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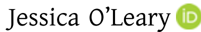
ARTICLE

Luís Fróis, Gendered Knowledge, and the Jesuit Encounter with Sixteenth-Century Japan



Jessica O'Leary

Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, Australia
Email: jessica.oleary@acu.edu.au

Abstract

This article argues that our understanding of the sixteenth-century Jesuit encounter with Japan is improved by taking into account the role gender played in cultural translation. Recent histories of the mission and the writings it produced have highlighted the strategies adopted by Jesuits to rely on and manipulate knowledge of local cultures to facilitate conversion. Yet, few scholars have used gender as a lens to read the actions and ethnographies performed and produced by Jesuits in overseas missions. Using Luís Fróis's *Tratado das contradições e diferenças de costumes entre a Europa e o Japão* (Treaty on the contrasts and differences between Europe and Japan), I argue that skilled cultural interpreters used gender as a determining lens to approach the primary task of conversion, but also the secondary task of cultural mediation. Unlike the invasion of the Americas, the ephemeral infiltration of Asia was accomplished through European accommodation of Asian political vocabularies and conduct. Examining the epistemological tools Fróis used to build knowledge of the Other sheds light on the initial stages of the unequal encounter between the Japanese and the Jesuits and how it changed based on a growing understanding of Japanese politics, class, and society.

I

When the new Visitor of the Indian Province, the Italian Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606), arrived at the port of Kuchinotsu in 1579, he turned to an experienced Portuguese Jesuit to serve as his interpreter.[1] Luís Fróis (1532–97) had

[1] All translations are the author's own unless otherwise indicated. Luís Fróis was Valignano's interpreter during his first visit in the 1570s and was substituted by João Rodrigues during the Visitor's second and third tours: Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the making of Europe: the century of discovery*, I, Bk 2 (Chicago, IL, 1994), p. 683.

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been in Japan for almost twenty years and had learned the language and customs of its warrior and noble elite.[2] However, Fróis was an outlier among the European missionaries, most of whom refused to learn the Japanese language and adopt the customs of its people.[3] This soon changed under Valignano. The new Visitor demanded that the Jesuits learn local behaviours and customs to gain audiences with powerful men and women who could be converted. Yet, there was little pre-existing knowledge of Japan circulating in Europe in the sixteenth century, so Valignano tasked Fróis with preparing a history of the Japanese mission for the benefit of the mission's practitioners and the reputation of the Jesuits in Europe. As a result, Fróis devoted his final years in the Japanese archipelago to meticulously recording his experiences in Japan, including a brief treatise on the differences between Japanese and European cultures.

In the summer of 1585, Fróis completed the *Tratado das contradições e diferenças de costumes entre a Europa e o Japão* (Treaty on the contrasts and differences between Europe and Japan).[4] Organized into fourteen chapters, the Portuguese-language collection of over 600 distiches[5] was a pithy introduction to how 'many of their customs are so removed, alien, and distant from our own, that it almost seems incredible to have such a stark contradiction in people of such civilization, sharp intelligence, and natural knowledge, like they have'.[6] Fróis wrote with authority on a variety of subjects related to life in Japan, including weapons, gardens, music, and childrearing. However, no topic received more attention than the appearances and behaviours of men and women.

Almost 25 per cent of the *Tratado* directly relates to masculinities and femininities.[7] Taking into account the number of distiches in other chapters that

[2] On Fróis, see Rui Manuel Loureiro, 'Turning Japanese? The experiences and writings of a Portuguese Jesuit in sixteenth-century Japan', in Dejanirah Couto and François Lachaud, eds., *Empires éloignés: l'Europe et le Japon (xvie–xixe siècles)* (Paris, 2010), pp. 155–68.

[3] The classic study is C. R. Boxer, *The Christian century in Japan, 1549–1650* (Berkeley, CA, 1951). See also Ikuo Higashibaba, *Christianity in early modern Japan: Kirishitan belief and practice* (Leiden, 2002); Asami Masakazu, *Gaisetsu kirishitan-shi* (Tokyo, 2016). The *Sakoku* (closed country) thesis is also contested: Ronald P. Toby, *State and diplomacy in early modern Japan: Asia in the development of the Tokugawa Bakufu* (Stanford, CA, 1991).

[4] There are several published editions, including Luís Fróis, *Kulturgegensätze Europa-Japan (1585): tratado em que se contem muito susinta-e abreviadamente algumas contradições e diferenças de custumes antre a gente de Europa e esta provincia de Japão*, ed. Josef Franz Schütte (Tokyo, 1955); and Luís Fróis, *The first European description of Japan, 1585: a critical English-language edition of striking contrasts in the customs of Europe and Japan by Luís Fróis, S.J.*, ed. Robin D. Gill and Daniel T. Reff, trans. Richard K. Danford (Abingdon, 2014). I have used the following edition: Luís Fróis, *Tratado das contradições e diferenças de costumes entre a Europa e o Japão*, ed. Rui Manuel Loureiro (Lisbon, 2019). I have also viewed a copy of the first volume of the *História de Japam* with a table of contents that matches the *Tratado*: Biblioteca da Ajuda, Jesuítas na Ásia, 49-IV-54.

[5] Two lines of verse, usually a self-contained statement.

[6] Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, p. 21. On whether the text was pedagogical or humanist, see Haruko Nawata Ward, *Women religious leaders in Japan's Christian century, 1549–1650* (Farnham, 2009), pp. 24–5.

[7] I totalled the number of distiches in the *Tratado* and the number of distiches in the first two chapters.

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are implicitly gendered, that is, about masculine or feminine behaviours, this number rises to almost 40 per cent.[8] The opening two chapters are dedicated to 'men, their persons, and dress' and 'women, their persons, and customs' and contain seventy-four and sixty-eight distiches, respectively.[9] The following chapters are all considerably shorter, except the final chapter, 'On some diverse and extraordinary matters that one cannot summarize well in the preceding chapters.'[10] It is clear, at least quantitatively, that Fróis's epistemological framework was informed by, and sought out, gender binaries. Fróis's systematic organization of foreign customs into masculine and feminine categories invites two possible explanations. First, he made sense of the Japanese world through gender norms and embodied practices, and second, he anticipated that this interpretative mode could be used by European arrivals, in addition to language training, to navigate the elite and secular elements of Japanese society. The latter is evident in several letters Fróis exchanged with the superior general, Claudio Acquaviva around the same time as the composition of the *Tratado*.[11] In sum, the *Tratado* was the result of years of experience navigating a foreign land by finding analogies in Fróis's own gendered culture, but also frustration with Europeans who lacked the discipline to come to grips with a new language and customs.

This article argues that Luís Fróis used gender as a modelling device to organize and produce knowledge about two diverse societies and cultures to advance the Jesuit mission in Japan. This only worked because Japanese society was also organized around a patriarchal gender system, which facilitated intercultural communication through its shared vocabulary.[12] Fróis was a talented linguist and diplomat who had successfully integrated himself into the upper echelons of Japanese society. However, he did so in isolation: many of his contemporaries did not speak Japanese well enough to socialize with the elite. Perhaps his companions' limited proficiency in the local language was a reason for Froís's choice to concentrate on bodily and behavioural practices that did not need familiarity with the Japanese language to be understood. Jesuits arriving from Europe could instead rely on their senses, and existing understanding of European norms, to read the embodied masculinities and femininities enacted by Japanese men and women of different ranks and classes.

