



The Passion and Flagellation in Sixteenth-Century Japan

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[See table of contents](#)

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Article abstract

Cet article met en relation la pratique ascétique et pénitentielle de l'auto-flagellation par les tous premiers catholiques du Japon du XVI^e siècle, avec leur compréhension de la passion du Christ telle qu'enseignée par les missionnaires Jésuites, et avec la tradition japonaise de l'ascétisme bouddhiste. On y montre que les pratiques dévalorisant les valeurs corporelles qui se trouvaient déjà dans les traditions religieuses japonaises, ont facilité la compréhension et la sympathie pour les pratiques comparables de la nouvelle religion européenne, malgré que les Jésuites leur aient présenté une théologie monothéiste inédite au Japon. Ces similitudes ont contribué à l'assimilation de la passion du Christ par les convertis japonais et à leur adoption de l'auto-flagellation rituelle, qui contraste vivement avec la mission contemporaine des Jésuites en Chine.

The Passion and Flagellation in Sixteenth-Century Japan

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Cet article met en relation la pratique ascétique et pénitentielle de l'auto-flagellation par les tous premiers catholiques du Japon du XVI^e siècle, avec leur compréhension de la passion du Christ telle qu'enseignée par les missionnaires Jésuites, et avec la tradition japonaise de l'ascétisme bouddhiste. On y montre que les pratiques dévalorisant les valeurs corporelles qui se trouvaient déjà dans les traditions religieuses japonaises, ont facilité la compréhension et la sympathie pour les pratiques comparables de la nouvelle religion européenne, malgré que les Jésuites leur aient présenté une théologie monothéiste inédite au Japon. Ces similitudes ont contribué à l'assimilation de la passion du Christ par les convertis japonais et à leur adoption de l'auto-flagellation rituelle, qui contraste vivement avec la mission contemporaine des Jésuites en Chine.

Introduction

This essay discusses the ascetic, penitential practice of self-flagellation conducted by the very first Catholics in sixteenth-century Japan and relates it to their understanding of Christ's Passion and, further, to indigenous ascetic practices in Japanese Buddhism. It is my thesis that ascetic practices negating bodily values already extant in Japanese religious traditions served to facilitate understanding of, and sympathy for, comparable practices in the newly introduced Western religion, although Catholicism as a whole represented a monotheistic theology unprecedented in Japanese history. I believe that these similarities contributed to the Japanese converts' understanding of the Passion and their eager undertaking of devotional self-flagellation, which stands in sharp contrast to the case of the China mission. In China, the Jesuits had much difficulty introducing the idea of Christ's sacrifice, let alone the practice of corporal mortification. Even the image of crucifixion horrified the

Chinese and caused many to suspect some form of insidious trickery on the part of the Jesuits. By contrast, the Japanese responded quite sympathetically to the theology of the Passion and the practice of Christian discipline at an early stage in their conversion, and the depictions of Christ's Passion, including flagellation and crucifixion, were amply produced and publicly displayed in the Japan mission.

Theological and ritualistic similarities exist between Catholicism and Buddhism, especially the latter's Pure Land school. The Jesuits themselves noted these elements and attempted to take advantage of them, while distinguishing their religion from Buddhism. It has been suggested by a number of scholars that these similarities made it easy for the Japanese to sympathize with the Western religion, while also confusing it with their own religious traditions.¹ This confusion or conflation between Christianity and indigenous religions was strictly censored by the Jesuits in their mission activities. However, as the presence of foreign missionaries became scarce after their expulsion in 1614, the conflation continued undeterred and has left its traces in the religion of today's *Kakure Kirishitan* (Hidden Christians).² By drawing largely on the comparative perspectives of these studies, I attempt to suggest that, in the very first decades of the Jesuits' presence in Japan, Christianity was understood by the Japanese through analogy to their indigenous traditions. The sympathy with (though perhaps inaccurate understanding of) the Passion theology and the willing undertaking of self-flagellation among the first Japanese converts, I believe, provide a touchstone for assessing the validity of such comparative perspectives.

The first section of this essay discusses the sixteenth-century records of the practice of self-flagellation by the Japanese, found in Luis Frois's *Historia de Japam* and other missionary letters. Though the practice was continuously conducted and recorded throughout the whole mission period up until about 1620, I will focus on the earlier records before 1570, which reveal the almost immediate acceptance by the Japanese of the practice upon conversion. The second section looks into the Jesuits' endeavour to introduce the Japanese to the theology of Christ's Passion in conjunction with corporal mortifications aiming at both penitence and the imitation of Christ. The content of the 1607 catechetical book, *Gopashion no Kannen* (or *Meditations on the Passion*), will be discussed in detail. Here I will further explore Matteo Ricci's own accounts of the negative reaction by the Chinese to images of the Passion around 1600,

and question what cultural or religious factors made a difference in Japan, which otherwise shared a broad cultural heritage with China—such as Chinese scripts, Buddhism, and even Confucianism. In the last section, I will propose that Japanese religious traditions negating bodily values served as the cultural foundation that linked the Japanese to the alien Western religion and its practices. I found *shugendō*, a Shinto-Buddhist asceticism, and the ritual suicide inspired by the Pure Land faith as the most relevant elements in this regard.³

I. Self-flagellation in Japan

Since St. Francis Xavier landed on Kagoshima in 1549, the Jesuit mission achieved unprecedented success in converting the Japanese, at least in number. Even considering the Japanese political order, wherein the conversion of a *daimyō* (regional vassal lord) resulted in the collective conversion of his entire territory, the number of converts in a little more than 60 years of mission activity before the ban of 1614 is still remarkable. Also notable is the Japanese Catholics' tenacious upholding of the faith after 1614, when many willingly suffered martyrdom. Even after 1644, when foreign missionaries stopped the attempts to smuggle themselves into the country, large groups of Christian villagers were still detected and persecuted in Kyushu as late as the 1650s and 1660s.⁴ It was only at the end of the 1660s that the Japanese Christians, except for those who went underground, were largely eradicated. The number of martyrs in Japan also is unprecedented in the Jesuits' mission history, not to mention the unique existence of *Kakure Kirishitan* who went underground and survive today.⁵

The Jesuits' impressive success in proselytizing has been ascribed to their adaptation to indigenous culture. However, my essay is concerned with the period well before 1579, when the active adaptation policy called “modo soave” began with the arrival of Fr. Alessandro Valignano. By this year, the number of converts already counted 130,000.⁶ Furthermore, historical references to the Japanese converts' deep sympathy with the Passion theology and their intense and empathic practices of self-flagellation had already appeared by the year 1555, only six years after the arrival of St. Francis Xavier. Considering all of this, I think it is reasonable to question whether there were factors in Japan besides the Jesuits' conscious efforts at adaptation that facilitated the

conversion process. The issue of corporal mortification appears to illuminate one such factor. In other words, the Japanese did not passively receive a new religion imposed by foreign missionaries, but rather willingly adopted a form of Christianity whose elements appealed to their religious sensibilities, in so far as these were culturally and historically conditioned.⁷

The case of the China mission stands in sharp contrast. The Jesuits began to bring in penitential confraternity in China only after 1630.⁸ Both individual and group conducts of flagellation were recorded after 1650. Even in the 1660s the Jesuits in China advised their female converts to refrain from public “discipline.” If we count the year 1582, when Michele Ruggieri obtained a residence in the southern city of Zhaoqing, as the beginning of the China Jesuit mission, it took almost 50 years for the Jesuits to introduce self-flagellation to the Chinese converts, which is much longer than the entire period of the Jesuits’ legally permitted mission in Japan.⁹ However, it remains unclear how actively and widely the practice was conducted by the Chinese converts even in the later periods. For example, not a single word on self-flagellation is found in *Kouduo Richao* (口鐸日抄, or the *Diary of Oral Admonitions*), written by literati convert Li Jiubiao to document the Jesuits’ pastoral activities and conversations with Chinese converts from 1630 to 1640 in Fujian, the most successful Christian region in China by that time.¹⁰ These Christians, led by Giulio Aleni, certainly had a good understanding of Christ’s Passion. Again, I think a comparison with the Chinese case is important, since Chinese scripts, Buddhism, and Confucianism all came to Japan and also to Korea from China, and as a result these three countries shared many common cultural heritages. Despite such common grounds, the notable difference in the reception of Christianity illustrates well the distinctive character of Japanese religious culture.

The earliest records of self-flagellation practised by Japanese converts appeared in the year 1555 in the regions of Bungo and Hirado in Kyushu. Even if we consider possible exaggeration on the part of the Jesuits in these documents to maximize the dramatic effect on their European readers, it does not change the fact that the Japanese converts were undertaking the practice of flagellation only six years after the beginning of the Japan mission. Brother Duarte da Silva, in his letter dated 1555, wrote about the practice in Bungo: “On the Friday of Indulgences Christians came from everywhere to the church, which was always full of people: On Wednesday of the Holy Week, there were disciplines (i.e., flagellations) at night and the preaching on the Passion, to which the Japanese

converts had much devotion, and everyday up to Easter there were much fervour and many fasts.”¹¹ Kawamura observes that the Jesuits in Japan did not organize the confraternity for self-flagellation.¹² The practice was nonetheless conducted not only individually but in groups, particularly during Lent, as one reads in this letter. The practice was conjoined with the sermons on the Passion and another ascetic conduct of the fast.

In the same year, Father Bathasar Gago wrote about the practice, on the same Holy Thursday in Hirado. This report also indicated that the practice was done in groups, conjoined with the Passion sermon and psalm:

On Holy Thursday there was a preaching on the Maundy, and we washed the feet of twelve poor Christians, and had meals. And at night there was a preaching on the Passion, and flagellation while saying the Psalm *Miserere mei Deus* according to Thy great compassion. One hundred and fifty men were at work there, so that no space was left for more people. Thus, through these exterior works, they fall into the truth, and see the difference between falsity and truth.¹³

The discipline or flagellation took place especially between Holy Thursday and Good Friday, often with the chanting of *Miserere mei Deus*. In this church, 150 men gathered for the occasion. It is not clear from the account whether all of these men were undertaking the flagellation or simply participating in the church ceremony. Nonetheless, we can at least see that the Japanese Christians were conducting the practice in a group, in plain sight of others, during Lent. Considering the structure of a Japanese household or Buddhist temple, which was often adapted to a church at the time, it is hard to imagine that such a group practice was not heard or seen even to the outsiders. This is significant, since these first Catholics in Japan not only practised self-flagellation but also did not mind doing so in public.

