work be done and evolve. In another fragment from 1558, Nóbrega described:

This Gentile is of a quality that you cannot have by good, but by fear and subjection, as we have experienced; and so if you want them all converted you need to order them to submit and you must extend the Christians to the interior land and share among them the service of the Indians to those who

2 "Os impedimentos que ha para a conversão e perseverar na vida cristã de parte dos índios, são seus costumes inveterados, como em todas as outras nações, como o terem muitas mulheres; seus vinhos em que são muito contínuos e em tirar-lhos ha ordinariamente mais dificuldade que em todo o mais, por ser como seu mantimento, e assim não lhos tiram os Padres de todo, senão o excesso que neles ha [...]."

3 "[...] porque los ya adultos, a los cuales la mala

costumbre de sus padres se les a quasi convertido en naturaleza, cierran las orejas para no oír la palabra de salud y convertirse al verdadero culto de Dios [...]."

4 "[...] porque não somente os grandes, homens e mulheres, não dão fruto não se querendo aplicar á fé e doutrina cristã, mas ainda os mesmos muchachos que quasi criamos a nossos peitos com o leite da doutrina cristã, depois de serem já bem instruídos, seguem a seus pais primeiro em habitação e depois nos costumes [...]."

help you to conquer and lord it over [...] (Leite, 1956-1968, vol II, pp. 448-449).<sup>5</sup>

However, in respect to the Portuguese community settled in the territory we identify a different perception from the disturbances it caused. One that defended it would be necessary more Christians and more control over the land to create an ideal environment to grow the Indians' interest and familiarity with the fundamentals of the Christians life, otherwise the bad customs would not be suffocated and exterminated. As wrote by Anchieta in 1555:

One thing we all wish for and pray to Our Lord, without which we cannot bear any fruit in Brazil, which we wish, and it is that this whole land come to be populated by Christians who have subjected to it, because they are so indomitable and so fierce to eat human flesh and exempt from acknowledging any superior, that it will be very difficult to be firm what we plant [...] (Anchieta, 1933, p.77).

But, in fact, the contact with the Portuguese community settled mainly in the northeast coast made the priests gradually to expand and concentrate their activity more into the countryside. This initiative was also an attempt to get away from the eyes of the main representatives of the Crown and the Church on land, as the priests reported that even the religious authorities had a lack of interest in respect to the work with the native people of Brazil, as the delegated visitors or bishops:

The third bishop, who now rules the church of Brazil, is D. Antônio Barreiros, from the habit of Aviz. He came in the year 1575; he makes his occupation like the past ones, since he does not show himself so zealous about the conversion of the Indians, nor does he care much of their Christianity, having them for dumb people and of little understanding, and yet he went to visit their villages, and he confirmed those who had the necessity of this sacrament (Anchieta, 1933, p. 309).<sup>6</sup>

Considering all the barriers the priests were facing in Brazil since the beginning, they soon came to replace the first positiveness and optimistic posture

for a more hopeless evaluation of the mission's future. As Anchieta wrote right in 1565:

This land has come to such a state that you should no longer expect news about the fruits in the conversion of the gentility, which lack, therefore, seems to be a consequence of the tribulations that happen, with the hope of being able to harvest some [...] (Anchieta, 1933, pp.196-197).<sup>7</sup>

Under different conditions, the case of Japan was identified as a unique experience. Even if the territory lived a complex and turbulent ambience, it seemed to be a propitious stage for the Jesuits intents. Writing about the Japanese, Father Francis Xavier (1506-1522) wrote in 1549:

First of all, from the people that we have contact until now, they are the best that have been discovered so far, and it seems to me that among unfaithful people there will be no other who will be better than the Japanese [...] (Cartas, 1997, f. 9).<sup>8</sup>

