

Luís Fróis's História de Japam: Rhetorical additions and the silencing of facts

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Abstract: This paper considers Portuguese Jesuit Luís Fróis (1532-1597) and his magnum opus the 5 volumes *História de Japam*, the first of the histories of the Jesuit mission in the archipelago by authors who took part in the evangelization of this country. Through close reading of this text and comparing it to fellow missionaries' letters as well as Fróis own previous letters, the *História* is analysed. Following the advice of the pioneer of the mission, Francis Xavier (1506-52), anything unedifying was omitted from the missives and the missionaries' letters from Japan continued to focus on the success of the mission, avoiding to mention the negative issues. In doing so the image of the mission was glossy which led to mission leaders such as Visitor Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606) and Superior of Japan, Francisco Cabral (c.1533-1609), to complain that the Jesuit's letters contain errors and gave misleading information. I contend that Fróis not only attempted to rectify previous 'errors' made by earlier Jesuit epistolary accounts, and argue that his real intentions go beyond attempting to diminish over-enthusiastic reports and presenting a more accurate and complete picture of the Japanese mission. Fróis wrote with a clear agenda, sometimes deliberately altering information, and creating a narrative that suggested a more coherent and sequent enterprise than existed in reality.

Keywords: Luís Fróis, Jesuits, Japan, História de Japam, rhetoric, missionary, intertextuality.

Resumen: Este artículo analiza el jesuita portugués Luís Fróis (1532-1597) y su obra maestra de cinco volúmenes História de Japam, la primera de las historias de la misión jesuita en el archipiélago escrita por autores que participaron en la evangelización de este país. A través de una lectura atenta de este texto y comparándolo con las cartas de otros misioneros, así como con las cartas anteriores del propio Fróis, se analiza la História. Siguiendo el consejo del pionero de la misión, Francisco Javier (1506-52), se omitió en las misivas todo lo poco edificante y las cartas de los misioneros desde Japón continuaron centrándose en el éxito de la misión, evitando mencionar los aspectos negativos. Al hacerlo, la imagen de la misión era superlativamente positiva, lo que llevó a líderes de la misión como el Visitador Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606) y el Superior de Japón, Francisco Cabral (c.1533-1609), a quejarse de que las cartas de los jesuitas contenían errores y daban falsa información. Sostengo que Fróis no sólo intentó rectificar “errores” previos, cometidos en anteriores relatos epistolares jesuitas, y sostengo que sus verdaderas intenciones van más allá de intentar disminuir los informes demasiado entusiastas y presentar una imagen más precisa y completa de la misión japonesa. Fróis escribió con una agenda clara, a veces alterando información deliberadamente y creando una narrativa que sugería una empresa más coherente y secuencial de la que existía en la realidad.

Palabras clave: Luís Fróis, Jesuítas, Japón, História de Japam, retórica, misionero, intertextualidad.

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The Portuguese Jesuit Luís Fróis (1532-97), one of the longer serving missionaries of the second half of the sixteenth century of the Japanese mission (1563-97), was the author of the *História de Japam*.¹ The first of the histories of the Jesuit mission in the archipelago by authors who took part in the Christian evangelisation of this region.² In his *História*, started around 1584, Fróis

¹ Fróis was absent from Japan between October 1592, when he accompanied the Visitor Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606) to Macau, where he worked as his secretary, and his return in July 1595. He died two years later in Nagasaki 8 July 1597. On Fróis's biography see Luís Fróis, *História de Japam*, 5 vols., ed. by Josef Wicki, S.J. (Lisbon: Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, 1976-1984), I, Intro. pp. 3*-10*, henceforth referred to as *História*. A brief description of his life is provided in Luís Fróis, *The First European Description of Japan, 1585*, pp. 6-12. Hubert Cieslik S.J., 'Father Louis Frois: Historian of the Mission', pp. 1-11. Josef Franz Schutte S.J. *Kulturegegensätze Europa-Japan (1585)* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1955), pp. 10-19; Luís Fróis, *Kan'kyaku Fróis Nihon-Shi*, trans. Kiichi Matsuda and Momota Kawasaki (Tokyo: Chuo Koron Shinsha, 2000). On different aspects of Fróis's life, especially his time in Macau see Baptista, 'Luís Fróis in Macau', pp. 40-59.