Luis Frois’s account of the practice is much more vivid and affective. Eight years later in the region of Bungo, we observe a spectacular scene of a procession by flagellants. In such a procession, as it appears repeatedly in other Jesuit letters, the participants not only whipped themselves, but also carried the other instruments of the Passion, strongly reminiscent of the European flagellants’ processions originating in the Middle Ages.

At the third hour of afternoon, flagellating people began to come in their black robes and thorn crowns, others with crosses on their backs and other various instruments of penitence and devotion, and always there were flagellants even after the procession. And among these I saw an old nobleman, who was a secretary of the lord of Hirado, already past the age of 70, by the name Xenxu Paulo, well recognized by all for his great virtue. And he flagellated himself with such fervour and did such colloquies [with God] that he moved all those in the church to great devotion and tears. And the words, which from time to time he was saying in his language (i.e., Japanese) were such, with much feelings and tears that poured forth: “Ah, my sadness! How many times I have broken the laws of God!” A thing that moved the people around in no small way.

After the preaching on the Passion, which Japanese brother Damiao did, a procession began in due order: thus the procession went out with much order and devotion. And they went to the mount of the cross, and turned back in procession to a church where many people gathered and heard the lesson of the Passion for almost the entire night.¹⁴

In addition to self-flagellation, these Japanese wore crowns of thorns and bore crosses on their backs during the procession, which led to the place they had designated as the Mount of the Cross. As far as the penitential practice is concerned, the European tradition seems to have been reenacted by the Japanese converts with almost no alteration, in a far eastern country that had very different cultural and religious backgrounds such as Buddhism, Shinto, and Confucianism. I note here that a spectacular and even exotic scene of such an outdoor procession would naturally have drawn the attention of the local people, including non-Christians. It is difficult to imagine that such a group act of self-infliction, conducted out in the open, would have been condoned by the local authorities in contemporary Confucian societies such as China or Korea. It was not until 1578 that Ōtomo Sōrin, former *daimyō* of Bungo, was baptized and Christianity was practised in the territory. Yet fifteen years before the group conversion of the territory, this exotic and even shocking scene did not provoke a local scandal.

Another public display of discipline is recounted in more detail by Frois in a later record on the region of Nagasaki. This time, the procession of flagellants was made up entirely of young boys.

... On the Friday of Indulgences (i.e., Good Friday) came fifteen boys to the front of the altar, all orderly, dressed in black robes, crowns of thorns on their heads, carrying the insignias of the Passion in their hands. And making a bow to the altar and turning around to face the congregation, they said in their language the significance of the insignias they carried in their hands, in a high voice so that all could hear. They said: "This is the image of the cross on which Our Lord Jesus Christ, true Son of God, willingly received cruel death and the painful passion in order to save us." All the boys did the same with the said words regarding the insignias that they carried in hands, and the same boys, while saying this, poured forth so many tears that, seeing the act of such devotion in innocent boys, almost all the people partook in weeping, because the Japanese, by nature, have gentle and tender hearts. When this was done, all the boys in due order, there in front of the people, lowered their robes down to the belts. And reciting *Miserere mei Deus*, they flagellated themselves and went out up to the cross which was at quite a distance, flagellating all the way, and returned to the church with the same order and devotion.¹⁵

Fifteen boys were marching in an outdoor procession through the town, while whipping their bare upper bodies, wearing crowns of thorns on their heads, and bearing crosses on their backs all the way up to the place of the cross. And somehow, this shocking scene did not cause a scandal among the townspeople or provoke the local authorities to intervene. We must consider, however, that baron Ōmura Sumitada of Nagasaki had converted in 1563 and that by 1569 a public display of penitence was probably nothing new to the local people. Even considering this political and religious context, it is still hard to imagine that such self-inflictions of young boys were more than tolerated. On the contrary, onlookers were deeply moved by these innocent boys and joined them in the weeping, since "Japanese have naturally gentle and tender hearts." I read Frois's words "gentle and tender hearts" not in their literal meaning, but as a significant reference to the Japanese religious sensibilities and tendency to sympathize with the penitential practice. As I will discuss later, such a practice aimed at the absolution of sins through bodily infliction was not unknown to the Japanese in their indigenous traditions.¹⁶

The penitential practice and devotion to the Passion were not limited to the island of Kyushu, where the Jesuits had begun the missionary work and

where, naturally, their efforts were highly concentrated throughout the mission period. In 1565, about fifteen years after the beginning of the Japan mission in western Kyushu, the penitential practice of Christianity was found in Kyoto, Honshu, the historical and cultural centre of Japanese culture:

This Lent of 1565 was the first time that the Christians of that region began to take much delight and open their eyes in recognition of the things of God. On Sundays the priest preached the Gospels, on Wednesdays Brother Damião on the Sacrament of Penance, and on Fridays, after the Mass, on the Passion; and on the same day at night he returned to the converts to summarize the preceding sermons. And with the psalm of *Miserere mei Deus*, which he was reciting to them, everyone took their disciplines with much devotion ...

On Thursday he preached to them on the Maundy. On this day the people in Miyako saw for the first time the sepulcher, in which the Holy Sacrament was contained. And they did not falter, [as if] armed with arrows and shining armours, keeping vigil until Our Lord was taken out of the tabernacle. The Christians, being naturally inclined to penitence, arranged among themselves black robes, thorn crowns, whips with small beads [attached to the strings], and came to the Holy Sacrament three times, spilling blood and tears.

At night, as the Compline was over, a Japanese boy read to them the words of the Passion in their language, which were derived from the four Gospels, with much modesty and good order. It lasted for an hour and a half. And afterwards, the Father gave them instruction on the most principal steps [of the Passion], exhorting them to penitence and experience of the Passion of Our Lord Christ. There was flagellation with such fervour, tears, and devotion that the Fathers were amazed to see the holy Passion of the Son of God celebrated and exalted in that extreme part of discovered land (i.e., Japan), in a city full of so much idolatries and where the demon was so much venerated.¹⁷

Kyoto was, as noted, an important city in Japanese Buddhism; yet Christianity was taking root among its people. Even considering Frois's affective dramatization when it comes to describing religious matters, the paraphernalia of the Passion, fervent practice of discipline, and sympathetic weeping viewers echo

the kinds of things that were said about Kyushu ten years earlier. Significantly, Frois noted that “those Christians were naturally inclined to penitence.” Again, I believe this meant that Japanese Christians showed an especially keen understanding of penitential discipline. What could have facilitated their understanding of the practice belonging to a newly introduced foreign religion, I will discuss in full in the last section of this essay.

Though the Jesuits did not organize the confraternity for discipline in Japan, it is certain that they taught and encouraged the practice as a part of their catechetical instructions. The usual components of the catechetical program at the time can be inferred from Frois’s record on Hirado in 1565, in which he recounted the duties of Brother João Fernandes:

... Brother João Fernandes taught them, preached every day to the catechumens, and preached on Sundays to the Christians. He taught every day the doctrines to boys, which they were reciting in chorus. They said *Pater noster*, *Ave Maria*, *Credo*, *Salve Regina* in Latin, and all the others in their language. They knew how to respond in the Mass, [and chant] *Miserere*, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, and the litanies that they say when they go to inter the dead with the Father. To *Ave Marias* they responded with litanies in church, in which many Christians assisted them. And especially on Fridays more people came to church because, when the litanies were done, there were always flagellations while chanting one *Miserere* with much fervour and devotion, by the inclination [the Japanese converts] have to penitence. And for the catechumens who could not come to church during the day for their works, [Brother Fernandes] preached to them at night.¹⁸

In the regular routine of teaching prayers such as *Pater noster*, *Ave Maria*, etc., discipline was also included as an essential part that was “always” conducted during the chanting of *Miserere mei Deus*. Frois noted here again that it was conducted with “fervour and devotion, by the inclination [the Japanese converts] have to penitence.”

As we have seen so far, the penitential practice of self-flagellation was closely related to the Japanese understanding of the Passion theology. It was most fervently conducted during Lent, and accompanied by other practices such as wearing crowns of thorns, bearing crosses, and going in procession

to the Mount of the Cross, which was an attempt to imitate Christ even in the pains of His Passion. The Jesuits meticulously positioned self-flagellation within such a theological context, in conjunction with the sermons and psalms on the Passion. I will now look into the way the Japanese responded to the theme of the Passion.

II. The Japanese and the Passion

The pastoral activities of the Jesuits in instructing the Japanese on the theology of the Passion, as one reads in the above-mentioned sources, consisted of not only providing sermons and psalms on the theme, but also encouraging bodily ascetic practices such as fasting and flagellation; in other words, instruction was both verbal and physical. Furthermore, the Jesuits published a booklet that focused on the meditations on the Passion. Before I discuss this textbook, titled *Gopashion no Kannen*, I would like to introduce an incident that illustrates the favourable predisposition of the Japanese towards Passion theology. St. Francis Xavier's 1549 arrival in Kyushu, and the beginning of the Japan mission, were prompted by his encounter with Japanese refugees in Malacca, one of whom was known by the name of Anjiro, a native of Kagoshima. Anjiro and his two companions learned the Christian religion and Portuguese language at the Jesuit college in Goa, and eventually decided to receive baptism, literally becoming the first Christians in Japan.

In a letter dated 1549, St. Francis Xavier recorded a notable story about how these men went through the catechetical education and became affected by the Christian teachings.