Not only the priests found in Japan a society which they admired and understood as highly qualified than the others they had contacted, as the political situation of the territory was an open space for the missionaries develop their work. They inclusively became an important tool of the political game that was in course among the local lords in dispute in order to control and centralise the governmental power (Sengoku period). Much of their first good impression was sustained by what the priests recognised as the unusual Japanese capability. This means that, even though they showed to be too hard and resistant to be converted and embrace the faith, the Japanese were individuals with higher competences as human beings, notably intelligent and disciplined. As Father Luis Fróis (1532-1597) wrote in 1566:

The people are very capable to receive the law of God our Lord, discreet, polite, bellicose of knowledge, submitted to the reason, superb in opinion, which about them they have [...] (Cartas, [1598] 1997, p. 212).<sup>9</sup>

The priest defended that the Japanese had a high ability to learn the doctrine, being people with a

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5 "Este gentio é de qualidade que não se quer por bem, senão por temor e sujeição, como se tem experimentado; e por isso se S. A. os quer ver todos convertidos mande-os sujeitar e deve fazer estender os cristãos pola terra adentro e repartir-lhes o serviço dos índios àqueles que os ajudarem a conquistar e senhorear [...]"

6 "O terceiro bispo, que agora rege a igreja do Brasil, é D. Antônio Barreiros, do habito de Aviz. Veiu no ano de 1575 (383); faz seu officio como os passados, posto que não se mostre tão zelozelo pela conversão dos índios, nem faz muita conta da sua cristandade, tendo-os por gente boçal e de pouco entendimento, e contudo já foi visitar suas aldeias e crismou os que tinham necessidade deste sacramento."

7 "E' chegada esta terra a tal estado que já não devem esperar dela novas de fruto na conversão da gentilidade, a

qual pois falta parece consequente superabundar as tribulações que se passam, com esperança de poder colher algum, que se guarde nos ceileiros do Senhor, o qual, pois se dignou de nos comunicar algo delas, determinou com elas algo me dilatar, pois o mesmo disse que o verdadeiro fruto nasce da paciência, para que com tudo seja seu santo nome glorificado."

8 "Primeiramente, a gente que ategora temos conuersado, he a melhor que ategora está descuberta, & me parece que antre gente infiel não se achará outra q ganhe aos lapços [...]"

9 "A gente he capacissima pera receber a lei de Deos nosso Senhor, discreta, polida, bellicosos de saber, sogeta a rezão, soberbissima na opinião, que de si tem, zelosa de saber em que consiste a saluação [...]"

desirable behaviour and “submitted to the reason”. After all, if they were more rational than of a bestial nature - on the contrary of the indigenous from Brazil -, they should be in a more appropriate stage to learn the Lord’s words. As it was said before, Japan’s unstable political situation, with many local lords disputing power, let an opening to the entrance and spread of the missionaries over the territory – even though they were concentrated in the south of the archipelago. Father Cosme de Torres (1510-1570) wrote to the Provincial of India in 1561:

I pray for our Lord's sake your reverence will send us some, at least six, or four, because besides these eight places where the door to the Gospel has been so opened [territories in which they were], Japan is now in a way with this peace, that there is nowhere we go that we cannot manifest or receive our holy faith: therefore, all people, so Christians as Gentiles, show and give signal that finally there will be a Christendom in this great land (Cartas, [1598] 1997, f.76).<sup>10</sup>

In a first moment, the Jesuits, having the monopoly over the territory, had good news to send to Europe, both about the growing of the mission among the Japanese and their quality to the creation of a proper Christendom. From the news that was circulating the priests were defending that there were no other people like the Japanese. As such, stimulated by the successes they achieved, the mission in Japan got a status of model to be followed, or at least to inspire the missionaries in other regions. As the Visitor Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606) wrote in 1580:

[...] this enterprise of Japan is not only the biggest one that the Society has in all these parts, but it is one of the largest that there is nowadays in the whole church of God, because the people are very noble, and very capable and very different from all the other people who are converted, and even though the Japanese have many chicaneries, in which they are raised, however, we cannot deny that they are very noble, capable, and of great ingenuity, and the law of our Lord has already spread, and with great reputation and credit everywhere, and it has been given excellent principles to do a lot very soon (Cartas, [1598] 1997, f.477v).<sup>11</sup>