Although the Jesuit mission ultimately failed in Japan, the early success of a European missionary like Fróis, who gained favours for the Jesuits from powerful individuals that improved rates of conversion, can shed light on the importance of understanding local gender norms in intercultural interactions.[13] Yet, there has been limited analysis by scholars of Jesuit missions of how

[8] I totalled the number of distiches which referenced male or female customs in the *Tratado*.

[9] Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, p. 5.

[10] Ibid., p. 6.

[11] See, for example, Luís Fróis to Claudio Acquaviva, 13 Dec. 1584, in Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), JapSin, 9,2, fos. 328r–331v, esp. fos. 328v–329r.

[12] I thank one of the reviewers for sharing this with me.

[13] See, for example, the collected materials in Josef Franz Schütte, ed., *Monumenta historica japoniae* (3 vols., Rome, 1975), and the writings of prominent Jesuits like Alessandro Valignano: Alessandro Valignano, *Sumario de las cosas de Japón (1583): Adiciones del Sumario de Japón (1592)*, ed.

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masculinities and femininities were studied to guide acculturation strategies in an all-male organization that relied on a gendered way of proceeding.[14] However, asking how gender affected Europeans' encounters with Asian states will not only add another dimension to current historiographical debates on the Jesuit missions, it will also challenge the traditional narrative of European domination after 1500.[15]

Unlike the invasion of the Americas, the ephemeral infiltration of Asia was accomplished through European accommodation of Asian political vocabularies and conduct.[16] Such accommodation ordinarily occurred after a period of conflict or violence, giving rise to what Sanjay Subrahmanyam has called an 'age of containment'.[17] As Adam Clulow has argued, such conflicts were productive because the weaker party often had to compromise, setting 'the rules of subsequent interactions'.[18] These rules were ordinarily imposed on Europeans who had to 'wholly reinvent themselves to secure a place on the fringes of powerful local states'.[19] As a result, Fróis and other successful missionaries adapted to the secular rituals of local, predominantly southern, Japanese rulers as a necessary precursor to conversion.[20] However, despite this important first step, scholars of the Jesuit mission have mostly focused on conversion and not the underlying and arguably more important stepping stone of cultural mediation.[21] Examining the epistemological tools Fróis used initially to structure the knowledge necessary for effective cross-cultural communication will shed further light on the encounter between the Japanese and

José Luis Alvarez-Taladriz (Tokyo, 1954). On the mission, see Hélène Vu Thanh, *Devenir japonais: la mission jésuite au Japon* (Paris, 2016).

[14] Ulrike Strasser, *Missionary men on the move: Jesuits and gender in the early modern world* (Amsterdam, 2020), p. 26. See also Mary Laven, 'Jesuits and eunuchs: representing masculinity in late Ming China', *History and Anthropology*, 23 (2012), pp. 199–214, esp. p. 200. See also Nadine Amsler, 'A source of creative tension: literati Jesuits and priestly duties', in *Jesuits and matriarchs: domestic worship in early modern China* (Seattle, WA, 2018), pp. 47–66.

[15] Tonio Andrade, 'Beyond guns, germs, and steel: European expansion and maritime Asia, 1400–1750', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 14 (2010), pp. 165–86.

[16] Adam Clulow, *The company and the shogun: the Dutch encounter with Tokugawa Japan* (New York, NY, 2014), p. 21.

[17] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Europeans and Asians in an age of contained conflict', in *The political economy of commerce: southern India, 1500–1650* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 252–97.

[18] Clulow, *The company and the shogun*, p. 9.

[19] Ibid.

[20] See Hélène Vu Thanh, 'The Jesuits in Asia under the Portuguese Padroado: India, China, and Japan (sixteenth to seventeenth centuries)', in Ines G. Županov, ed., *The Oxford handbook of the Jesuits* (Oxford, 2019), pp. 399–426. There are many examples of cultural accommodation in the scholarship: D. E. Mungello, *Curious land: Jesuit accommodation and the origins of Sinology* (Honolulu, HI, 1988). Beyond accommodation, see Ronald P. Toby, *Engaging the Other: 'Japan' and its alter egos, 1550–1850* (Leiden, 2019).

[21] See Dauril Alden, *The making of an enterprise: the Society of Jesus in Portugal, its empire, and beyond, 1540–1750* (Stanford, CA, 1996); and Ann Cole, 'Becoming all things to all men: the role of Jesuit missions in early modern globalization' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, 2015). See also M. Antoni J. Üçerler, *The samurai and the cross: the Jesuit enterprise in early modern Japan* (Oxford and New York, NY, 2022).

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the Jesuits and how it matured based on a growing understanding of Japan's gendered cultures and politics.

II

The first Portuguese merchants arrived in southern Japan in the middle of the sixteenth century, and the Jesuits soon followed.[22] Francis Xavier (1506–52), the co-founder of the Society of Jesus, arrived in Japan in 1549, six years after the first Portuguese carracks (*kurofune*) docked at the southern island of Kyūshū. By 1585, several dozen Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian Jesuits had established approximately 200 churches that hosted between 150,000 and 240,000 converts.[23] However, most Japanese Christians had converted for political and economic reasons.[24] Before the arrival of the Portuguese in 1540, China had prohibited trade with Japan due to the influx of pirates along its coast.[25] The Portuguese were exempt from the ban, and many rival domain lords (*daimyō*) converted to Christianity to access Chinese and European goods, especially firearms.[26] Several *daimyō* in Kyūshū realized that fraternizing with a Jesuit could yield access to the contents of Portuguese ships, and so many courted the favour of the Society of Jesus while missionaries balanced spiritual practice with the need to fund the mission.[27]

Between 1549 and 1571, Jesuits served as middlemen between Portuguese merchants and Japan to support the latter's demand for Chinese goods. In 1550, King João III (1502–57) of Portugal declared Japanese trade a royal monopoly, and restricted trade to ships authorized by the *Estado da Índia* in Goa.[28] Silk was purchased in China and transported to the Macau peninsula, which had been used as a commercial port since 1535 until the Portuguese secured a lease from the authorities of Canton in 1557.[29] The Portuguese black carracks then sailed to southern Japan, initially to Hirado, the hereditary domain of Takanobu Matsura (1529–99), and Bungo, the hereditary domain of Sōrin Ōtomo (1530–87). In 1571, however, the first lord to convert to Christianity, Sumitada Ōmura (1533–87), *daimyō* of Yokoseura, granted land in the small fishing village of Nagasaki to the Jesuits, where they quickly established a chapel and college and hundreds of houses.[30] In 1580, the city of

[22] Alden, *The making of an enterprise*, pp. 59–66. There is a vast scholarship on the Society of Jesus: Županov, ed., *The Oxford handbook of the Jesuits*, offers a useful starting point.

[23] Nawata Ward, *Women religious leaders*, p. 6.

[24] Joan-Pau Rubiés, 'Real and imaginary dialogues in the Jesuit mission of sixteenth-century Japan', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 55 (2012), pp. 447–94, esp. p. 448.

[25] Alden, *The making of an enterprise*, p. 60.