I left India for Japan in the month of April, with two companions of mine, one a clergyman and the other a layman, and with three Japanese Christians, who were baptized after being instructed on the fundamentals of the faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ. They were indoctrinated in our College of Holy Faith in Goa, where they learned to read and write [Portuguese], and went through the Spiritual Exercises with much concentration and delight of benefitting from the exercises. God granted them such mercies and benefits, allowing them to feel inside their souls, with much recognition, the mercies and graces that they received from

their Creator, Redeemer, and Lord. They benefitted so much from the exercises that others as well (i.e., ourselves), who came here, with much reason desired to participate in the virtues God placed in them. They can read and write, and plead to God through the books of prayer. I asked them many times, in what prayers they found most joy and consolation of spirits. They said to me that it was in the prayer on the Passion, to which they were much devoted. They experienced great feelings, consolation, and tears at the time that they conducted Exercises.¹⁹

The Jesuits in Goa were bold enough to instruct these three men—who were totally unfamiliar with the European tradition of visually-oriented meditation—on the *Spiritual Exercises* of their founder, St. Ignatius of Loyola.²⁰ Later in 1591, Matteo Ricci attempted to train a Chinese convert through the same program in Shaozhou, Southern China.²¹ However, Ricci applied only the first week's program of exercises, namely self-reflection on sins, which did not reach the stages of the Passion at all. In the case of the first three men, it appears that the Jesuits trained them through the whole four-week program including the themes of the Passion. When the saint asked them in what prayer they found “the most joy and consolation,” they answered with the prayers on the Passion. “Prayer” in this context most likely meant reflection or meditation on the Passion rather than mere preset prayers such as the *Pater noster* or *Ave Maria*, since they were deeply moved when they “conducted Exercises” (*se exercitarão*).

One should not overemphasize the reaction of these three men and make a generalization about all Japanese converts. Nonetheless, these men's empathetic reaction to the theme of the Passion, far from misunderstanding or revulsion, seems to be consistent with the later Japanese converts' sympathy with the Passion recorded in the above-mentioned sources. The converts' favourable reaction to the Passion theology, even from the earliest encounter with the Western religion, becomes conspicuous when we compare it to the case of the China mission. In 1600 Matteo Ricci finally entered the capital of the empire and began the work of proselytization among the courtiers and high officials. It was very slow and hard work that led in at least one case to an alarming incident:

What made everybody very surprised and gave great concerns to us, was to rediscover among our things a very beautiful Crucifix, carved in wood

and painted with the color of blood, which appeared alive. Here the cruel eunuch began to scream and say: This is a fetish that you have made in order to murder our king; people coming with these arts are no good people. Indeed he thought this was something evil.

Father Matteo Ricci on the one hand did not want to say that this was Our Lord, as it seemed to him difficult to declare so high a mystery among those ignorant people at such a time. Especially to the eunuch, whatever he (Ricci) said was [an attempt] to make an excuse for the evil thing he did. On the other hand, he saw that everyone turned against him, full of revulsion at such cruelty that, as it seemed to them, Ricci had done to the man. For this reason, (Ricci) began to explain to Pinpitao and others little by little that “they (i.e., the eunuch and other courtiers) could not imagine what this was. [They could not even imagine that] this is a great saint of our land, who willingly suffered for us such a penalty on the Cross; for this reason, we painted and sculpted Him in such a way that we might have Him always in front of our eyes and give gratitude for such a benefit.” Notwithstanding all these words, Pinpitao said that it did not look good to keep the man of that appearance (i.e., crucified Jesus).²²

The Eunuch Matang was a notorious adversary to Ricci and the foreign religion. However, it is important to note that his horrified reaction to the “blood-painted” crucifix was also shared by others, as it says here “everyone turned against him (Ricci), full of revulsion at such cruelty.” Such a reaction appears to have been a general tendency among any educated Chinese with good tastes in visual art.²³ At the negative reactions even on the part of his friends, Ricci gave up the idea of explaining the meaning of the crucifix and Christ’s Passion.

As a wise man with a shrewd political sense, Ricci found it useless to expound on the theology of the Passion at such a moment. He later recounted bitterly to Pinpitao, a Chinese official sympathetic and friendly to him, the meaning of the crucifix. More distressing was Pinpitao’s response after hearing all of these theological explanations regarding “a great holy man of our land, who had willingly chosen to suffer for us such a penalty on the cross.” Pinpitao simply advised, “it did not look good to keep the man of that appearance (crucified Jesus).” I wonder what the same words and the same image could have inspired among the Japanese. About 50 years before this unfortunate incident in Beijing, the Japanese in Kyushu not only sympathized with the Passion, but

ferently attempted to imitate the Redeemer by flagellating themselves, wearing thorny crowns, and bearing crosses in processions. In short, the Japanese did not abhor the depiction of Christ's physical suffering, but even imitated Him by willingly taking the same pains upon themselves.

Revulsion to the image of the Passion appears to have been a universal response from the Chinese, whether sympathetic or hostile to the foreign missionaries, at least in the period of Ricci's activity.²⁴ After this incident, another friend of Ricci, Ciunvanlo, gave advice similar to that of Pinpitao:

Ciunvanlo was concerned and sent letters to the father, secretly by calling the servants of the fathers inside the palace. To the fathers he said that "the situation of the fathers was in as worse a state as it could be, because the eunuch intended to submit a memorandum against them for plotting the death of the king with fetishes; and the eunuch was spreading the words throughout the city that he had found the fathers to be evil men, that they had come to this kingdom to do evil things, and that they had to remain in their lands, bound in chains." For this reason he wrote and also advised verbally through the servants that "they should find a way to save their lives and escape towards Canton, even if they would lose all their possessions, and that they should smash all the crucifixes they had with them into dust, so that the memory of crucifixes would not seem to remain. And if they did not intend to run away, they should submit a memorandum, via their friends, to the king, requesting [permission] to return from here to their lands."²⁵

Ciunvanlo suggests that such an image should be completely destroyed so that it did not remain in memory any more. In his view, the shock and horror caused by those images certainly contributed to the hardship the Jesuits were suffering at the time. I have not come across anything like this degree of revulsion expressed against Christian images in Japan, at least before 1614 when vigorous criticisms against Christianity began to surface among the Confucian scholars serving the Tokugawa regime.

Not only in the Northern capital Beijing, but also in the southern city of Nanchang, where the Jesuits had begun their mission work earlier and achieved modest success by this time, local authorities were keen to search and confiscate such ominous images:

At the time, some Confucian degree holders came to search the houses of Christians to find the images of the Saviour, and they destroyed two or three images with much rudeness. And as it was known that the governor prohibited these images, Father Manoele advised the Christians to gather up the images inside their houses and not to keep them in public rooms, so that they would not put themselves in danger of provoking these infidels during the persecution. It is not obligatory to have them this way (i.e., hung in public rooms), but keeping them in the house was good enough, and they could demonstrate their Christianity to all the people well enough by carrying the rosaries.²⁶

Spence understood these hidden images not as all kinds of Christian images but specifically crucifixes.²⁷ I think his reading is correct, since around the year 1606 there was no governmental persecution of Christianity in China, despite Ricci's choice of the word "persecution." The local officials here were not prohibiting the church or Christian images in general, but "these images" only.

It is well known that, for this reason, the Jesuits in China preferred to use more agreeable images, which happened to be the Madonna and the Child. Already in the earlier years, when Ricci obtained a residence in the southern city of Zhaoqing, the Jesuits took precautions not to display a crucifix up front in the church. There is an interesting story written about the altar image in the Zhaoqing church in 1583:

To this image of the Madonna and her Son, which we have installed on the altar, all the mandarins, other literati, commoners, and also the ministers of idols, who came to visit the Fathers, showed their adoration, genuflecting to the image and bowing in front of it even to the level of ground with much respect, and admired the fineness of our picture.

Truly shortly afterwards, they placed another [picture] of the Saviour in the place of the Madonna; because the fathers said that the only God has to be adored, and seeing the image of the Madonna on the altar, they could not explicate the mystery of the Incarnation, and the Chinese were even confused and many of them broadcasted throughout other parts that the God we adored was a lady.²⁸

The popularity of the Madonna and Child among the Chinese even brought about a misunderstanding that Mary was the primary deity of Christianity. In part, her favourable reception among the Chinese was ascribed to her resemblance to Buddhist bodhisattva Guanyin (in Japanese, “Kannon”). Thus, the Jesuits decided to procure a new image of the Lord without His mother. However, this image of the Saviour was not a crucifix but a *Salvator Mundi*, which resembled dignified Buddhist or Daoist icons.²⁹

The image of the Madonna and Child was very popular in the Japan mission as well, but it was not the only image publicly displayed there. In China, images of the Passion including flagellation or crucifixion appeared mostly in illustrated woodcut books such as *The Manual of the Rosary* (誦念珠規程) (Nanchang, 1608), or *Illustrated Explanations on the Incarnation of the Heavenly Lord* (天主降生出像經解) (Fuzhou, 1637).³⁰ As a book, one has to flip over the pages to see the uncomfortable scenes of the Passion. In other words, these distasteful scenes were hidden in the middle of books from uninitiated or uninterested viewers. In Japan, by contrast, the scenes of the Passion were produced not only in illustrated books, but also in paintings or sculptures installed as altarpieces or hung inside the chapel. These images decorating the churches and Christian households were fully exposed to visitors, Christian and non-Christian alike.

A good example of such images is the depiction of the rosary mysteries (Fig. 1).³¹ In the centre appears the Madonna and Child, or sometimes the figure of St. Francis Xavier, while the five scenes of the Passion appear prominently in the upper margin as a part of the fifteen scenes of the mysteries. Wakakuwa relates the scene of flagellation in this painting to the fervid practice of the discipline or self-flagellation among the contemporary Japanese Catholics.³² She further underlines the emotive and affective verbal descriptions of Christ’s suffering under flagellation found in *Supiritsuaru no Shugyo* (or *Spiritual Training*), published in the Jesuit press in Kyushu in 1607, as the reflection of such self-flagellation undertaken by early Christians in Japan. Though a crucifix from this period large enough to be an altarpiece does not survive today, *Kirishitan Monogatari* (or *Stories on Christians*), an anti-Christian pamphlet from 1639, mentioned that a gory image of Jesus crucified, “fashioned in the most gruesome manner,” was installed as an altarpiece in Christian churches.³³

The ample production and wide deployment of Passion images in Japan were meticulously orchestrated in conjunction with catechesis on the Passion.