Comparing to the inconstant behaviour of the Indians from Brazil, which could be easily molded

but never solid shaped, the Japanese, being people of reason, intelligence, and discipline, would be better instructed, being able to evolve in the faith truly. As Valignano wrote:

[...] because they are so well inclined and subject to reason and have all the same language, after becoming Christians they are easier to cultivate than all other nations [...] (Valignano, [1593/1592] 1954, p.133).<sup>12</sup>

This means that, besides all the admirable characteristics they had in what concerns their behaviour, the Japanese also counted with another distinction, which was the existence of a single language and a writing system.

The writing was, for the European missionaries, one of the elements that made any population to be considered more or less civilised. In Brazil, the priests encountered not only a wide variety of languages but also the absence of written culture. Since the Catholic doctrine is based on a book, the possibility of working with this material was a real advantage. These competencies, associated with apparent Japanese opening, were seen by the missionaries as a promising opportunity to grow a Japanese Christian community. As Fróis wrote in 1585, two years before the first expulsion edict promulgated by Hideyoshi Toyotomi (1537-1598):

What comforts us about this Christhood is that it seems to us that they understand well the things of God, because if by the smoke it is believed that there is fire, it is easy by the devotion the Christians show to understand the fire of the things of God, which they have in their souls (Cartas, [1598] 1997, f.145).

As the priest exposed, the fact the Japanese were able to understand the Christian message was an important signal that the missionaries could reach better results in the archipelago. Even so, the persecution and resistance showed by some Japanese leaders started to intensify. This situation was unavoidable, directly affecting the missionaries presence and progress in the territory. Paradoxically, even facing this turbulence, the missionaries were reaching outstanding results, what made them resist and keep believing in the evolvment and consolidation of the Japanese Christians. As wrote Father Luis Fróis:

About the fruit, and progress of the Christendom:

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10 “Peço por amor de nosso Senhor a vossa reuerencia nos mande algúis, ao menos seis, & senão quatro, porque alem destes oito lugares em que tão se abriu a porta pera o Euangelho (territórios em que se encontravam), está agora lapam de maneira com esta paz, que por nenhum lugar delle se irá aonde não se possa manifestar & receber nossa santa fê: & por tanto todos, assi Christãos como Gentios, mostram e dal sinal que emfim há de uer nesta terra grande Christandade.”

11 “[...] esta empresa de lapão não sò he a maior que tem a Companhia em todas estas partes, mas he húa das maiores que ha oje em dia em toda a igreja de Deos,

porque a gête he mui nobre, & mui capaz, & muito diferente de todas as outas fentes que se conuertem, & ainda que tenham os lapões muitas más manhas, em as quaes estão criados todavia se não pode neguar que não seja mui nobre, & capaz, & de muito engenho, & a lei de nosso Senhor esta ja diuulgada, & em grande reputação, & credito em todas as partes, & se tem dado muito bõs principios pera se fazer muito em breue tempo.”

12 “[...] por ser la gente tal y tan bien inclinada y sujeta a la razón y tener todos una misma lengua, son después de hechos cristianos más fáciles de cultivar que todas las otras naciones [...]”

during this period the things were so numerous, and of so great disturbances, and so worrying, and so juncture of adversities with the prosperities, and the tastes with the tribulations, that one can hardly judge whether we are in worse or better state, because for one hand it seems that everything is in great danger, and I depend on a thread (for the great persecution that raged Quambacudono universal lord of Japan from July to this part against Christianity, and the priests). And on the other side, Japan has never been in such good disposition as now to be made great conversion, nor has there ever been such apparatus, nor such power among the lords, and Japanese Christians, we hope our Lord will be better known & glorified in these parts (Cartas, [1598] 1997, f.188).<sup>13</sup>