[26] Ibid.

[27] See Hélène Vu Thanh, 'Un équilibre impossible: financer la mission jésuite du Japon, entre Europe et Asie (1579–1614)', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 63 (2016), pp. 7–30.

[28] Boxer, *The Christian century in Japan*, p. 92.

[29] Ibid., pp. 96, 461 n. 3.

[30] See Reinier H. Hesselink, *The dream of Christian Nagasaki: world trade and the clash of cultures, 1560–1640* (Jefferson, NC, 2015); Carla Tronu, 'The post-Tridentine parish system in the port city of Nagasaki', in Nadine Amsler et al., eds., *Catholic missionaries in early modern Asia: patterns of localization* (Abingdon, 2020), pp. 82–95.

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Nagasaki came under the direct control of the Jesuits under a lease secured by Alessandro Valignano on similar terms to the port of Macau.[31] The settlement was far from the imperial capital, Kyōto, on the main island of Honshū, where attempts to unify Japan began with the regimes of Oda Nobunaga (1534–82) and Hideyoshi Toyotomi (1537–98) before Ieyasu Tokugawa (1543–1616) emerged victorious at the Battle of Sekigahara (1600).[32]

Following the War of Ōnin (1467–77), the Ashikaga Shogunate collapsed, giving rise to a century of civil war fought between *daimyō* until Ieyasu Tokugawa established the Tokugawa Shogunate in the seventeenth century. The Jesuits took advantage of the civil unrest to convert lords in southern Japan who, in turn, instructed their subjects to embrace Christianity. In the absence of military or juridical control, several Jesuits understood that conversion was only possible through courting powerful lords whose subjects might follow their leader into Catholic churches. However, winning the patronage of these lords required a degree of tolerance and flexibility – cultural accommodation – towards Japanese customs. In simple terms, accommodation prioritized the adoption of local (elite) language and customs to adapt missionary practice to indigenous cultures.[33] Accommodation became an important strategy in missions to China and Japan because Francis Xavier claimed that these two societies were highly civilized, and their rulers required sophisticated persuasion to convert to Christianity.[34]

Accommodation itself was controversial within and outside of the Society of Jesus.[35] When the Japanese mission was under the remit of Francisco Cabral (1529–1609), accommodation was restricted, and European apostolic dress and customs were mandated.[36] However, Cabral continued to find evidence of fathers wearing silk and owning expensive and luxurious products, objects, they claimed, that were vital to the mission. Unless they dressed and behaved in ways that were recognizably Japanese, they faced exclusion from circles that could prove profitable for the mission.[37] However, this began to change with the arrival of the Visitor, Alessandro Valignano. When Valignano arrived in 1579 to inspect the mission, he was dismayed to see that tales of its success had been vastly exaggerated.[38] He quickly realized the conditional nature of

[31] Hesselink, *The dream of Christian Nagasaki*, p. 67.

[32] Asao Naohiro and Bernard Susser, 'The sixteenth-century unification', in John Whitney Hall, ed., *The Cambridge history of Japan*, IV (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 40–95.

[33] Joan-Pau Rubiés, 'Ethnography and cultural translation in the early modern missions', *Studies in Church History*, 53 (2017), pp. 272–310, esp. p. 291.

[34] Joan-Pau Rubiés, 'The concept of cultural dialogue and the Jesuit method of accommodation: between idolatry and civilization', *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 74 (2005), pp. 237–80, esp. p. 248.

[35] Ibid., pp. 238–40.

[36] See Linda Zampol D'Ortia, 'Purple silk and black cotton: Francisco Cabral and the negotiation of Jesuit attire in Japan (1570–1573)', in Robert Aleksander Maryks, ed., *Exploring Jesuit distinctiveness: interdisciplinary perspectives on ways of proceeding within the Society of Jesus* (Leiden, 2016), pp. 137–55.

[37] Zampol D'Ortia, 'Purple silk and black cotton', p. 147.

[38] See the new direction he outlined in Josef Franz Schütte, *Valignano's mission principles for Japan* (St Louis, MS, 1980).

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the Christian faith among converts and was told by two powerful lords of Kyūshū that unless the Europeans learned the Japanese language and courtesies, the mission would fail.[39] However, prejudice was rampant among the ranks of Europeans who refused to adopt local customs, respect existing hierarchies, and ordain converts.[40] Valignano turned to Fróis to correct this trend through in-person cultural mediation and in-text cultural translation.

Luís Fróis was one of a handful of Europeans who were proficient in Japanese.[41] Born in Lisbon, he initially worked as a royal scribe until he left the court to join the Society of Jesus in 1548.[42] He departed the same year for India, where he trained as a novice first in Goa and then in Malacca.[43] After his ordination, Fróis moved to Japan, docking at Yokoseura on Kyūshū.[44] His extensive experience with the Japanese language earned him audiences with influential religious and political figures who granted the Society of Jesus significant favours.[45] Fróis's knowledge of Japanese culture also impressed Jesuit superiors, who asked him to write a history of the Jesuit mission in Japan.[46] By the end of 1586, Fróis had completed the first volume, which included a 'Prologue', a 'General Introduction', and a 'Description' of the sixty-six kingdoms of Japan (this section has since been lost), as well as 116 chapters covering the history of the Jesuit mission between 1549 and 1578. He finished Part Two (1579–89) in 106 chapters around 1590. Part Three (1589–93) consisted of eighty chapters and was finished in Macau, where Fróis was sent against his will in 1593.[47] The prologue and table of contents suggest that the *Tratado* originally formed part of the first volume or was later discarded.[48]

While modern scholars have praised both the *Tratado* and *História de Japam* for their insight into sixteenth-century Japanese religion and culture, Alessandro Valignano suppressed both texts.[49] Jesuit writing was highly regulated, and superiors oversaw, edited, and approved any text before it entered circulation within the order or in publication.[50] Fróis's fixation on accuracy

[39] J. F. Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits: Alessandro Valignano in sixteenth-century Japan* (London and New York, NY, 1993), p. 21; Alessandro Valignano, *Il cerimoniale per i missionari del Giappone*, ed. Josef Franz Schütte (Rome, 1946), p. 45.

[40] Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, pp. 163–4.

[41] João Rodrigues was perhaps better as he arrived in Japan at a younger age and helped compile the first dictionary of Japanese: Tadao Doi, ed., *Nippo jisho: vocabvlario da lingoa de Iapam* (Tokyo, 1960).

[42] Lach, *Asia in the making of Europe*, p. 683.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., p. 684.

[46] Ibid., p. 686.

[47] Nawata Ward, *Women religious leaders*, pp. 17–18.

[48] Ibid., p. 18. Kiichi Matsuda interpreted the *tratado* as a type of memorandum: Luís Fróis, Kiichi Matsuda, and Engelbert Jorissen, eds., *Furoisu no nihon oboegaki: nihon to yōroppa no fūshū no chigai* (Tokyo, 1983), p. 58.

[49] On praise, see Rubiés, 'Ethnography and cultural translation', p. 296; Engelbert Jorissen, *Das Japanbild im Traktat (1585) des Luis Frois* (Münster, 1988). On its suppression, see Nawata Ward, *Women religious leaders*, p. 18.