² On authorship see Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, pp. 101-20; Irwin, *The Death and Resurrection of the Author*; Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*; White, 'The Death of the Author', pp. 111-22. The other two histories are Alessandro Valignano's (1539-1606) *Princi-*

stated that errors and misinterpretations disseminated by the *cartas* to European readers had created an impression of Japan which diverged significantly from reality.³ Perhaps persuaded by the Visitor Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606), who soon after his arrival in Kuchinotsu, 1579, complained to the Jesuit headquarters in Rome that the difference between the Jesuit letters and reports and the reality was so misleading: “is like the difference between black and white.”⁴

The Jesuit correspondence had much missing, as requested by Francis Xavier (1506-52) who asked that anything unedifying should be omitted, and the missionaries’ letters from Japan continued to focus on the success of the mission, avoiding to mention the negative issues. In 1571, the Superior of Japan, Francisco Cabral (c.1533-1609, Superior 1570-1581) “complained that the stress on edification had meant the suppression of real information about the situation in Japan.”⁵

pio y Progreso de la Religión Christiana en Japón and João Rodriguez Tçuzu’s (c.1562–1634) *Historia da Igreja do Japão*.

³ In the prologue of the *História* Fróis listed ten famous misrepresentations of Japan, see Fróis, *História*, I, prolog., pp. 5-9.

⁴ See J. F. Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits: Alessandro Valignano in sixteenth-century Japan* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 35.

⁵ See Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, p. 35. On Cabral see Linda

In the prologue of Fróis's manuscript he stated that he aimed to revise and correct the sources at his disposal, aware that many of the letters in circulation had been written in a hasty manner and were lacking accurate information.⁶ It is noteworthy to point that Fróis does in fact correct errors or fill in the gaps of previous Jesuits' letters, sometimes making the

Zampol D'Ortia, 'Purple Silk and Black Cotton: Francisco Cabral and the Negotiation of Jesuit Attire in Japan (1570–73)', in *Exploring Jesuit Distinctiveness: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Ways of Proceeding within the Society of Jesus*, ed. by Robert Aleksander Maryks (Boston: Brill, 2016), pp. 137-55. Pedro Lage Reis Correia, 'Francisco Cabral and Lourenço mexia in Macao (1582-1584): Two Different Perspectives of Evangelisation in Japan', in *Bulletin of Portuguese – Japanese Studies*, 15 [online] 2007 (December) [consulted 10 November 2017], pp. 51-64. Available <<http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=36112010004>>.

⁶ "En esta sere breve por estar la nao de partida, dire lo que me acordare, y por el orden que se me ofreciere, que aunque vaya desatado, al fin es para mis hermanos" see Baltasar Gago to the Jesuits in India and Portugal (Hirado, 3 September 1555), see *Cartas que los Padres y Hermanos de la Compañía de Iesus, que andan en los Reynos de Iapon escribieron a los de la misma Compañía, desde el ano de mil y quinientos y quarenta y nueve, hasta el de mil quinientos y setenta y uno*. Alcalá de Henares: House of Juan Iniguez de Lequerica, 1575, p. 70, henceforth referred to as Alcalá *Cartas*,

changes silently. But by pursuing a close reading of his sources, I contend that Fróis's not only attempt to rectify previous 'errors' made by earlier Jesuit epistolary accounts, and argue that his real intentions go beyond attempting to diminish over-enthusiastic reports and presenting a more accurate and complete picture of the Japanese mission. Fróis wrote with a clear agenda, sometimes deliberately altering information, and creating a narrative that suggested a more coherent and sequent enterprise than existed in reality.⁷

Fróis's *História* appeared in a complete publication of its extant parts, that is what the author considered part two (1549-77) and part three (1578-93), in Portuguese and it accounts for five volumes between 1976-84, edited by Jesuit historian Josef Wicki. The *História* was Fróis' *magnum opus*, in the current full printed version it chronicles from 1549-93.⁸ It was Wicki,

⁷ On how Fróis made changes in his *História* see N. Frances Hio-ki. "El Encuentro Entre Cristianos y No Cristianos Como Recurso Para Una Teología Comparativa: Un Estudio de Caso En El Japón Del Siglo XVI." *Horizontes Decoloniales / Decolonial Horizons* 3 (2017): 61-90 [71-77].