The priests understood that if it were not for their bellicose spirit and the intensification of the conflicts, the Japanese would be willing to become Christians. This predisposition was due both to their exceptional capability and to what they had in their 'souls', what can be seen as the recognition of their humanity – which was in a stage never identified in the 'savages' from America. After all, "Coming all these kingdoms to know the law of God, it can be said they are of the best Christians there are in the world". Reinforcing this idea, the Portuguese Gaspar Vilela wrote in 1571:

[...] now there is no longer this as in the beginning, the Christians are firm, when they are baptized they already understand reasonably what is necessary from them, because before they are baptized, they take many days listening to what they will receive [...] they show with some signals what they have in their souls, if there were not so many wars as there are right would be many people baptized, but there is a lot of wars, and the few languages we have to explain to them the mysteries of our salvation: there are many impediments to not being baptized many of them [...] (Cartas, [1598] 1997, f.329v).<sup>14</sup>

The reality of the Japanese mission came to a complete change in the 17th-century after the persecution was intensified, ending with the archipelago's closure to the foreigners. Still, during the 16th-century, Japan was a case of success, being identified as one of the most promising Christendom to be formed.

## 2. Conclusion

These profound discrepancies were associated with

13 "Quanto ao fruto, & progresso da Christandad: forão neste tempo as cousas tão varias, & tão grandes as perturbações, & desconquietações, & tão conjuncturas as aduersidades com as prosperidades, & os gostos com as tribulações, que mal se pode ategora julgar se estamos em pior ou melhor estado, pois por húa parte parece que tudo está em grande perigo, & dependo de um fio (por a grande perseguição que aleuantou Quambacudono senhor vniuersal de lapão de julho a esta parte contra a Christandade, & contra os padres). E pola outra nunca esteue lapão em tão boa desposição como agora pera se fazer mui grande conuersão nem nunca ouue tal aparelho, nem tanto poder entre os senhores, & Christãos lapões,

a higher or lower capability to learn the Christian doctrine, which would affect the possibility of the native people of Brazil and Japan to be truly converted to the Catholicism. In Brazil, the identification of the 'indigenous' lack of interest or constancy in the Christian life was partly justified by a deficiency of their intelligence, the fragility and precariousness of their knowledge, of their capacity to 'evolve' in the faith, or even in their 'humanity'. The Japanese were recognised as competent people, which was associated with their higher intelligence and discipline. However, they had a bellicose spirit, being continuously involved with war affairs.

Both cases showed to have advantages to the Jesuits' goals, but also plenty of impediments to their consolidation. Clearly the problems faced in both territories were different, and as such, they demanded distinct responses. From one side, they had to manage a Portuguese community which demanded their attention, while it disturbed the missionaries in their approach to the indigenous, considered of a more savage behaviour. On the other hand, they had to deal with the complete inexistence of an administrative and military apparatus from the Portuguese empire to sustain and protect their presence in Japan, territory in which the mission, which was almost wholly focused on a Japanese audience, also gradually came to be formed by a Japanese body.

In both cases, from the interests and actors that were playing a determinant role during this first stage of interaction between the Jesuits with the local populations, the attempt to establish and consolidate local Christendoms happened to meet significant obstacles, not being reached as expected

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esperamos que será nosso Senhor nestas partes mais conhecido & glorificado."

14 "[...] agora já não há tanto isto como nos principios, os Christãos são firmes, quando se bautizão já entendem arzeoadamente o que lhe he necessario, porque antes que os bautizem, se trazê muitos dias ouuindo o que hão de receber [...] elles mostrão com sinaes o que tem em sua alma, se não ouuera tantas guerras quantas há fora já muita gête bautizada, mas a muita guerra, & as poucas lingoas q temos pera lhes explicar os misterios de nossa saluação: são muito impedimêto a não se bautizarê tantos [...]."

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