[50] See Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism* (Durham, NC, 1997), pp. 67–8.

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and authentic primary sources upset Valignano.[51] According to the Visitor, the text was not sufficiently focused on the mission, and its thick description was 'not suitable to mention' to Europeans.[52] Instead, Valignano produced a history based on an amalgamation of different sources, and Fróis's manuscript remained in Macau.[53] As a result, a critical edition of the *História de Japam* only appeared in 1976 following a reconstruction of scattered manuscript copies.[54] Likewise, the *Tratado* was published for the first time in the 1950s based on an extant copy held in Madrid, although its proto-ethnographic style garnered several translations into Japanese, Spanish, English, and French, the latter of which was issued with a preface by Claude Levi-Strauss.[55] Although the *Tratado* has been hailed as one of the most valuable works of the genre because of its relativism and praise of the Japanese people, such analyses do not consider gender in any meaningful way. Therefore, the following sections will examine how Fróis used the gender binary as an epistemological framework to structure knowledge about the Other for the benefit of European missionaries adapting to Japanese society and culture.

III

The first chapter of the *Tratado* begins with eleven distiches distinguishing the physical appearance of European men from Japanese men. These distiches alert the novice to the difference in height, eye shape, eye colour, nose shape, beard size, hair loss, skin pigmentation, scarring, and nail length. The first distich, for example, declares that: 'For the most part, European men are tall of body and with a good stature; the Japanese are, for the most part, shorter of body and stature than us.'[56] This structure is repeated throughout the *Tratado*: the first verse states the norm in Europe while the second does the same for Japan. It is important to note at the outset that the use of a distich was a common feature of pedagogical texts in Europe.[57] The most popular textbook for schoolboys was the third- or fourth-century *Distichs of Cato*, a compendium of moral and proverbial wisdom that featured advice like 'When you are old and blame what [young] folk do or say; Remind yourself of what you did in your youth.'[58] The use of the distich, otherwise rare among Jesuit writings, would have immediately created the impression that the text was both didactic and, implicitly, drawn from European morals.

[51] Nawata Ward, *Women religious leaders*, p. 18.

[52] Haruko Nawata Ward, 'The Christian "nuns" of early modern Japan', *Portuguese Studies Review*, 13 (2005), pp. 411–49, n. 9.

[53] Nawata Ward, *Women religious leaders*, p. 18.

[54] Luís Fróis, *História de Japam*, ed. Josef Wicki (5 vols., Lisbon, 1976).

[55] Fróis, *Kulturgegensätze Europa-Japan*; Luís Fróis, *Européens & japonais: traite sur les contradictions & différences de mœurs* (Paris, 2009).

[56] Fróis, *Tratado das Contradições*, p. 23.

[57] See Robert Black, *Humanism and education in medieval and Renaissance Italy: tradition and innovation in Latin schools from the twelfth to the fifteenth century* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 62.

[58] *Catonis Dicta*, 1.16.

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Many of these initial distiches use the words 'honour', 'shame', or 'pride' to distinguish physical features that affect a man's reputation. Honour was fundamental to homosocial relationships in the Mediterranean, especially among the elite.[59] While honour for European women was mostly tied to sexual conduct in male-authored writings, it was a multifaceted code for men based on lineage, wealth, and virility.[60] Although it had been nearly forty years since Fróis last socialized in Europe, he still recalled the importance of appearance in judging a man's honour. Distiches six and seven, for example, equated the European beard to the Japanese *chonmage*, a hairstyle created by shaving the top of one's head and tying the rest of the hair up into a bun or topknot.[61] Over time, the hairstyle came to be associated with the elite warrior class, and so became a status symbol. Like the European beard, it conveyed manliness because it marked the transition from boyhood to manhood.[62] Similarly, distiches ten and eleven inform the reader that a scarred face is a source of pride for Japanese men while: 'Among us, keeping long nails is considered to be unclean and uncouth; the Japanese, both noblemen and women, maintain some [nails] similar to hawks.'[63] These physical markers informed Europeans of the rank and status of their interlocutors in pre-modern Japan.

The Jesuits claimed that China and Japan were advanced civilizations, but Fróis was aware that some customs were contrary to European manners. To this end, he qualified many distiches by anticipating the judgement of his colleagues. In a second section on clothing, he remarked that 'Among us, wearing paper would be a joke or madness; in Japan, *bonzō* and many lords wear paper, with the front and sleeves [made] of silk.'[64] Similarly, 'Among us, it would be madness to wear clothing that is unhemmed', or 'Among us, wearing colourful clothing would be taken for nonsense and buffoonery; in Japan, wearing colourful clothing is the norm.'[65] Accommodation for the Jesuits in East Asia was broadly based on the principle that secular culture and religious belief were distinct: social practices were acceptable if they were not contrary to either (Eurocentric) salvation, reason, or ethics.[66] While comical to the European eye, strange clothing choices were not unethical and, therefore, could be tolerated to access members of the elite who wore such items.

[59] J. G. Peristiany, ed., *Honour and shame: the values of Mediterranean society* (Chicago, IL, 1974).

[60] Susan Broomhall, 'Gendering the culture of honour at the fifteenth-century Burgundian court', in Stephanie Tarbin and Susan Broomhall, eds., *Women, identities and communities in early modern Europe* (Abingdon, 2008), pp. 181–93.

[61] Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, pp. 23–4. The hairstyle was originally used by samurai to hold their helmets in place during battles.

[62] The *chonmage* was first cut at coming-of-age ceremonies during the Tokugawa period; see Kristin Williams, 'Childhood in Tokugawa Japan', in Gary P. Leupp and De-min Tao, eds., *The Tokugawa world* (Abingdon, 2021), pp. 249–71, esp. p. 253. On beards, see Eleanor Rycroft, *Facial hair and the performance of early modern masculinity* (Abingdon, 2019).

[63] Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, p. 24.

[64] Ibid., p. 32.

[65] Ibid., pp. 25, 32.

[66] Rubiés, 'Ethnography and cultural translation', p. 296.

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Fróis had extensive experience in the households of elite Japanese men and women, and the knowledge he gathered, in some ways, resembled European courtesy books. A courtesy book gave ambitious young courtiers instruction on etiquette and other conduct expected at court.[67] The most famous example is Baldassare Castiglione's *The book of the courtier* (1528), based on the author's experience in Renaissance Italy, but countless other examples prescribed all manner of behaviour from table manners to receiving or being a guest.[68] Fróis was born into a noble family and worked as a royal scribe before joining the Society of Jesus.[69] Therefore, he must have had a good understanding of the importance of the ethical and aesthetic codes of conduct that regulated courtly behaviour in Europe. Following his arrival in Yokoseura, Fróis applied himself to learning equivalent standards in Japan to cultivate acquaintances with high-ranking members of Japanese society. He travelled to Kyōto in 1565, where his efforts culminated in the successful courting of Oda Nobunaga, the first 'Great Unifier' of Japan, between 1568 and 1569 that resulted in authorization for Fróis to remain in the city and proselytize.[70] He had particular intimacy with Nobunaga, as his letters suggest, but also with many rulers across southern Japan, whom he refers to as 'friends'.[71]

Although Nobunaga was no handmaiden to Jesuit preaching – they had a shared enemy in the militant *bonzō* – Fróis would have been unable to access Nobunaga had he not understood and tolerated warrior masculinities, especially when it came to appearances and ritual.[72] His many letters and the *História de Japam* make his attention to detail in these matters clear.[73] In an early letter from 1565, Fróis claimed that the Japanese elite who resided in Kyōto 'and in their politeness, behaviour, and customs, like the master Father Francis [Xavier] said, they, in many things, have many advantages over the Spanish'.[74] His praise continued throughout the 1570s and possibly influenced Valignano's positive assessment of Japanese civilization in contrast to many Western customs.[75] For both men, the study and tolerance of secular tradition were vital to the mission in the same way that the study and refutation of Shinto-Buddhism were. Perhaps, for this reason, the arts and manners

[67] Michael Curtin, 'A question of manners: status and gender in etiquette and courtesy', *Journal of Modern History*, 57 (1985), pp. 396–423. See also Philip Carter, *Men and the emergence of polite society, Britain 1660–1800* (Abingdon, 2014).