⁸ Josef Wicki published Fróis's *História de Japam* between 1976 and 1984. It must be noted that the first part of the original manuscript remains missing and the work will be considerably larger.

who was also the editor of the *Documenta Indica* and therefore very acquainted with the Jesuit letters which Fróis used as sources for his manuscript, who pointed that when Fróis lacked material he added events, sometimes not very strictly chronologically, as well as ‘making use of narratives not always free from rhetoric.’⁹ An analysis of his *História* reveals that, in fact, rhetoric is constantly utilised, often in a very subtle manner, and every step is imbued with ideology, strategy, and tactics.¹⁰ It is therefore crucial in order to better understand this chronicle that this be taken into consideration. Although many scholars have used Fróis’s *História* as a source, the latter’s aims and methods have not yet been fully analysed or completely understood. In particular, I focus on a few significant themes that enable us to visualise a general picture of the Japanese mission and the manner in which he was attempting to portray it.

⁹ ‘Lançando mão de discursos nem sempre isentos de retórica’ see Fróis, *História*, I, p. 26*.

¹⁰ On the humanistic education that the Jesuits received in the St Paul College in Goa, which included the study of rhetoric based on the books by Cicero, Virgil, Aristotle and Quintilian, see Fróis to the Jesuits in Coimbra (Goa, 30 November 1557) in *Documenta Indica*, III, pp. 704-6.

According to Gérard Genette, the paratext is a threshold, or (as annotated by Lejeune) a fringe, ‘comprising those liminal devices and conventions, both within the book (peritext) and outside it (epitext) that mediates the book to the reader.’¹¹ This area includes titles and subtitles, forewords, epigraphs, prefaces (prologues), notes, epilogues and afterwords, constituting in total a zone between text and off-text, a place of dialogue with, and influence on, the public, a zone which requires careful analysis.¹² One of the key intentions of the *História de Japam*, as explicitly expressed by its author in the prologues or ‘paratexts’ of this work, was to attempt to correct some of the ‘errors’ that arose from the Jesuit epistolary correspondence in the past¹³:

Huma das couzas, que me occorreo ser nesta Historia muito necessaria, foi, quanto fosse possivel, tirar algumas

¹¹ Gérard Genette, *Paratext: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. xviii (originally published as *Seuils*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987), p. xviii. See also Lejeune, *Le Pacte Autobiographique*, p. 45; Kristeva, ‘Word, Dialogue, and Novel’, pp. 34-61.

¹² Genette, *Paratext: Thresholds of Interpretation*, p. 2.

¹³ See the first prologue in *História*, I, pp.1-9, and the second prologue in III, pp. 1-2.

ambiguidades e equívocos, que - por respeito das particulares que de cá se tem escritas pelo discurso dos annos em as cartas dos nossos - fazem em Europa formar diverso conceito do que na realidade as cousas são em sy cá em Japão.¹⁴

Pausing on this *threshold*, Fróis draws attention to the ‘Japanese reality’ in general and not just to the Japanese mission, evidently believing that it was not just the mission that had been misunderstood. This is very important as he is stating that he set out to deal with issues beyond *historia sacra* in his text. Helmut Feldmann affirmed that the title of Fróis’s text shows that his attention is mainly orientated towards the ‘história profana do Japão.’¹⁵ While the title is very generic, he clearly considered that due to the complex Japanese reality it was necessary to incorporate both narratives, profane and sacred, to aid the reader. This also refers to the debate of *res et verba*, that words should represent things, or that things should be expressible in words.¹⁶ *Res* represents the sense of a passage and *verba* the

¹⁴ *História*, I, Prol., p. 5.

¹⁵ See Feldmann, ‘As disputas de São Francisco Xavier’, p. 284.

¹⁶ Howell, ‘Res Et Verba: Words and Things’, pp. 131–142. See also Lampe, ‘Theology and Rhetoric’, pp. 90-112,

exact words and syntax.¹⁷ I believe that while Fróis's manuscript is very much *historia sacra*, he felt he should extend his work to give a fuller picture of the Japanese reality by incorporating the socio-political landscape. Fróis is conscious of the difficulty of matching the words to the things, especially when writing about new things for which there are not yet precise words. This is a *locus classicus* of the Jesuit enterprise: in an attempt to understand remote civilisations, the Jesuits bring new words, concepts, and objects to Europe.