Most relevant in this regard was a catechetical textbook on the Passion, titled *Gopashion no Kannen* (or *Meditations on the Passion*), which was derived from the second part of the more substantial *Supiritsuaru no Shugyo*.³⁴ As its title suggested, the key themes and methods in this book were based on the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Here I would like to examine the parts that not only discussed the theological significance of the Passion, but deliberately related it to the practices of asceticism such as self-flagellation and fasting.

The book starts by underlining the importance of meditation practice, which could be more beneficial than other devotional practices: “Contemplating on the Passion yields ample virtues, therefore if you take a moment every day and devote your faith to the practice of contemplation on the Passion, you will get much more ample benefits than the practices of many prayers, fasts, and flagellations, as many great theologians said.”³⁵ This comparison to fasting and self-flagellation appears to me as evidence that, by 1607, those practices were firmly rooted among the Japanese Catholics. Even though this part seems to underestimate the importance of mortification, it does not. In the following section, which expounds the points of caution in meditation, a second point is made:

During the seven days, at least once or more one needs to conduct the examination (*eshame*) whether one is getting the benefits and can proceed to the next stage or not. If one is not getting the benefit and realizes that one should not move on to the new stage every day, one should know well the reason. Certainly it must be due to his fault. In other words, one should discern the reason. It may be because one did not conduct the mortification (*moruchihikasan*) important in the middle of the practice of prayer, or because one is not keeping in mind the lessons and rules, or because one lacks the learning and resolution necessary for prayers, or because of the laxity of mind.³⁶

Corporal mortification was required to keep the prayer and meditation effective. The practice could be a cautioning alert to the lax mind.

The practice of corporal discipline originated in the Lord’s Passion, since it was an attempt to imitate Him in all aspects, even to His suffering. Therefore, having empathy with His suffering was the key in the meditation on the Passion. The second method of contemplation was as follows: “Secondly, one should

conduct contemplation with the volition to suffer together [with the Lord] the pains of the Passion. In order to do so, one should ponder deeply on the various pains and humiliations the Lord Christ received, and rouse in the mind painful compassion.”³⁷ Next, the physical sufferings Christ had gone through were enumerated one by one. Each suffering was interpreted to redeem each of our sins:

For your sake, He was offered as a sacrifice, for your sake, He was beaten, for your sake, He was hung on the cross. He was harmed because of our sins. He was crowned with thorns because of your pride, His holy body was beaten because of your carnal sins, and He tasted the sour wine because of your gluttony. Your delight in evil was the reason for [His] deep suffering.³⁸

Flagellation was taught here to be the outcome of our bodily sins or carnal desire. In the Japanese original, the word *shokushin* (色身) was used for “carnal body,” which was a Buddhist term.³⁹ This choice of words is significant in relation to the Buddhist tradition of negating the body, which I will discuss in full in the final section.

Each suffering of Christ was associated with a specific sin. It followed that our undertaking of those sufferings as fleshly mortifications would absolve us of those sins. For example, self-flagellation would not only assist our empathy with Christ’s suffering, but also cleanse our carnal desire. Thus, the instruments of the Passion, which could be used as the instruments for discipline, were extolled as the fuel for our spiritual love towards Christ: “In order to keep flaming the fire of love towards Christ, the firewood of spirit is required. The firewood consists of the Cross, crown of thorns, whip, lance, and nails, i.e., the instruments of the Passion. In order to keep burning the fire of love for Him, one should contemplate on the whole set of these instruments of the Passion.”⁴⁰ It seems to me that not only mental meditations on these instruments, but also their physical applications to one’s body was urged in this book, since the section on the contemplation of Christ’s flagellation ended with the following prayer:

Though it was us, mere lowly beings, who enjoyed the evil pleasure with our carnal bodies, [the Lord] took our due punishments in His body, in order to absolve us of our sins. For this reason, the wrathful lashes

of justice we should receive, was turned toward the body of the Lord, so that we can get the lessons and rid ourselves of our evil pleasure and immoderation. As our carnal bodies will resist the spiritual, we implore You to grant us the grace to persevere in the ascetic practices, endeavoring in bodily efforts. Amen.⁴¹

The last sentence was a prayer asking for aid to persevere in mortification, as the practice has a healing, redemptive power to cleanse our sins. This idea of associating ascetic practice with the absolution of sins caused by the “carnal body,” such as “evil pleasure” or “immoderation,” was nothing new to the Japanese. It had a strong resonance with indigenous Buddhist tradition, which I will discuss in the following section.

III. Negation of body and redemptive death in Japan

The ascetic practices of corporal mortification were not unknown in Japanese tradition. Seclusion, pilgrimage, and fasting, largely associated with Buddhism but also with Shinto and folk beliefs, were as common as in Christian Europe.⁴² However, self-flagellation was certainly something novel in the Japanese context. Even though I have emphasized so far that Japanese converts quite easily understood and accepted the practice, there certainly existed negative views on it as well. I need to discuss this criticism on flagellation first, before exploring the Japanese ascetic traditions. The logic adopted in this criticism, however, could have been directed with no alteration to the indigenous practices of Buddhism, which of course the critic would not be doing.

After the ban of 1614, a series of anti-Christian literature was published by various intellectuals, such as apostatized former Jesuits, both Japanese and Portuguese, and Confucian literati.⁴³ Many of these writers advanced their criticism from the standpoint of Confucianism. However, singularly they did not discuss the act of self-flagellation, even though it could be deemed against the Confucian code of filial piety, as Confucius had said: The flesh, bone, hair, and skin were what one received from the parents. The filial piety begins with not harming them: 身體髮膚受之夫母不敢毀傷孝之始也. (孝經, 開宗明義章). I think this tenet was probably the primary reason why the theology of Christ's Passion and its imitation in self-flagellation were only slowly introduced to the

Chinese. Due to the Jesuits' shrewd precautions, the confrontation with this Confucian code of conduct had not occurred in China at least by the end of the Ming dynasty. In Japan, the critics from a Confucian perspective did not discuss the matter of self-flagellation, probably because these elite intellectuals were preoccupied with more important theological issues such as Creation, salvation, and ethics in the Ten Commandments.

On the other hand, a pamphlet from 1639, entitled *Kirishitan Monogatari* (or *Stories on Christians*), mentioned the practice of self-flagellation as barbarous and foolish. Written by an anonymous author in a rather unsophisticated writing style and furbished with woodcut illustrations, this booklet appears to have aimed at a more popular level of readership. The following portion merits attention:

Here (Room of Repentance) the *Bateren* (i.e., Father) and *Iruman* (i.e., Brother) and their adherents all sit in a circle, while the penitent in its center publicly proclaims contrition of his sins and misdeeds, begging forgiveness and subjecting himself to severe humiliation. Thereupon the *Bateren*, taking into his hands the aforementioned *penitencia*, flogs the sinner, causing the flow of blood. Then he wipes the blood off with a piece of cloth and, without washing his hands, offers up prayers to the Buddha. And they call this a great deed! But here is what the *Kirishitans* believe. Those who perform such acts of mortification obtain the protection of Deus ...⁴⁴

The author did not seem to be fully familiar with the Catholic practice. More than twenty years after the 1614 ban, it was probably impossible for anyone other than the hiding Christians themselves to witness the real scene of the disciplinary act. The account reported that the priest was conducting the beating, not the practitioner himself. Furthermore, the author confused the individual, confidential Catholic confession with the group confession in *shugendō*, which I will discuss shortly. To make it sound even gorier, he wrote that after the beating the priest conducted a prayer with unwashed bloody hands. Confessing one's sin was viewed as a humiliation. The woodcut illustration in this part showed the so-called *penitencia*, which was not the usual whip but a scary-looking spiked panel with a handle. The author and the illustrator, apparently

having never seen the actual practice, were doing their best to provoke the readers' horror and curiosity.

However, the very elements derided by the author as “foolish and barbarian,” such as the confession of sins in front of others, the willing suffering in the body, and the divine blessing obtained through physical affliction, were very similar to what had been conducted and believed in Japanese religious traditions since mid-Heian period in the ascetic practices of *shugenja* and *hijiri*, roughly translated respectively as “ascetic” and “holy man.” On what grounds, then, could the author deride analogous ideas and practices found in Christianity? The Japanese religious practices of asceticism were duly observed and recorded by the Jesuits from the very first decade of their mission work in the land. In a letter dated 1554, Father Alcaçova recorded his observations of the *yamabushi shugenja* (mountain ascetics):

These Japanese conduct severe penance. In the time of cold weather, which is harsh, they bathe themselves in the water that they left freezing, so freezing that one cannot even hold the water in hand. And in the time of the hot summer, they bathe themselves in hot water just about to boil. Those who take baths with such water are the priests of idols in this land, who keep nothing else than the contemplation on the things that the demon taught them. On the surface they have much humility, but under that humility the demon teaches much haughtiness.

There are other priests who go to the mountains, where they stay in a pagoda, doing much penance, because for 60 days they eat no more than seven or eight times, only the amount as much as it fits their hands. And once the penance is done, they confess all the sins they committed, one in front of the others, and when it is done, they make a vow that they will not divulge to anyone what they heard in the confession.⁴⁵

The Jesuits' words need careful reading, since, when it comes to the matter of local religions, they did not refrain from using negative names such as “demon,” “idols,” “hell,” etc. These letters were not written as anthropological reports, but as advertisements of the Jesuits' crusading ventures in a pagan land. However, given their educated background in pagan, humanist classics, their words at the same time reveal a true admiration behind the invectives.⁴⁶ Alcaçova seemed to be impressed by the sincerity of these ascetics in their persevering mortifications.

Plus, he rightly observed that these acts were also, as in Christianity, aimed at penitence, though the concepts of sin in Christianity and Buddhism have different allusions.