[68] See Peter Burke, *The fortunes of the courtier: the European reception of Castiglione's Cortegiano* (Cambridge, 1995).

[69] Lach, *Asia in the making of Europe*, p. 683.

[70] Ibid., p. 684.

[71] See, for example, Arima Harunobu, the ruler of the Shimabara area of the Hizen province, described as 'intimo amigo nosso' (our close friend). Luís Froís to Claudio Acquaviva, 30 Aug. 1582, ARSI, JapSin, 9,1, fos. 151r–162v, esp. fo. 154v.

[72] Lach, *Asia in the making of Europe*, p. 685.

[73] See *Cartas que os padres e irmãos da Companhia de Iesus escreverão dos Reynos de Iapão & China aos da mesma Companhia da Índia, & Europa des do anno de 1549. Até o de 1580* (2 vols., Evora, 1598), I, pp. 287–94.

[74] Luís Fróis to the Brothers of India, 27 Apr. 1565, Miyako [Kyoto], *Cartas que os padres e irmãos da Companhia de Iesus escreverão dos Reynos de Iapão e China*, I, pp. 181–5, esp. p. 185.

[75] Lach, *Asia in the making of Europe*, p. 685.

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that Fróis represented were most commonly attributed to samurai: he dismissed the merchants who resided on the coast, citing members of the court who called them 'bush people'.[76] Fróis also loathed the *bonzō* and all but ignored the vast commoner population.[77] When they did appear in his letters, it was in the context of tragedy, such as natural disasters like earthquakes, or as victims of wars.[78]

The importance of understanding the martial elite for conversion and the religious elite for refutation is made clear by the content of the *Tratado*. The chapter on men focuses on martial and noble masculinity and features approximately thirty distiches describing accessories, mostly armaments, that adorned male bodies, while chapter seven is solely dedicated to weaponry. There is extensive detail on the make and use of different weapons, including the blade, hilt, and scabbard. The last, for example, was made of leather and velvet in Europe while 'those of the Japanese [are made] of wood, lacquer, and, those [belonging to] the lords [are] covered with gold and silver'.[79] Among the detailed explanations of weaponry, the reader learns that Europeans wear their cutlasses and scimitars with the convex side downward, while the inverse was true for the Japanese.[80] Although members of the Society of Jesus did not carry weapons, their actions ensured continuity of supply to the Japanese. Fróis does not offer detail on the intricacies of trade, but instead describes ceremonial weapons that carried ritualistic and masculinizing power for the bearer.

It is implicit in the detail given to the different sizes, uses, and construction of a weapon that Fróis intended to describe how to read male bodies for status. In Europe and Japan, men dressed and embellished their bodies to conform to localized masculine ideals. Men read other men's bodies, and the visual transformations that the right accessory produced distinguished those of higher rank from those of the lower classes.[81] Sumptuary law regulated the use of certain fabrics in Europe, and similar social codes restricted certain items to the upper class in Japan; for example, there is frequent mention of silk and gold.[82] Fróis used the standard Jesuit black cassock and kimono, understanding that

[76] Luís Fróis to the Brothers of India, 27 Apr. 1565, Miyako [Kyoto], *Cartas que os padres e irmãos da Companhia de Iesus escreverão dos Reynos de Iapão e China*, I, pp. 181–5, esp. p. 185.

[77] Luís Fróis to the Brothers of India, 27 Apr. 1565, Miyako [Kyoto], *Cartas que os padres e irmãos da Companhia de Iesus escreverão dos Reynos de Iapão e China*, I, pp. 181–5, esp. p. 185.

[78] See description of casualties following an earthquake: Luís Fróis to Alessandro Valignano, 7 Oct. 1586, ARSI, JapSin, 10,2, fos. 163r–172v.

[79] Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, p. 28.

[80] Ibid., p. 29.

[81] On the European beard, see Stefan Hanß, 'Face-work: making hair matter in sixteenth-century central Europe', *Gender & History*, 33 (2021), pp. 314–45.

[82] See Catherine Richardson, 'Status', in Elizabeth Currie, ed., *A cultural history of dress and fashion in the Renaissance* (London, 2017), pp. 117–34. On sumptuary law, see Catherine Kovesi, *Sumptuary law in Italy, 1200–1500* (Oxford, 2002). On silk, see Zampol D'Ortia, 'Purple silk and black cotton'. On the use of silk and gold among the upper classes, see Luís Fróis to Claudio Acquaviva, 30 Aug. 1582, ARSI, JapSin, 9,1, fos. 152r–160v, esp. fo. 152v.

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dress enabled Europeans to identify high-ranking members of Japanese society, who could assist with their mission.[83]

Fróis also offered advice to those who found themselves in the presence of the elite. The final third of the chapter on men provides translations of body language from the European context to the Japanese. For example, Fróis instructs the reader that Europeans remove their hat to show courtesy while the Japanese remove their shoes.[84] This was slightly inaccurate: Europeans may have removed their hats among equals, to which the Japanese equivalent may have been a slight bow.[85] Furthermore, the removal of shoes was related to class; those lower on the hierarchy had to remove their shoes in the presence of someone higher.[86] Other useful pieces of instruction included when to stand and when to sit in front of one's master, and the appropriate amount of groin coverage as a page.[87] To this end, Fróis demonstrates an understanding of the variety of masculinities present in elite society, and how they interacted with rank, class, and femininity.

There are two distiches where Fróis reassures his reader that behaviour considered effeminate in Europe is manly in Japan. 'In Europe', he wrote, 'it would be taken as an effeminate for a man to carry a fan and fan himself with it: in Japan, it is a sign of low status and poverty to not always carry one on one's belt and use it'.[88] Similarly: 'Among us, to see a nobleman in front of a mirror would be taken to be an effeminate act; the Japanese noblemen, to dress themselves, all ordinarily have a mirror in front of them.'[89] The juxtaposition of femininity in a chapter dedicated to men is suggestive of the degree to which values and appearances were defined using a gender binary in the European world. New arrivals to Japan may have struggled or even mocked the apparent girlishness of powerful men who preened in front of mirrors, which would have been detrimental to the mission. In 1585, the Jesuits had not yet been issued with the order to leave the country, and many in the Society considered that the mission would be a great success.[90] However, such success would be based on Valignano's drive to improve the cultural literacy of European Jesuits, especially among Kyōto court circles, and Fróis's knowledge was crucial to this enterprise.[91]

[83] Linda Zampol D'Ortia, 'The dress of evangelization: Jesuit garments, liturgical textiles, and the senses in early modern Japan', *Entangled Religions*, 10 (2020), n. 25. I thank Linda Zampol D'Ortia for the reference.