In the prologue, Fróis tells how he was pondering – *ponderando* – as to how he could best narrate the history of the conversion of Japan.¹⁸ Here he is alluding to the first of the five tenets of rhetoric: *inventio*.¹⁹ According to Cicero, invention ‘is the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one’s cause plausible.’²⁰ This is the process of prewriting, draf-

¹⁷ Kretschmer, “The ‘Res/Verba’ Dichotomy and ‘Copia’ in Renaissance Translation”, pp. 24–29.

¹⁸ *História*, I, prol., p. 1.

¹⁹ The other four are arrangement, style, memory, and delivery.

²⁰ Cicero, *De Inventione*, p. 19. In the *Ad Herennium* Cicero noted ‘Invention is the devising of matter, true or plausible, that would make the case convincing’ see Cicero, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, p. 7.

ting ideas.²¹ After careful consideration, Fróis wrote, two matters occurred to him, ‘que a [his history] podião mais ilustrar e dar-lhe maior decoro.’²² Fróis wished to state that he was using a central rhetorical principal, *decorum*, the use of a style appropriate to the subject, thus demonstrating how carefully thought through and planned the writing of the *História* had been. Since the conversion of Japan was viewed as a major achievement by the Society of Jesus, Fróis was demonstrating that he was treating this theme appropriately by using a dignified and noble style, thus associating himself with classical histories. From 1552 to the end of the century, the Jesuit letters about Japan in the published collections would cover more space than those regarding any other country in Asia.²³

And the second factor he identifies is all the written sources available to him:

O segundo, que o que faltasse para sua perfeição e sahir a historia melhor limada já que nam hé possivel poderem ocorrer por ordem o sucesso das couzas assim como passarão em trin-

²¹ Quintilian, *On the Teaching of Speaking and Writing*, p. 8.

²² *História*, I, prol., p. 1.

²³ Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, Book 2, p. 674.

ta e oito annos se podia suprir, e ajudar-nos do livro que anda impresso das cartas annuas, que, segundo a ordem e discurso do tempo, se forão de cá sempre inuia[n]do.²⁴

In an attempt to claim gravity and authority, Fróis alludes to the slow and laborious process of polishing his work, ‘a historia melhor *limada*’, using a word familiar from Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, ‘poetarum limae labor et mora’ (the time-consuming labor of the file, *Ars* 290-1).²⁵ By referring to this, he was alluding to the careful revision of one of his main sources for the years 1549-71, the famous compilation of letters, the Alcalá *Cartas* printed in 1575. These 89 letters from Asia published by the Jesuits - with 14 written by Fróis himself - relate their achievements and aim to inspire would-be missionaries. Fróis was particularly interested in gathering information regarding the early years of the mission, and places great importance upon this process of collection. In spite of the initial challenges, the mission had undergone dramatic changes over the previous 38 years, expanding from its origins of only three members with very little knowledge of the country to a sizeable community of priests leading many churches, schools, and seminaries which numbered over a hundred

²⁴ *História*, I, prol., p. 2.

²⁵ See Oliensis, *Horace and the Rhetoric of Authority*, p. 209.

thousand converts, including members of the upper levels of Japanese society.²⁶

From the start of the twentieth century scholars had begun to recognise Fróis as a significant writer of the mission and his accounts were constantly consulted.²⁷ Historians have poured praise on the quality of Fróis' work. Hubert Cieslik, S.J., proposed that Fróis deserves a place 'among the world's Men of Letters.'²⁸ Josef Wicki S.J. called the *História* the 'most complete and authoritative [history] of the Japanese mission.'²⁹ And Donald F. Lach argued that the Jesuit letters from Japan were of superior quality to those from other areas

²⁶ There were approximately 150,000 converts by 1585, see Üçerler, 'The Jesuit enterprise', p. 164. Moran wrote that in 1584 - when Fróis began his text - there were about 85 missionaries, including 29 Japanese Jesuits, see Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, p. 2.

²⁷ One of the first to use Fróis's correspondence as primary source was the Scottish scholar James Murdoch in his work, see Murdoch, *A History of Japan*. In this work he spelled the author as Froez.

²⁸ Cieslik, *Father Louis Frois*, p. 10.