In the letter above, I note with particular interest that the *shugenja* were conducting a group confession of sins, which the author of *Kirishitan Monogatari* derided as a “foolish” practice of Christianity. Acts of severe asceticism and group confession were recorded more in detail by Fr. Lancilotto in Goa in 1548, who heard about these ascetics in Japan⁴⁷:

They say that in this land they are accustomed to a kind of penance in the following way: The ascetics fast and keep chastity for a hundred days, and thereafter they enter a deep forest, in which there are many pagodas similar to hermitages. They stay in this forest for 75 days and they eat every day no more than a small amount of rice they can hold in their palms, and they drink water every day no more than three times, and at the end of 75 days they, who entered this deserted place, assemble. Sometimes there are a great number of them. Then, in the place facing the pagoda they kneel down, and confess all their sins of the whole life in high voices in front of everyone; while one confesses, the others are listening, and when everybody is finished confessing publicly like this, all of them swear to the pagoda that they won't divulge what they heard during the confessions. Afterwards, they leave the deserted place.

They say, while they proceed in this penance all 75 days, they don't sleep and they never undress. They are wearing crude linen and a tight belt, and they never lie down, but ambulate every day about four, five, or six leagues throughout the bush around the mountain, all being assembled in the manner of a procession. And arriving at designated locations, they take a short break and make a huge fire, warming their bodies. And they say that they bring with them a master who guides them in the things of prayer and penitence, and if someone falls asleep while resting, that master gives him much beating with a stick ...⁴⁸

Shugendō, a Japanese blend of mountain asceticism with folk religious and Buddhist elements, and eventually organized into two main branches affiliated respectively with the Tendai and esoteric Shingon Buddhism, was practised in the major mountains historically deemed as holy.⁴⁹ Significantly, one of those

mountains, Hikosan, was in Kyushu, not far from the Buzen and Bungo areas under the rule of Christian *daimyō* Ōtomo Sōrin.

Shugenja conducted a number of ascetic practices in the belief that such bodily mortifications could cleanse them of their accumulated sins, which, according to Buddhist doctrines, were committed in both this and previous lives. Furthermore, such practices were believed to award them certain supernatural powers such as healing or exorcism. Even though the exact theological terms in Christianity were not identical with those in *shugendō* or Buddhism in general, I find analogical elements between the two faiths in a broad sense. Sins could be alleviated or even removed by bodily mortification, since the body was basically a carnal obstacle and therefore often the cause of sin. Furthermore, ascetic practices brought in spiritual benefits or even spiritual power, which manifested itself in the case of *shugendō* as *shugenja*'s authority to heal the sick and drive out demons. Such practices and beliefs, extant at the time of the Jesuits' entry into Japan, could explain why the Japanese developed sympathy with Christian practices in a very short time span. Despite the differences in the theological details, such formal and logical similarities between indigenous traditions and the Western religion led the Japanese to recognize and understand the foreign practices by analogy to their own.

Though ascetic practices in Japan had a long history with a number of methods for afflicting one's own body—such as continuous ambulation without sleep, bathing in extremely cold or hot water, and refraining from food—they did not include whipping or beating the self with an instrument of punishment. Therefore, the practice of self-flagellation could have been viewed as outlandish and bizarre, although active criticism was not voiced during the Jesuits' 60-year mission period when the practice was conducted even in public processions. Though whipping or beating were not found in Japanese ascetic traditions, the concept of negating the body in favour of the holy went to an even further extreme in this land: i.e., the ritual suicide aiming at rebirth in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha. Though not an authoritatively endorsed practice in Japanese Buddhism even in the sixteenth century, it was not uncommon.⁵⁰

This practice of self-termination was an attempt to escape from the accumulated sins and expedite one's transition to the Pure Land or (sometimes) bodhisattva Kannon's Potalaka. Monks rather than laymen took these extreme measures, though records showed that the latter also occasionally participated in such acts. Again, in a broad sense I think there existed an analogical point

between Buddhist self-termination and Christ's sacrificial death. Buddhist monks terminated their current lives in order to be absolved of sins preventing them from obtaining nirvana, while Christ was sacrificed to redeem the collective sins of humankind. In both cases, death was a redemptive act, even though comparing a man's individual death to the God Incarnate's redemptive plan would be a sacrilege from the Catholic perspective. In other words, death as a means to cleanse the accumulated or collective sins was not a completely alien idea to Japanese traditions, though the details in theology differ from those of Catholicism.⁵¹ I think that such a concept of redemptive death to a large extent predisposed the Japanese to understanding the Passion theology.

These "martyrs of demon" were also observed and recorded by the Jesuits. It is quite paradoxical that the Jesuits were applying words such as "martyrs," "penitence," and "salvation" to the practices of "demons." Perhaps the Jesuits, too, were recognizing the analogical points between their religion and the indigenous "idolatries." Such perceptions of foreign religions via their own terms and traditions were mutual among the Jesuits and the Japanese: "In this land, there are so many martyrs of the demon, who are countless. In this province of Japan there is a pagoda on a very high rock, to which many Japanese come to die as martyrs, throwing themselves from there downward. They say that they die as saints, because they die for the pagoda."⁵² These men went to a pagoda on a high rock, most likely on a rocky mountain, and willingly jumped down to terminate their current lives. This portion of Father Alcaçova's letter appears to refer to the *shugendō*-related shrines in Kumano mountains, where such self-terminations were conducted.⁵³ The death here aimed to speed their transition to the next world, the Pure Land of Amida. Alcaçova could not help acknowledging that these men died for the cause of obtaining holiness.

A more well-known and dramatic case is self-termination via the sea, whereby the devotees of Amida Buddha sailed to the West, the cosmological direction of His Pure Land, and sank themselves in the sea in order to be reborn in paradise:

There are others who stand on their feet for a long time, never laying their bodies on the ground. In the meantime a large amount of money is gathered (i.e., donated by onlookers). And as the demon sees that they have already done much penance, he orders them to take the money and a boat, and get on the boat. And they make a hole in the boat and sail into

the sea, because they are saved by dying this way. They take it for a great honour to kill themselves by their own hands.⁵⁴

In these redemptive drownings, two kinds of imagery seemed to be blended, even though both had their theological foundations in the devotion to Amida.⁵⁵ One was the rebirth in the Pure Land. According to this belief, sailing to the west and drowning in the sea would lead the dead to be reborn in the lotus pond of the Pure Land, which explains the significance of water as the transitional medium. The other was a sailing voyage to the island of Potalaka, the legendary paradise of bodhisattva Kannon. In the latter case also, death in the water seemed to be a precondition to reaching paradise, even though some certainly believed that one could sail to Potalaka in one's current body.

The Buddhist traditions of asceticism and redemptive death also originated in China, where self-immolation by burning, inspired by the bodhisattva Medicine King chapter in the *Lotus Sutra*, was more frequent.⁵⁶ It is hard to clarify why the preexistence of such practices in China did not work favourably towards the reception of comparable Christian ideas and practices. For one thing, Christian bodily mortification was not advanced by the Jesuits actively enough to cause notable reactions on the part of the Chinese, either positive or negative. Therefore, one can only surmise. It is known that Confucian scholars objected to Buddhist self-infliction.⁵⁷ However, I think that the dominant status of Confucianism both in politics and ethics in China limited such Buddhist practices to the marginal realm of only the deeply religious, so that they could not significantly affect the religious sensibilities of the general populace.

Considering the relative difference in size and population between China and Japan, it is meaningless to gauge where the practice was more widely or frequently undertaken. More significant is whether such practices remained as an influential cultural factor to affect the general populace's perception and understanding of the foreign religion of Christianity. This was certainly the case in Japan, where religious self-termination was often a public event, witnessed and praised by clerics and laymen alike.⁵⁸ Throughout this article, I point out that Christian self-flagellation was often publicly exposed, even to non-Christians. It is further notable that one of the major sites for self-termination in the sea was located in Ariake near Nagasaki in Kyushu. Such a notion of redemption via death was emulated, if not literally undertaken, by laymen in a milder form

of pilgrimage, in which participants went through the symbolic experience of death and rebirth.⁵⁹

So far, I have attempted to demonstrate that the introduction of self-flagellation based on the sympathetic understanding of the Passion was possible among the very first Japanese Catholic converts, due to their familiarity with indigenous traditions of asceticism and redemption via death. These traditions, derived largely from *shugendō* and Pure Land faith, had equipped the Japanese with the notions of negating bodily values, cleansing accumulated sin through asceticism, and the even more drastic idea that death could serve as a transit to blessed states, even though the definitions of sin or redemption in Christianity and Buddhism did not exactly match each other.

A significant cornerstone, which may substantiate my argument that the Japanese indeed recognized such analogical points and viewed Christianity through their inherent religious frame of reference, finds itself in the modern day *Kakure Kirishitan's* practice of field exorcism. Among the rituals of these *Kirishitans*, who refused to rejoin the Catholic church, a field exorcism called *nodachi* interestingly employs the whip, still preserving its original shape used in flagellation by their ancestors throughout the persecution period. Over time, this whip has been transformed into an instrument of exorcism. The Japanese Catholics in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries knew that self-flagellation could alleviate the sins of its practitioners. Over the next centuries after the 1614 ban, while these Christians continued to practise their religion in secrecy and gradual isolation from orthodox Church doctrine, the whip used to cleanse the sins was somehow transformed into an instrument to drive out evils.⁶⁰

How, then, did the act of cleansing sins come to be associated with the act of driving out evils? I think the answer lies in the asceticism of *shugenja*. Early Japanese Christians were already familiar with the existence of *shugenja* and their practices of asceticism. *Shugenja* were believed to absolve themselves of accumulated sins through physical mortification, even though they did not use an instrument of punishment to whip or beat their bodies. They were also believed, through such sin-cleansing practices, to acquire the supernatural ability of healing and exorcising. Thus, *shugenja* were entrusted to conduct healing and exorcism rituals for the populace; in these services, they often employed instruments such as Buddhist deity Fudo Myoo's *vajra* sword, Fudo Myoo being

their primary deity in the perseverance of asceticism, or the Shinto paper strip called *gohei* (御幣).⁶¹

It appears that, as the isolation began to intensify after 1614, the early Christians, already familiar with *shugenja*'s alleged supernatural power and their instruments, gradually came to identify their own instrument of sin-removing practice with *shugenja*'s instrument of healing and exorcism. The whip brought divine blessing, and the *vajra* sword or *gohei* transmitted supernatural power because their users had absolved themselves of sin. Both could be compared to a whip: the *vajra* sword due to its function of afflicting the body; the *gohei* due to its shape, a stick with paper strips hanging like whip strings.⁶² This confusion or conflation of theological and ritual elements between Christianity and indigenous religions, much noted and discussed in the studies of *Kakure Kirishitan*, suggests to me that, already in the days of Jesuit presence, such association or comparative understanding in the minds of the Japanese converts was more than possible, even though their erring identifications would have been held in check and corrected by the missionaries.