[84] Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, p. 28.

[85] See discussion at Fróis, *The First European description of Japan*, p. 44.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid., p. 30.

[88] Ibid., p. 31.

[89] Ibid., p. 32.

[90] The Jesuits were issued with an order to leave the country in 1587, but it was not until Ieyasu Tokugawa issued an edict in the early seventeenth century that effectively ended the mission (although some Christians continued to practise their faith, known as *kakure kirishitan* (hidden Christians). Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, p. 192.

[91] See Ângela Barreto Xavier and Ines G. Županov, *Catholic Orientalism: Portuguese empire, Indian knowledge (16th–18th centuries)* (Oxford and New York, NY, 2015).

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The knowledge collected and articulated by Fróis about elite men was a selective and strategic process that recorded and organized information based on its utility. The *Tratado* did not provide a systematic breakdown of Japanese class and religion; rather, it was a systematic description of the privileged classes and religions that could aid or impede the mission in Japan. Reading Fròis's letters, it is evident that he read Japanese society across gender and class-based categories: the noble and the poor, the men and the women, and, interestingly, the young and the old. As this section has shown, opening the *Tratado* with seventy-four distiches – the most of any chapter – on the subject of elite men stresses the utility that Fróis imputed to a limited and exclusive class of Japanese society. However, Fróis was not an objective observer and his commentary related to the men with whom he had spent the most time on account of their utility to the mission. These were the warrior lords of southern Japan and along the eastern seaboard who figure prominently in his letters and the *História.* The *Tratado* should not be taken to represent certain realities about Japanese masculinity(ies), but rather certain strategies that Fróis used to build and maintain relationships with a very exclusive group of men. The societies in which Fróis circulated were masculinist and based on patriarchal dynamics that supported a hierarchy that elevated a particular type of man – the warrior – to the top.[92] The Portuguese had no intention (or ability) to colonize the Japanese, and so spiritual conquest could only be achieved through knowledge, socialization, and conversion. Knowledge was not limited to verbal language; it included visual and gestural cues: appearances, conduct, and ritual similar to the European courts with which Fróis was familiar. In many ways, Fróis relied on strategies used by diplomats with little real power to create opportunities for conversation and exchange.

IV

In contrast to the section on men, the section on women begins not with appearance, but with moral conduct. 'In Europe', Fróis began, 'the supreme honour and fortune of maidens is modesty and the inviolable cloister of her purity.' By contrast, 'Japanese women pay no heed to virginal cleanliness and do not lose their honour nor their marriage for not having virginal cleanliness.'[93] Chastity was a fundamental element of an unmarried woman's honour in Western Europe, while it was valued less in Japan, where pre-marital sex was accepted as part of courting.[94] For elite Japanese women who entered arranged marriages, affairs were discouraged not because coitus was stigmatized, but because of how their divided attentions would reflect on their husbands.[95]

[92] The samurai or warrior class became one of the four social groups, warriors, peasants, artisans, and merchants, in the Tokugawa period: Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall, *Recreating Japanese men* (Berkeley, CA, 2011), p. 49.

[93] Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, p. 35. On Japanese female heterosexuality, see Haruko Wakita, *Women in medieval Japan: motherhood, household management and sexuality* (Tokyo, 2006).

[94] Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, p. 35.

[95] Fredrik Charpentier Ljungqvist, 'Female shame, male honor: the chastity code in Juan Luis Vives', *De institutione feminae christianae*', *Journal of Family History*, 37 (2012), pp. 139–54. On

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Although it is not possible to speak of a single Japanese society during this period, in general terms, regional societies were patriarchal, and women were still broadly considered unequal due to prevailing Shinto-Buddhist attitudes that labelled them imperfect and spiritually 'obstructed', a condition they could rectify by transforming into men after death.[96] This contextual information is lacking in the first distich, which says less about Japanese attitudes towards women and more about Christian norms and modes of objectifying women, especially elite women, through the social control of their bodies.[97]

The majority of the chapter, excluding the first distich, exclusively treats bodily adornment for elite women, especially hair. Disticches two through eleven describe hair colour, styling, covering, and washing.[98] The following distiches, twelve through twenty-eight, address cosmetics, jewellery, and clothing and address not only how women look and act, but also how they smell. Japanese women, for instance, wear wigs, anoint their hair with foul-smelling oil, whiten their faces, and blacken their teeth with iron and vinegar, while European women favour veils, perfumed hair, subtle makeup, and concoctions to whiten their teeth.[99] There are times where Fróis's European sensibilities emerge, like on the subjects of bare feet and a type of lower-class dress that Fróis universalizes to all Japanese women.[100] The former would be considered 'madness' in Europe while the latter, which 'are all open at the front and reach the top of the foot', apparently needed no explanation to a European audience.[101] Europeans sexualized both feet and breasts, and Fróis uses clothing (or rather, its absence) to emphasize the lack of honour among Japanese women.[102] Such a lack of honour, his colleagues suggested, meant that local women would make poor nuns.[103] Although Japanese Christians challenged this attitude in texts like *Myōtei mondō* (1605), a dialogue between a Japanese

women traded as objects, see Morgan Pitelka, *Spectacular accumulation: material culture, Tokugawa Ieyasu, and samurai sociability* (Honolulu, HI, 2016), p. 35. On marriage, see Luisa Stella de Oliveira Coutinho Silva, 'The Janus face of normativities in a global mirror: viewing 16th-century marriage practices in Japan from Christian and Japanese traditions', in Manuel Bastias Saavedra, ed., *Norms beyond empire, law-making and local normativities in Iberian Asia, 1500–1800* (Leiden, 2022), pp. 171–206.

[96] See the discussion in Fróis, *The first European description of Japan*, p. 63. See also Satoko Yamaguchi, 'Christianity and women in Japan', *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 30 (2003), pp. 315–38; and Linda Zampol D'Ortia, Lucia Dolc, and Ana Fernandes Pinto, 'Saint, sects, and (holy) sites: the Jesuit mapping of Japanese Buddhism (sixteenth century)', in Alexandra Curvelo and Angelo Cattaneo, eds., *Interactions between rivals: the Christian mission and Buddhist sects in Japan (c. 1549–c. 1647)* (Bern, 2022).

[97] On the encounter between Jesuits and Japanese women, see Sumie Iwata, 'Meeting Christian women in sixteenth-century Japan', in Akiko Okuda, Okano Haruko, and Haruko Okano, eds., *Women and religion in Japan* (Leipzig, 1998), pp. 87–102.

[98] Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, pp. 35–7.

[99] Ibid., pp. 37–9.

[100] Ibid., pp. 37–8. See also Hitomi Tonomura, Anne Walthall, and Wakita Haruko, eds., *Women and class in Japanese history* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1999); Marcia Yonemoto, *The problem of women in early modern Japan* (Oakland, CA, 2016).

[101] Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, p. 39.