²⁹ See *História*, I, Intro., p. 14.

in Asia mainly because most of them were written by Fróis.³⁰

Fróis spent more than 30 years in Japan and was often an eyewitness as well as a protagonist of the events about which he wrote in his extensive letters and in the *História*. Perhaps it is mainly this fact that has greatly predisposed most scholars to assume that his detailed accounts are the most knowledgeable and trustworthy, especially when sometimes he is the only known source, and his main work, as a whole, has remained without much scrutiny or analysis. The Spanish Japanologist José Luis Álvarez-Taladriz, well known for editing Alessandro Valignano's works, used Fróis's writings extensively in his research because he considered Fróis 'un testigo presencial tan fidedigno.'³¹ The eminent historian Josef Franz Schütte, S.J., appears to have taken at face value some of his accounts, as for example he thought Fróis to be the most reliable source of the first meeting between Nobunaga and Valignano 'as he [Fróis]

³⁰ Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. I, Book 2, p. 321.

³¹ Valignano, *Sumario de las cosas de Japón*, p. 51*. Three distinguished Spanish missiologists, Juan Ruiz de Medina, S.J. (1927-2000), Jesús Lopez Gay, S.J. (1941-2017), and Diego Pacheco, S.J. (Yūki Ryōgo, 1922-2008), also used Fróis's *História* in their respective works.

took part in this audience.³² Wicki considered Fróis's account of Hideyoshi's expulsion edict of 'exceptional value' because he was present with the vice-provincial Gaspar Coelho (1530-90).³³ George A. Sioris goes as far as to suggest that every historian of the Japanese mission draws extensively from Fróis and 'everyone seems to accept him as a most reliable source.'³⁴

However, some scholars had cast doubt in accepting Fróis on specific events where he is the only one extant source. The issue of Nobunaga's self-deification has divided historians, with some including Asao Naohiro and Herman Ooms putting forward the reliability of Fróis's account, while others such as W.J. Boot doubt the veracity of Fróis's account especially given the lack of any Japanese document that could co-

³² Schütte, *Valignano's Mission Principles*, p. 119n. Schütte is full of praise for Fróis, regarding the uncomfortable situation in which the Italian Jesuit Organtino Gnecci Soldo (1533-1609) found himself between Oda Nobunaga (1534-82), and Araki Murashige (1535-86), Schütte wrote: 'Fróis described those dramatic days in masterly fashion', p. 114.

³³ *História*, IV, ch. 53, p. 406.

³⁴ Sioris, 'Chronicler and Interpreter of Japan', p. 13.

roborate it.³⁵ Jeroen P. Lamers concluded that Nobunaga's self-deification does not seem plausible and that Fróis's account is for the purpose of fitting the hegemon's death into a European context.³⁶ Boot and Lamers find the Jesuit's source wanting, especially given the lack of any known Japanese sources on this subject.

More relevant to this study are the reasons for the changes which Fróis makes, some of which may have been used by the author to tie up loose ends. What follows aims to show that even a small addition to the previous narrative or what may appear to be an inconsequential insertion in fact gives a greater impression of the organisation of the mission. A comparative and close analysis between the published letters and the *História* sheds light on his intentions.

The historiography of the Jesuit mission to Japan had generally agreed that Father Cosme de Torres (c.1510-70), one of the three pioneers of the Japanese mission, was left as superior on 22 November 1551, when Francis Xavier (1506-52) departed. Josef Wicki stated that Xavier left Torres 'ficando no

³⁵ Boot, 'The Death of a Shogun' p. 146.

³⁶ Lamers, *Japonius Tyrannus*, p. 223.

Japão em 1551 por superior da missão até sua morte, 1570.³⁷

According to Donald F. Lach, in 1551, Xavier ‘appointed him [Torres] to be superior of the Japan mission.’³⁸ Dauril Alden also considered Torres as superior from 1551 to 1570.³⁹ The same is repeated by Juan Ruiz de Medina who stated Xavier left ‘after making Cosme de Torres new superior of the incipient mission.’⁴⁰ But was Torres superior of the mission from 1551? Or was this a deliberate addition by Fróis, at a later date? To answer this question, one needs to look more closely at the letters of the time, and to anticipate my conclusion I argue that Fróis added the title retrospectively, from 1551 in his *História*, with rhetorical intentions.

One important issue that must first be taken into consideration, which is the overall state of the India Province during those years. After his return from Japan to Goa, Xavier left for China in 1552, instructing Gaspar Barzeus (1515-53), to become the vice-provincial of Goa. In case of Barzeus’ death,

³⁷ *História*, I, ch. 1, p. 20.