A foreign religion is like a foreign language. In adulthood, one learns a foreign language in comparison to his or her mother tongue, which causes facilitation as much as misunderstanding. The indigenous traditions of asceticism and redemptive death gave the Japanese the religious vocabularies and semantics to perceive and sympathize with counterparts in the Western religion, to such an extent that the newly introduced religion was tenaciously upheld by the Japanese throughout more than 250 years of underground existence.



Figure 1: *Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary*, anonymous Japanese painter, sixteenth century, 75 x 63 cm, Kyoto University Museum. Courtesy of Kyoto University Museum.

Notes

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1. Arimichi Ebisawa, "Crypto-Christianity in Tokugawa Japan," *Japan Quarterly* 7 (1960), pp. 288–94; Ikuo Higashibaba, *Christianity in Early Modern Japan: Kirishitan Belief and Practice* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 76–81; Junhyoung Michael Shin, "Avalokitesvara's Manifestation as the Virgin Mary: The Jesuit Adaptation and the Visual Conflation in Japanese Catholicism after 1614," *Church History* 80, no. 1 (March 2011), pp. 1–39. Furthermore, Kawamura observes that Jodo Shinshu lay organizations provided the early Christians with comparable models to shape Catholic lay brotherhoods in Japan; see Shinzo Kawamura, "Making Christian Lay Communities during the Christian Century in Japan: A Case Study of Takata District in Bungo" (Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, 1999), pp. 315–37.
2. Shin's article, "Avalokitesvara's Manifestation," discusses the conflation procedure in *Senpuku Kirishitan's* devotional practices of meditation and icon veneration in the early decades after the 1614 ban of Christianity.
3. Throughout this article, I will focus on the Buddhist elements in the Japanese religious traditions rather than those of Shinto. The Jesuits understood Shinto merely as boon-seeking sorcery and soothsaying concerned with earthly matters rather than the eschatological issues of afterlife salvation. Even though their understanding was superficial, it is largely true that the Japanese turned primarily to Buddhism for explanations of the afterlife and salvation, and this remains true today. Since Christian asceticism also aimed ultimately at afterlife salvation via the cleansing of sins, its comparable counterpart is found more readily in Buddhism than in Shintoism. See Georg Schurhammer, *Shinto, the Way of the Gods in Japan: According to the Printed and Unprinted Reports of the Japanese Jesuit Missionaries in the 16th and 17th centuries* (Bonn: K. Schroeder, 1923), pp. 134–47. For the political significance and more complicated theological dimensions of Shinto at the time, which the Jesuits failed to comprehend, see Nam-lin Hur, *Death and Social Order in Tokugawa Japan: Buddhism, Anti-Christianity, and the Danka System* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007), pp. 41–45.
4. Hur, pp. 80–81, 95.

5. Over the 30 years of persecution after 1614, more than 2,000 Japanese Christians were martyred. C. R. Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), p. 448.
6. Kentaro Miyazaki, “Roman Catholic Mission in Pre-modern Japan,” in *Handbook of Christianity in Japan*, ed. Mark R. Mullins (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 7.
7. Though discussing a different topic of Japanese Confucianism, Kiri Paramore observes that the humanistic ideas and discourse brought by the Jesuits were not totally alien to the Japanese, who were also dealing with comparable concepts in their Confucian tradition; see Kiri Paramore, “Early Japanese Christian Thought Reexamined: Confucian Ethics, Catholic Authority and the Issue of Faith in the Scholastic Theories of Habian (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), Gomez and Ricci,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 35, no. 2 (2008), pp. 231–62.
8. Liam Matthew Brockey, *Journey to the East: the Jesuit Mission to China 1579–1724* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 396. See also pp. 140 and 367 for the flagellation practices in China.
9. Before the order of expulsion in 1614, Christianity had been banned officially by Hideyoshi in 1587, though the ban was not yet fully enforced till 1614. Therefore, Christian mission was legally permitted in Japan only for 38 years, in a strict sense.
10. *Kouduo Richao: Li Jiubiao’s Diary of Oral Admonitions: a late Ming Christian Journal*, trans. with annotations by Erik Zürcher (Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2007), 2 vols.
11. イエズス會日本書翰集：原文編 2 vols., 譯文編 4 vols. 東京大學史料編纂所編纂 日本關係海外史料叢書 (東京: 東京大學史料編纂所, 1990–2000) (hereafter Jesuit Letters), vol. 2, p. 213 (the Japanese translation of the original Portuguese is found in vol. 2.2 p. 54). A letter from Br. Duarte da Silva, Bungo, 1555:

“Sesta-feira de endoenças vieram aqui de todas as partes christãos à igreja, que estava sempre cheia de gente: ouve disciplina a noite da quarta-feira, e pregaçam da paixam, em que ouve muita devaçãõ, e todos os dias até a Pascoa ouve muito fervor e jejuns.”

All the translations of Portuguese, Italian, and Japanese are mine, except for the quotation from *Kirishitan Monogatari* in the third section of this essay. Quotations will appear as translations into English in the main text, with the original in an endnote.

Throughout, I have translated the term *disciplina* as “self-flagellation.” The word in its literal modern usage may refer to a broad range of bodily mortifications,

but all the Japanese translations I compared for these citations translated the term as 鞭打ち、 or “flagellation.” Since these translations by the Tokyo University historical document editorial board (see note 8) and Prof. Kiichi (see note 12) were the collaborations of Japanese and Portuguese scholars specialized in this period, I accept their understanding of *disciplina* as “flagellation.” Furthermore, in the index of Fróis’s *Historia de Japam*, the item “disciplina” is equated with “flagelação.” See Luís Fróis, *Historia de Japam*, 5 vols., ed. Josef Wicki (Lisbon: Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, 1976–1984) (hereafter HJ), vol. 2, p. 524. See also Satoru Takemura, *Kirishitan Ibutsu no Kenkyu* (Tokyo: Kaimonsha, 1964), p. 289.

12. Kawamura, p. 150.

13. Jesuit Letters, vol. 2, p. 240 (trans. vol. 2.2, p. 92). A letter from Fr. Balthasar Gago, Hirado, 1555:

“é á quinta-feira ouve a pregação do mandato, e lavamos os pés a doze christãos pobres, e tambem de comer. E á noite ouve pregação da paixão, e diciplina em quanto disse o Psalmo de Miserer mei Deus secundum magnam misericordiam tuam. Averia obra de cento e cincoenta homens, que a casa não dá lugar a mais, e assi por estas obras exteriores, caem muito na verdade, e vem a deferença da mentira à verdade.”

14. HJ, vol. 1, pp. 293–94, Bungo, 1563. For Japanese translation with annotations, フロイス 日本史, 12 vols., 松田毅一, 川崎桃太 譯. (東京: 中央公論社, 1977–1978), (hereafter *Nihonshi*), vol. 9, p. 36.

“Às tres horas depois do meio dia, começarão a vir disciplinantes com suas vestimentas pretas e coroas de espinhos, outros com cruces às costas e outras diversas invensões de penitencia e devoção, e sempre houve disciplinantes athé depois da procissão. E entre estes veio hum velho fidalgo, que foi secretario do tono de Firando, que passava já de 70 annos, por nome Xenxu Paulo, bem conhecido de todos por sua grande virtude; e disciplinou-se com tanto fervor e fez taes colloquios, que a todos os que estavam na igreja moveo a muita devoção e lagrimas; e as palavras, que de quando em quando dizia em sua lingua, erão taes, com muito sentimento seo e lagrima que derramava: “Ay triste de mim, quantas vezes tenho qebrantado os mandamentos de Deos!” couza que não pouco movia aos circunstantes.

Depois da pregação da paixão, que fez Damião japão, se começou a pôr em ordem a procissão: e assim sahio com muita ordem e devoção, e forão ao monte da cruz passando pela povoação; e feita oração em huma hermidã, que estava ao pé

da cruz, se tornarão com a procição para a igreja aonde, ajuntando-se muita gente, tiverão huma lição da paixão quazi toda a noite.”

15. HJ, vol. 2, p. 325, Nagasaki, 1569; *Nihonshi*, vol. 4, pp. 244–45.

“... Sexta-feira d’Endoenças vierão 15 meninos diante do altar todos por ordem vestidos com suas vestimentas pretas e suas coroas de espinhos na cabeça, trazendo cada hum delles sua insignia da paixão na mão, e fazendo sua reverencia ao altar, virando-se para o povo lhes dizia em sua lingua a significação da insignia que trazia na mão em voz alta que todos pudessem ouvir, dizendo: Esta hé a similhansa da cruz em a qual Jesu Christo Senhor nosso e verdadeiro Filho de Deos por nos salvar quiz receber cruel morte e dolorosa paixão. E o mesmo fazia cada hum dos outros aplicando o ditto à insignia que trazia na mão, e os mesmos menios quando isto recitavão, choravão tantas lagrimas que de ver aquelle acto de tanta devoção em meninos innocentes, quazi todos os circunstantes os ajudavão a chorar, porque tem naturalmente os japões os corações brandos e maviozos. Acabado isto todos os meninos por sua ordem alli diante da gente deixavão cahir as vestes dos hombres até a cinta e, dizendo hum Miserere mei Deus, se disciplinavão e sahião disciplinando-se até huma cruz que está mui longe, e tornavão à igreja com a mesma ordem e devoção.”

16. The ascetic practices in Buddhism aimed to overcome human desires that hinder one’s progress to Nirvana. These human frailties eventually lead to committing sins that would be accumulated through karmic reincarnations. In strict terms, the concept of sin in Christianity differs from that of accumulated karmic sins in Buddhism. However, on the surface at least, the frequent use of the same term “sin” (罪) by the missionaries and the Japanese Buddhists, and their similar practices of confessing and recanting sins, could serve as a comparative link for them to perceive and understand each other.