[102] Song of Solomon 7:7.

[103] Nawata Ward, *Women religious leaders*, p. 41. See also Barbara Ruch, ed., *Engendering faith: women and Buddhism in premodern Japan* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2002).

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Christian woman and a *bikuni*, female Buddhist monastic, Fróis's spurious claims of female religious prostitution among *bikuni* suggests that Fróis shared the same prejudice as other Jesuits.[104]

The remainder of the chapter addresses a variety of differences in behaviour and customs. In this section, Fróis blurs class lines to identify elements of society that do not cohere with European standards of control over women. For instance, Fróis expected that Europeans would be surprised to hear that a Japanese married couple owned property independently and that wives sometimes 'loan money to the husband with interest'.[105] Usury was stigmatized in early modern Europe, and its inclusion here may have seemed scandalous to Catholic eyes.[106] Fróis goes on to further shock his reader by claiming that divorced women did not lose 'neither their honour nor [further] marriages' if repudiated (divorced) by their husbands.[107] Women often divorced their husbands, Fróis continued, more so than men.[108] This is not entirely accurate and typically applied to the lower classes.[109]

Fróis also gives the impression that Japanese women had far greater freedom of movement because they left the household without their 'parents being aware', or 'without their husbands' knowledge'.[110] However, noblewomen, whom Fróis described in the first third of the chapter, rarely left the household without a retinue of women servants.[111] For example, in a letter in which Fróis praised an elderly woman convert named Magdalena, he described how she attended church every Sunday accompanied by numerous noblewomen.[112] It seems that Fróis selectively chose some of the most scandalous elements (for European eyes) of women's lives in Japan and universalized them across different classes. This contrasts strongly with his letters, and indeed the *História*, where he frequently praised certain noblewomen (with means) for their charity and dedication to Christianity. For example, the sister-in-law of Harunobu Arima, baptized Hieronyma, paid for a golden cross for the Jesuit church.[113]

[104] Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, pp. 41–2. On nunhood in Japan, see Lori Meeks, 'Buddhist renunciation and the female life cycle: understanding nunhood in Heian and Kamakura Japan', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 70 (2010), pp. 1–59; Matthew Steven Mitchell, 'Beyond the convent walls: the local and Japan-wide activities of Daihongan's nuns in the early modern period (c. 1550–1868)' (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 2016). See also Barbara R. Ambros, *Women in Japanese religions* (New York, NY, 2015).

[105] Fukansai later apostatized and wrote *Hadaiusu* (Deus destroyed). See James Baskind and Richard Bowring, *The Myōtei dialogues: a Japanese Christian critique of native traditions* (Leiden, 2015); Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, p. 44.

[106] It was primarily associated with Jewish merchants: François Soyer, *Antisemitic conspiracy theories in the early modern Iberian world: narratives of fear and hatred* (Leiden, 2019), p. 233.

[107] Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, p. 44. See also Akiko Yoshie and Janet R. Goodwin, 'Gender in early classical Japan: marriage, leadership, and political status in village and palace', *Monumenta Nipponica*, 60 (2005), pp. 437–79.

[108] Fróis, *The first European description of Japan*, p. 73.

[109] Nawata Ward, *Women religious leaders*, p. 134.

[110] Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, p. 40.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Luís Fróis to Claudio Acquaviva, 30 Aug. 1582, ARSI, JapSin, 9,1, fos. 152r–160v, esp. fo. 153v.

[113] Luís Fróis to Claudio Acquaviva, 30 Aug. 1582, ARSI, JapSin, 9,1, fos. 152r–160v, esp. fo. 154v.

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Finally, Fróis was preoccupied with the weakness of the family unit and the inferior maternal or religious qualities of Japanese women. He returned several times to the lack of familial sentiment in Japan, which, although applied to men and women, he inserted in the section on women.[114] However, this is in contrast to several anecdotes throughout his other writings. In one letter, for instance, he described how a young mother succumbed to a strong river current when trying to escape enemy soldiers because she was carrying her son on her shoulders.[115] Similarly, Fróis described five practices associated with reproduction, including the frequency of abortion and infanticide as well as pregnancy, and childbirth.[116] According to a letter sent by Fróis to Rome, abortion was very common in Japan among poor women who were unable to afford food and shelter for a dependant, claims he repeated in his *História* that failed to recognize the high rate of infanticide in Europe for the same reasons.[117]

The essentialization and criticism of Japanese women does not align with Fróis's other writings. In his letters and the *História*, he regularly differentiates between poor women and noblewomen, from different parts of Japan, and with vastly different behaviours. In the *História*, Fróis recorded several well-connected women converts, including those related to prominent figures, like Gratia Hosokawa, daughter of the 'thirteen-day Shogun' Mitsuhide Akechi (1528–82), or the sister of Hideyoshi Toyotomi's consort, Maria, or even Hideyoshi's wife's favoured companion, Magdalen Kyakujin.[118] These women were highly literate and persuasive and taught Kirishitanban (Jesuit press) texts widely.[119] Similarly, his letters highlight other noblewomen who contributed to the mission as well as Buddhist women who understood scripture well.[120] Fróis does highlight the relative literacy of Japanese women in comparison to European women: 'among us, women that know how to write are not very common; honourable Japanese women are considered to be lower class if they do not know how to read'.[121] An earlier letter makes the same claim about the elite, and both men and women were likely reading Kirishitanban texts.[122]

Criticism aside, it seems that Fróis included detail on (mostly noble) femininities to support interaction with potential patrons like those mentioned

[114] Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, pp. 40–1.

[115] Luís Fróis to Francisco Cabral, 27 May 1573, ARSI, JapSin, 7,1, fos. 130r–136v, esp. fo. 133v.

[116] Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, p. 41.

[117] Luís Froís to Claudio Acquaviva, 30 Aug. 1582, ARSI, JapSin, 9,1, fos. 152r–160v, esp. fo. 155r. Similar claims are made in the *História*. See Ward, *Women religious leaders*, pp. 312–13.

[118] Nawata Ward, *Women religious leaders*, p. 6. See also Makoto Harris Takao, '"In what storms of blood from Christ's flock is Japan swimming?" Gratia Hosokawa and the performative representation of Japanese martyrdom in Mulier Fortis (1698)', in Yasmin Haskell and Raphaële Garrod, eds., *Changing hearts: performing Jesuit emotions between Europe, Asia, and the Americas* (Leiden, 2019), pp. 87–120. See also Kiichi Matsuda, *Toyotomi Hideyoshi to nanbanjin* (Tokyo, 1992).

[119] Nawata Ward, *Women religious leaders*, p. 31.

[120] See Luís Fróis to António de Quadros, 4 Oct. 1568, ARSI, JapSin, 6, fos. 226r–227v, esp. fo. 226v.

[121] Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, p. 42.

[122] Luís Fróis to António de Quadros, 4 Oct. 1568, ARSI, JapSin, 6, fos. 226r–227v, esp. fo. 227v. See William J. Farge, *The Japanese translations of the Jesuit Mission Press, 1590–1614: De imitatione Christi and Guia de Pecadores* (Lewiston, NY, 2003).