³⁸ See Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, Book 1, p. 282 (n. 196).

³⁹ Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise*, p. 61.

⁴⁰ See Medina, ‘The Role of Children’, p. 34.

Xavier provisioned for him to be succeeded by Manoel de Moraes (c. 1511-1553) and Melchior Nunes Barreto (c.1520-71), in that order.⁴¹ Unexpectedly, Xavier died on 3 December 1552. Moraes died between June and July 1553, and Barzeus died a few months later in October.⁴² Thus within a period of eleven months the most senior members of the Society in India were all dead. Finally, Nunes Barreto assumed the vice-provincial position in January 1554. However, three months later Nunes Barreto was hurriedly leaving his post and bound for Japan.⁴³ Ayres Brandão described this: “En este tiempo, sabiendo el padre maestro Melchior, del mucho fructo que en Iapon se ha-

⁴¹ See Manoel de Moraes to the Jesuits in Coimbra (Colombo, 28 November 1552) in *Documenta Indica*, III, p. 428. Nicolo Lancilotto to Loyola (Ceylon, 12 January 1555) in *Documenta Indica*, III, p. 218. Belchior is also called Melchior or Melchor in some texts.

⁴² See Xavier to (Goa, 6 April 1552) in *Cartas y Escritos de San Francisco Javier*, pp. 433-4, henceforth referred to as *X. Cartas*. It is not certain when Moraes died and could have happened on April 1553.

⁴³ See Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinação*, p. 292r. On the criticism he received from fellow Jesuits for his rash actions see Melchior Carneiro to General Lainez (Goa, 20 November 1559) in *Documenta Indica*, IV, p. 417.

zia, determino de poner otro padre en su lugar.”⁴⁴ En route to Japan, in a letter addressed to his fellow Jesuits in Portugal, Nunes Barreto ironically declared: “O quanta obediencia nos es necessaria, a los que a estas partes vamos.”⁴⁵

In 1555, Nicolo Lancilotto wrote to Loyola referring to the previous year’s and lamenting the death of Xavier, Moraes and Barzeus whom, he called, were:

Collunas da Companhia nestas partes [...] De novo comesamos a estar sem cabeça, polla qual cousa hé necessario V. R. prover de laa de Padres ydonios pera reger esta derramada e espalhada Companhia que V.R. tem na India.⁴⁶

An unexpected situation turned worst by the appointment

⁴⁴ Aires Brandão to the Jesuits (Goa, 23 December 1554), Alcalá *Cartas*, p. 60v.

⁴⁵ Nunes Barreto to the Jesuits in Portugal (Malacca, 3 December 1554), Alcalá *Cartas*, p. 63r.

⁴⁶ Lancilotto also lamented the death of father Urban Fernandes during his trip from Portugal to India, see Nicolo Lancilotto to Loyola (Ceylon, 12 January 1555) in *Documenta Indica*, III, p. 218.

of Nunes Barreto as vice-provincial, who had his detractors. Lancilotto complained about the new vice-provincial sudden decision to leave for Japan in April 1554:

Pareceo bem a o Padre Mestre Melchior yr en pesoa a Japão, e deixar en seu lugar huum Padre que viera aquelle mesmo ano de Portugal [...] e a usa partida foy tão repentina [...] que não deu a ningem conta della senão aos que estavam en casa.⁴⁷

Therefore, when Fróis wrote about this period, he was writing about difficult years of the mission in Asia, and he was very aware of the facts, since he had lived in Goa during those years and departed with Nunes Barreto towards Japan in 1554.⁴⁸

Cosme de Torres, a native from Valencia, Spain, left for Mexico as a priest in 1538.⁴⁹ In 1542 he travelled to the Phi-

⁴⁷ Nicolo Lancilotto to Loyola (Ceylon, 12 January 1555) in *Documenta Indica*, III, p. 220.

⁴⁸ Fróis was left in Malacca in 1555 and did not reach Japanese shores until 1563.