17. HJ, vol. 2, pp. 17–18, Miyako, 1565; *Nihonshi*, vol. 3, pp. 233–34.

“Esta Quaresma de 65 foi a primeira em que os christãos daquella parte começarão a tomar mais gosto, e abrir os olhos no conhecimento das couzas de Deos. Aos domingos pregava o Padre o Evangelho, às 4. o Irmão Damião do sacramento da penitencia, e às sextas, depois da missa, a paixão; e no mesmo dia à noite se lhe tornava a rezumir o sermão precedente, e todos com o psalmo de Miserere mei Deus, que lhes dizia, tomavão devotamente sua disciplina ...

Quinta-feira lhes pregou o Mandato. Neste dia virão no Miaco o primeiro sepulcro aonde se encerrou o Santissimo Sacramento, e não faltarão, armados de frechas e luzidas armas, os que vigiarão até se desencerrar o Senhor. Os christãos

por serem naturalmente inclinados à penitencia, negociarão entre sy vestimentas pretas, coroas de espinhos, disciplinas de rozetas, e diante do Santissimo Sacramento vierão por três vezes derramando sangue e lagrimas.

À noite, acabado o officio das trevas, lhes leo hum menino japonês a letra da paxão em sua lingua, tirada dos quatro evangelistas, com tanta modestia e boa ordem, que gastou nisto huma hora e meia de relogio; e depois, sobre os passos mais principaes, lhes fez o Padre huma pratica exhortando-os à penitencia, e sentimento da paxão de Christo N. Senhor. Houve disciplina com tanto fervor, lagrimas e devoção, que estavam os Padres admirados de ver celebrada e exaltada a santissima paxão do Filho de Deos naquelle ultimo do descuberto, em huma cidade cheia de tantas idolatrias e aonde o demonio era tão venerado.”

18. HJ, vol. 2, pp. 74–75, Hirado, 1565; *Nihonshi*, vol. 9, pp. 197–98.

“... O Irmão João Fernandes os ensinava, pregava cada dia aos cathecumenos e aos domingos aos christãos, ensinava todos os dias a doutrina aos meninos, a qual dizião em coros cantada. O Pater noster, Ave Maria, Credo, Salve Regina dizião em latim e tudo o demais em sua lingua. Sabião ajudar à missa, o Miserere, Veni Creator Spiritus e as ladainhas que dizem quando vão com o Padre enterrar os deffuntos. Às ave-marias se dizião logo as ladainhas na igreja, às quaes acodião muitos christãos, e especialmente às 6.-feiras vinhão mais porque, acabadas as ladainhas, havia sempre disciplina por espaço de hum Miserere com muito fervor e devoção, pela inclinação que tem à penitencia; e os cathecumenos que por cauza de seo trabalho não podião vir de dia, de noite se lhes pregava.”

19. Jesuit Letters, vol. 1, pp. 95–96 (trans. vol 1.1, pp. 156–57). A letter from Fr. Francisco Xavier, Malacca, 1549:

“Eu parti da India para Iapão no mes de Abril, com dous companheiros meus, hum de missa, e outro leigo, com tres japões christãos, os quais se bautizarão depois de serem bem instruidos em os fundamentos da fé de Nosso Senhor Iesu Christo. Forão doutrinados em o nosso collegio de Santa Fé de Goa, onde aprenderão a ler & escrever, e fizerão os Exercicios Spirituaes com muito recolhimento, & desejo de aproveitarem nelles. Fez lhes Deos tanta mercê dando-lhes a sentir dentro em suas almas com muito conhecimento das mercês e beneficios que de seu Criador, Redemptor, & Senhor tinham recebidas. Aproveitarão-se tanto em os Exercicios, e fora delles, que com muita razão todos os que ca andamos desejamos participar das virtudes que Deos nelles pos. Sabem ler & escrever, & se encomendão a Deos por livros de rezar. Preguntei-lhe muitas vezes em que orações achavão mais gosto & consolação spiritual? Dezião-me que em rezar a paixão, da qual sam elles muito

devotos. Tiverão grandes sentimentos, e consolações, e lagrimas, no tempo que se exercitarão.”

20. The meditative methodology based on imaginary visualization in the Jesuit tradition was compared by Junhyoung Michael Shin to the Meditation Sutra of Pure Land Buddhism, in “The Reception of Evangelicae Historiae Imagines in Late Ming China: Visualizing Holy Topography in Jesuit Spirituality and Pure Land Buddhism,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 40, no. 2 (2009), pp. 303–33.
21. Jonathan Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1984), pp. 230–31.
22. Pasquale d’Elia, ed., *Fonti Ricciane: Documenti originali Concernanti Matteo Ricci e la Storia delle Prime Relazione tra l’Europa e la Cina (1579–1615)*, 3 vols. (Rome: Libreria dello stato, 1942–49) (hereafter, FR), vol. 2, pp. 115–16, Beijing, 1600. This incident is discussed in Spence, pp. 246–47.

“Quello che fece più maravigliare a tutti, e diede maggior travaglio ai Nostri, fu ritrovare tra le nostre cose un molto bello Crucifisso, intagliato in legno e pinto col sangue, che pareva vivo. Qui cominciò il crudele eunuco a gridare e dire: “Questo è il fatticcio che avete fatto per amazzare il nostro Re; non è questa buona gente che anda con queste arti. E nel vero pensò lui esser questo qualche cosa cattiva.

Il P. Matteo, per una parte non voleva dire che questo era il nostro Dio, parendogli difficile tra quella gente ignorante et in quel tempo dichiarare sì alto misterio, specialmente parendo all’eunuco che tutto quanto diceva era scusarsi del male che aveva fatto; e per l’altra vedeva tutti voltati contra lui, pieni di sdegno per quelle crudeltà che pareva a loro aveva fatta a quell’uomo. Per questo cominciò puoco a puoco a dichiarare al Pinpitao et altri, che “non potevan imaginare che cosa era quella; esser quello un grande santo di nostra terra che aveva voluto patire per noi quelle pene nella croce; per questo noi lo pingevamo e sculpivamo di quel modo per tenerlo sempre avanti gli occhi, e dargli gratie di tanto beneficio” Con tutto questo, disse il Pinpitao (兵備道), non par bene tenere quel uomo di quella guisa.”

23. The Chinese distaste for crucifixes was so well known that it was even discussed in one of the most recent textbooks in Chinese art history; see Craig Clunas, *Art in China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 130.
24. In seventeenth-century China, the sign of the cross openly appeared in Christian buildings and objects. Here I am referring specifically to the images of Christ suffering on the cross, not the abstract symbol.
25. FR, vol. 2, p. 118. Beijing, 1601.

“Il Ciunvanlo (鍾萬祿) hebbe paura di pigliare e mandar lettere al Padre; e così non lo fece se non nascostamente, chiamando dentro al palazzo il servitore de’ Padri, al quale disse che “il negotio delli Padri stava nel peggior stato che poteva stare, perchè l’eunuco voleva dar memoriale contra di loro per machinare con fatticci la morte del Re; e che l’eunuco aveva sparso per tutta quella città avere ritrovato esser i Padri gente cattiva, che erano venuti a questo regno a far qualche male, e che gli aveva di rimandare a sue terre ligati con catene.” Per questo scrisse et anco avisò di bocca per il servitor, che “procurassero di salvare le loro vite e si fuggissero di là verso Quantone, ancorchè perdessero tutte le loro robbe, e che facessero in polvere quanti Crucefissi avessero seco, acciochè non ve ne restasse memoria. E se non volevano fuggire, dessero per via di suoi amici, un memorial al Re chiedendo di voler ritornarsene a sua terra.”

26. FR, vol. 2, p. 455. Nanchang, 1606.

“In questo temp andavano alcuni de’ siuzai cercando per le case de’ christiani le imagini del Salvatore, et a doi o tre gliele stracciorno con molta scortesia. E perchè si era saputo che il Governatore aveva da proibire queste imagini, avisò il P. Manoele ai christiani che ricogliessero le imagini dentro delle case e non le tenessero nele sale pubbliche, per non porsi a pericolo di esser rotte da quegli infedeli mentre durava questa persecuzione; chè non era obligatione tenerle così, ma bastava tenerle in casa, e con portare le corone mostravano sufficientemente a tutti la loro christianità.”

27. Spence, p. 247.

28. FR, vol. 1, pp. 193–94. Zhaoqing, 1583.

“A questa imagine della Madonna et al suo figliuolo, che avevamo posta nell’altare, tutti i mandarini et altri letterati e gente del popolo, e parimente i ministri de’ loro idoli, che venivano a visitare i Padri, adoravano tutti, facendo le loro genuflessioni et inclinazioni della fronte sino al suolo con molto rispetto, e si ammiravano dell’artificio della nostra pintura.

È vero che puoco dipoi, in luogo della Madonna, posero un’altra del Salvatore; perciocchè, dicendo i Padri che si aveva d’adorare un solo Dio, e vedendo l’image della Madonna nell’altare, senza potersi così presto dichiarare il mistero dell’Incarnazione, venivano i Cinesi a restare un puoco confusi, e molti divulgavano per alter parti che il Dio che noi adoravamo era donna.”