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above. For example, 'European noblewomen speak uncovered with those who come to speak with them; the ladies of Japan, if the persons are strangers, speak to them behind a *byobu* [folding screen] or blind.'[123] Similarly, Fróis warns that European women who use a head covering shield their faces when speaking to someone, but for Japanese women 'the veil must be removed, because to speak with it is a discourtesy'.[124] When a Japanese woman receives a guest, she remains seated in contrast to Europe where 'women receive guests by standing up'.[125] Once someone has entered, 'Japanese women [sit] on the ground, with the feet turned backwards, supporting [themselves] with one hand on the *tatami*'.[126] If sake is served, the woman would 'take the *sakazuki* of wine with the left hand and drink from it with the right'.[127] Common to all these examples is the placement of women in a position of inferiority or service, reflective of normative attitudes in Western European societies.

In so doing, Fróis appears to limit the relevance or utility of women. Rulers were overwhelmingly male, but they did have wives, sisters, and daughters, as converts or even as converters themselves. For example, Magdalena mentioned above also persuaded other women her age to convert.[128] It seems the Jesuits attempted to access these rulers through the kinswomen, albeit on a reduced scale compared to men.[129] Nawata Ward's analysis of the *História* revealed that some aspects of Christianity were appealing and even empowering to Japanese women, and there was significant uptake among certain classes, especially where women catechists were able to speak from their perspective as converted Christians or former Buddhists.[130] Such observations are also present in Fróis's letters to Rome. For example, in 1582, Fróis describes how the elderly Magdalena, previously loyal to Amida, was, after conversion, relentless in her pursuit of further converts.[131] Jesuits also oversaw their ministries and became confessors at the sixteenth-century's sole convent-like women's society.[132]

However, in the *Tratado*, Fróis rarely mentioned women outside of their dedicated chapter. Only three further distiches outside of chapter two referred to women. The first appears in the chapter on children; young girls carried infants on their backs, like the young mother who tried to cross the river, and the remaining two in the miscellaneous chapter; one distich that concerned methods of turnip washing and the high rate of abduction for young Japanese women who sought refuge in the house of any lord.[133] These three

[123] Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, p. 44.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid., p. 45.
[127] A *sakazuki* is a small glass used for sake or rice wine. Fróis, *Tratado das contradições*, p. 44.
[128] Luís Fróis to Claudio Acquaviva, 30 Aug. 1582, ARSI, JapSin, 9,1, fos. 152r–160v, esp. fo. 153v.
[129] Nawata Ward, *Women religious leaders*, pp. 1–35.
[130] Ibid., p. 15.
[131] Luís Fróis to Claudio Acquaviva, 30 Aug. 1582, ARSI, JapSin, 9,1, fos. 152r–160v, esp. fo. 153v.
[132] Nawata Ward, *Women religious leaders*, p. 79.
[133] Haruko Wakita and Suzanne Gay, 'Marriage and property in premodern Japan from the perspective of women's history', *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 10 (1984), pp. 73–99, esp. p. 92.

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distiches contrast to the ninety distiches that addressed men of different classes and occupations spread out over many different chapters, including children, *bonzō*, physicians, ships and seafaring, and the arts. This makes sense in light of Fróis's repeated calls for further language and instruction of new arrivals and the number of pages he dedicates in his letters reporting on various movements of the key political players.[134] Thus, women were either not visible or were considered irrelevant to Fróis for the *Tratado*. Their visibility became noteworthy only where they were wealthy or connected enough to support the mission, or their actions ran counter to scriptural prescriptions on their conduct.

The Society of Jesus defined itself through the exclusion of women, but it frequently relied on women for economic support.[135] As Susan Broomhall has argued, 'women engaged with the Jesuits, or did not, as it suited them personally, politically, and spiritually, in highly individual ways', and this pattern was repeated in Japan, and, indeed, in other missions in Asia and the Americas.[136] Such moments, however, were transitory and did not disrupt the patriarchal dynamics that shaped Jesuit ethnography and narratives. Some women rejected Buddhism in favour of Christianity, while others did not.[137] Yet, the *Tratado* rarely accounts for female agency and instead positions women as objects to admire or use. As Broomhall has argued elsewhere: 'Gender mattered to how women were perceived in early modern culture; their identities were relational – as daughters, wives, mothers and so on – and never understood separately from men.'[138] Fróis's categorization of women as mothers, nuns, or prostitutes offers insight into how Jesuit cultural interpreters like Fróis categorized women based on their utility to the mission: wealthy and literate aesthetes on the one hand and unchaste and uncouth bodies on the other.

V

This article has suggested that our understanding of the European encounter with Japan is improved by analysing the role gender played in cultural translation. Reading the *Tratado* with gender in mind helps us revise the encounter by identifying the importance of performative masculinities to securing important political relationships. The first chapter of the *Tratado* identifies and instructs readers on homosocial relations and normative masculinities in Europe and Japan and how patriarchal values served as a cross-cultural idiom. Conversely, the second chapter focuses on the subordinate role of femininities in the construction of religious and political masculinities. The sum of both chapters is a guide to visual and behavioural cues in elite Japanese society

[134] Luís Fróis to Claudio Acquaviva, 25 Oct. 1585, ARSI, JapSin, 10,1, fos. 51r–54v, esp. fo. 54r.
[135] Strasser, *Missionary men on the move*, p. 26.
[136] Susan Broomhall, 'Devoted politics: Jesuits and elite Catholic women at the later sixteenth-century Valois court', *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, 2 (2015), pp. 586–605, esp. p. 605.
[137] Nawata Ward, *Women religious leaders*, pp. 111–91.
[138] Susan Broomhall, *The identities of Catherine de' Medici* (Leiden, 2021), p. 1.

to prepare the European missionary to interact respectfully with Japanese people.

Recent scholarship has affirmed that Europeans had little leverage in foreign relations with Asian states and so were forced to rely on 'negotiation, petition and appeal to carve out what was at best a limited space for their operations'.[139] Embodied masculinities were fundamental elements of these performances because they often communicated power through appearance and gestures. Valignano believed that Europeans who interacted with the upper echelons of Japanese society needed to be familiar with what visual and gestural cues meant to be able to proceed effectively with conversion. Fróis was one of the most successful mediators, and looking at his writings, particularly those that appear to be practical and pedagogical, gives us insight into the mind of one of the few Jesuits who successfully navigated *Sengoku* Japan. He used analogous gender norms to self-regulate in contexts where he acted as a cultural mediator by translating local bodies and behaviours into their European equivalents.

However, Fróis was a complex figure whose writings were inflected by his background, upbringing, and idiosyncrasies. While many scholars have compared his work, especially the *Tratado*, to that of modern empirical cultural anthropology due to its putative realism, a closer look suggests this is an imperfect comparison. Although he found much to praise in Japanese society, his respect was directed towards elite men, and he ignored, limited, or disparaged other men and women. However, the exclusivity of his writing does not devalue his vast oeuvre. His letters and chronicles remain vital to our understanding of how Jesuits operating under the Portuguese *Padroado* managed to eke out a marginal space in Japanese society before 1600. Future research in the form of a comparative study of writings in the Jesuit encounter with Japan will be useful to determine how Fróis's frameworks operated in practice, especially concerning relationship-building in Japan during a time of vast change and conflict.

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[139] Clulow, *The company and the shogun*, p. 6.

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