29. FR, vol. 2, pp. 193–94, n. 9.

30. Hiromitsu Kobayashi and Shigemi Aoki, eds., *Western Style Paintings and Graphics in China: From Late Ming to Qing Dynasty* (中国の洋風画展：明末から清時

- 代の絵画・版画・挿絵本), exhibition catalogue of Machida City Museum of Graphic Arts (Machida: Machida City Museum of Graphic Arts, 1995), pp. 14–16, 71–106.
31. This image is discussed in detail in Wakakuwa Midori, 若桑みどり, 聖母像の到来 (東京: 青土社, 2008), chapter 6; the title translated into English would be *The Advent of the Image of Holy Mother*. See also Noriko Kotani, “Studies in Jesuit Art in Japan” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2010), chapter 4.
 32. Wakakuwa, p. 194. She suggests that this painting was indeed an altarpiece or a “tabernacle image.”
 33. *Kirishitan Monogatari*, in George Elison, *Deus Destroyed: The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 329.
 34. *Gopashon no Kannen*, in Arimichi Ebisawa, ed., *Kirishitansho, haiyasho* (Tokyo: iwanami Shoten, 1970), pp. 225–321.
 35. *Gopashon no Kannen*, p. 227.
 36. *Gopashon no Kannen*, p. 268.
 37. *Gopashon no Kannen*, pp. 228–29.
 38. *Gopashon no Kannen*, p. 237.
 39. Suzuki Hiromitsu, 鈴木広光, “キリシタン宗教書における仏教語の問題、名古屋大学文学部研究論集 109 (March 1991), pp. 50–54.
 40. *Gopashon no Kannen*, p. 260.
 41. *Gopashon no Kannen*, p. 284.
 42. The Buddhist tradition of asceticism, especially fasting, in relation to the content of the Lotus Sutra is discussed in アップル荒井しのぶ, “法華経と苦行と滅罪—東アジア仏教のパーспекティブ” 東洋哲学研究所紀要 24 (2008), pp. 241–42.
 43. See the *Haiyasho* part in Ebisawa, *Kirishitansho, haiyasho*; Four anti-Christian booklets translated by Elison in *Deus Destroyed*; Hubert Cieslik, “The Case of Christovão Ferreira,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 29, no. 1 (1974), pp. 1–54.
 44. *Kirishitan Monogatari*, p. 331.
 45. Jesuit Letters, vol. 2, pp. 160–61 (trans. vol. 2.1, pp. 240–41). A letter from Pedro de Alcaçova, Goa, 1554:

“Fazem estes Iapões grandes penitencias, porque no tempo do frio (o qual hé muito grande) se banhão com agoa que põem a esfriar, tão fria que somente na mão se não pode tomar, e no tempo da calma se banhão com agoa quasi fervendo. Os que se banhão com esta agoa sam sacerdotes dos idolos desta terra, os quaes nam têm outra ley, senão contemplar nas cousas que o demonio lhes dá a

entender. São mui humildes no exterior, mas sobre aquella humildade edifica o demonio muita soberba.

Hay outros bonzos, que se vão a huns montes, aonde estão num pagode fazendo grande penitencia, porque em sesenta dias não comen mais de sete ou oyto vezes, tanta quantidade quanta lhe pode caber em huma mão, e acabada a penitencia se confissão de quantos peccados têm feitos, huns diante dos outros, e acabando, fazem juramento de nunca se descobrirem a ninguem.”

46. One of the typical, derogatory descriptions of indigenous religion by missionaries is found in a document titled “A Summary of the Errors in which the Heathen of Japan live,” in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, compiled by Wm. Theodore de Bary et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 151–55. However, the Jesuits’ records of local religion reveal rather different tones depending on their audiences. The complexity of the Jesuits’ perception of local religion was discussed by Hioki and Sindemann. See N. Frances Hioki, “Early Christian/Non-Christian Encounters as Comparative Theological Resources: A Case in Sixteenth-Century Japan,” *Journal of Inter-Religious Dialogue* 5 (2011), pp. 5–6; Kerstin-Katja Sindemann, “Japanese Buddhism in the 16th century: Letters of the Jesuit Missionaries,” *Bulletin of Portuguese/ Japanese Studies* 2 (2001), pp. 119–22. Interestingly, Gauvin A. Bailey suggests that the Jesuits’ willingness to learn and understand indigenous culture as the foundation for their adaptation policy might have been the reflection of their education in the Renaissance humanities consisting of pagan classics. See Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542–1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 7–8.
47. One should keep in mind, however, that this was information Lancilotto heard second-hand from a Japanese convert, Anjiro, not a direct observation in situ. Concerning the background of this letter, see notes 1 and 2 in *Jesuit Letters*, vol. 1, p. 28.
48. *Jesuit Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 30–31 (trans. vol. 1.1, pp. 47–48). A letter from Fr. Nicolao Lancilotto, Goa, 1548:

“Diz que costumão nesa terra hum jenero de penytemcyda da maneyra seguynt: jejuão e goardão castidade cem dias, depois emtrão em hum mato muy grande por o qual estão muytos pagodes à menyra de ermydas; estão em aquelle mato setemta e cymquo dias e não comem cada dia mais que quomto arroz podem ter na pallma da mão e não bebem cada dia mais de tres vezes de agoa e, a cabo de setemta e cymquo dias, se ajuntão todos os que amdão por aquelle deserto, que hé allgumas vezes grande numero delles, em hum luguar diamte de

hum pagode, em gyolhos, e comfesaõ cada hum seus pecados de toda sua vyda a allta voz diamte de todos; emquoamto hum se comfesa, os outros estão ouvindo e acabando-se todos de comfesar asy pubryquamente, cada hum delles jura sobre o pagode de numqua dizer nada do que ouvio em tal comfisaõ, depois de sayr do deserto.

Diz que, emquoamto amdão nesta penytemcyã todos estes setemta e cymquo dias, não dormem e numqua se despem; estão vestidos huns panos de lynho groso e amdão muy apertados polla cymtura e numqua estão quedos, mas cada dia camynhão quoaatro, cymquo, seys leguoas por aquelle mato derredor do momte, todos juntos à maneyra de persyção e, chegando a certos lugares determynados, descamsão hum pouquo e fazem hum grande foguo, aquemtando-se o corpo, e diz que levão hum mestre que os guya em as cousas de rezar e penytemcyas e, se allgum dorme quoaando descamsão, aquelle mestre lhe dá muyta pamquada com hum pao ...”

49. Kazuo Kasahara, ed., *A History of Japanese Religion*, trans. Paul McCarthy and Gaynor Sekimori (Tokyo: Kosei, 2001), pp. 314–31; Paul Swanson and Clark Chilson, eds., *Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), pp. 74–77; Hitoshi Miyake, “The Structure of Exorcism in *Shugedō*,” *Shugendō: Essays on the Structure of Japanese Folk Religion*, ed. H. Byron Earhart (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, the University of Michigan, 2001), pp. 99–108; Christoph Kleine, “Hermits and Ascetics in Ancient Japan: the Concept of *Hijiri* Reconsidered,” *Japanese Religions* 22, no. 2 (1997), pp. 1–7; Paul L. Swanson, “Shugendo and the Yoshino-Kumano Pilgrimage: An Example of Mountain Pilgrimage,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 36, no. 1 (1981), pp. 55–84. I appreciate Prof. Paul Swanson of Nanzan University, Japan, for his precious advice in the accurate phrasing in this part.
50. D. Max Moerman, *Localizing Paradise: Kumano Pilgrimage and the Religious Landscape of Premodern Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 94; D. Max Moerman, “Passage to Fudaraku: Suicide and Salvation in Premodern Japanese Buddhism,” *The Buddhist Dead: Practices, Discourses, Representations*, ed. Bryan J. Cuevas and Jacqueline I. Stone (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), p. 266. Even though Pure Land Buddhism was transmitted from China to Japan, it was in the latter that the school was developed into independent and influential orders. In contemporary Ming China, Pure Land Buddhism was integrated to Chan and Tiantai schools, whereas in Japan the school had already established itself as an independent order from the time of patriarch Honen (法然)

- (1133–1212). Another patriarch, Shinran (親鸞) (1173–1262), had launched the True Pure Land School (浄土真宗), which was especially powerful at the time of the Jesuit mission. See Shinko Mochizuki, *History of Pure Land Theology in China* (中國淨土教理史) (Kyoto: Hozokan, 1964), pp. 458–86; Kasahara, pp. 169–74, 191–99.
51. Japanese Buddhism also had an idea of sacrifice for others. One of the reasons why Buddhist monks were highly respected in the society was that they were believed to keep the ascetic rules not only for their own enlightenment, but also on behalf of the laymen, for whom the upholding of severe rules was simply too difficult. This aspect was observed and recorded by the Jesuits. See Jesuit letters, vol. 1, p. 213 (trans. vol. 1.2, p. 82). A letter from Fr. Francisco Xavier, 1552.
 52. Jesuit Letters, vol. 2, pp. 160–161 (trans. vol. 2.1, pp. 240–41). A letter from Fr. Pedro de Alcaçova, Goa, 1554:

“Há nesta terra tantos martyres do demonio, que nam têm conto: porque está nesta provincia de Iapam em huma rocha mui alta hum pagode, aonde vão os Iapões morrer maryres do demonio, e deitando-se daly abayxo, dizem que morrem santos, porque morrem polo seu pagode.”
 53. Moerman, *Localizing Paradise*, p. 51; Moerman, “Passage to Fudaraku,” p. 267.
 54. Jesuit Letters, vol. 2, pp. 160–61 (trans. vol. 2.1, p. 241), a letter from Fr. Pedro de Alcaçova, Goa, 1554:

“Hay outros, que estão muito tempo em pé, sem nunca se deitar, e em aquelle tempo ajuntão muito dinheiro: e como o demonio vee que já têm feita muita penitencia, manda-lhes que tomem o dinheiro e hum barco, e que se metão nelle, e que lhe fação hum buraco, e que se vão polo mar: porque morrendo daquella maneira se salvarão. Têmporgrandehonramatarem-se porsimesmos.”
 55. Moerman, *Localizing Paradise*, pp. 101–02.
 56. Jan Yün-hua, “Buddhist Self-Immolation in Medieval China,” *History of Religions* 4, no. 2 (1965), pp. 243–68.
 57. Jan, p. 245.
 58. Moerman, *Localizing Paradise*, pp. 55, 115–17.
 59. Moerman, *Localizing Paradise*, pp. 117–21.
 60. Kentaro Miyazaki, 宮崎 賢太郎, “生月カクレキリシタンの「野立ち」の行事研究” 紀要 27 (1991), pp. 33–52; I thank Dr. Hioki for bringing to my attention the fact that in *Kakure Kirishitan*’s rituals today the whip called *otenpensha* has become an instrument to exorcise a place. There seems to have been a shift from a body to a place, as regards where the instrument was administered.

For a discussion of such transformations in idea and religious imagery among the *Senpuku Kirishitans* in the seventeenth century, see Shin, “Avalokitesvara’s Manifestation.”

61. Kasahara, pp. 469–470.
62. Miyazaki, “生月カクレキリシタン,” p. 35.