⁴⁹ On Torres's biography see Pacheco, *El Hombre que Forjó a Nagasaki*.

lippines and the Maluku islands. In Ambon he would meet Xavier in 1546. He continued to Goa where he joined the Society of Jesus in March 1548.⁵⁰ Only a year later he would be accompanying Xavier to begin the Japanese mission. In 1551, when Xavier departed from Japan, he left only the Spaniards Torres and Juan Fernandes (c.1526-67).⁵¹ Torres was a Jesuit priest (*padre*) and Fernandes a brother (*hermano*) so there was no need to specify who was in charge, as hierarchically Torres was the highest ranking of the two only Jesuits left in Japan, and Fernandes owed obedience to Torres. Historian Diego Pacheco S.J. asserted that Torres was left in charge of the mission by Xavier: 'Torres quedará en Yamaguchi al frente de la misión Japonesa', and Michael Cooper echoed Pacheco statement.⁵²

In 1551, Xavier wrote: 'En [Yamaguchi] queda Cosme de To-

⁵⁰ Pacheco, *El Hombre que Forjó a Nagasaki*, p. 21. Cooper, *Rodrigues the Interpreter*, pp. 9-13.

⁵¹ Juan Fernandes de Oviedo was born in Cordova. He was a pioneer of the Japanese mission together with Francis Xavier and Cosme de Torres. He was the first missionary to learn the Japanese language and he often acted as interpreter. He died in Hirado 26 June 1567.

⁵² See Pacheco, *El Hombre que Forjó a Nagasaki*, p. 15. Cooper, *Rodrigues the Interpreter*, p. 45.

rres y Juan Fernández.⁵³ In April 1552, Xavier decided to send brothers Pedro de Alcáçova (1523-79) and Duarte da Silva (1527-64): ‘Al Japón van [...] a estar en la ciudad de Amanguche (Yamaguchi), con el padre Cosme de Torres.’⁵⁴ The very next day, in a letter to King John III of Portugal, Xavier mentions that the above brothers were going to Yamaguchi ‘donde hay una casa de la Compañía, y un padre y un hermano.’⁵⁵ In 1554, Ayres Brandão wrote “De la carta del padre Cosme de Torres, tendran noticia de lo mucho que el Señor obra en aquella tierra [Japan].”⁵⁶ So far, the title ‘superior’ does not appear in Xavier’s letters. And Torres is only mentioned as a *padre*.

Xavier had intended to bring Father Balthasar Gago (c.1520-83), to China, but he changed his mind and decided to send Gago to accompany the brothers Alcáçova and da Silva: ‘a Amangu-

⁵³ See Xavier to Francisco Perez (Singapore, 24 December 1551) in *X. Cartas.*, p. 383.

⁵⁴ Xavier to Simon Rodriguez (Goa, 7 April 1552) in *X. Cartas*, p. 435.

⁵⁵ Torres and Fernandes, see Xavier to John III (Goa, 8 April 1552) in *X. Cartas*, p. 443.

⁵⁶ Aires Brandão to the Jesuits (Goa, 23 December 1554), *Alcalá Cartas*, p. 60v.

che, donde están el padre Cosme de Torres y Juan Fernández.⁵⁷ Again, Xavier only says ‘el padre’ with no mention of superior. In fact, I have found no mention of the appointment or even a suggestion that Torres was the mission superior since 1551, in Xavier’s extant letters, neither in Torres nor Fernandes’s letters at the time. In 1555, when Nicolo Lancilotto wrote to the General, naming the Jesuits in Asia and their locations, he simply noted: ‘No Japão está o padre Cosme de Torres, o padre Baltasar Gago e o irmão João Fernandes e Duarte da Silva’⁵⁸ There is certainly, epistolary evidence of Xavier naming other superiors in Asia, such as when he gathered the Jesuits from the Pescaria and Travancor and confirmed Antonio Criminali (1520-49) ‘que es superior de esta Costa.’⁵⁹ Likewise, in a letter

⁵⁷ Xavier to Gaspar Barzeus (Singapore, 21 July 1552) in *X. Cartas*, p. 499. Fróis to the Jesuits in Coimbra (Goa, 1 December 1552) in *Documenta Indica*, II, 455. Gago and the brothers left Malacca 6 June 1552.

⁵⁸ See Lancilotto to Loyola (Kollam, 12 January 1555) in Catz, *Cartas de Fernão Mendes*, p. 58.

⁵⁸ *História*, I, ch. 15, p. 94.

⁵⁹ Xavier’s letter (Manapat, February 1548) in *X. Cartas*, p. 246. The Italian Jesuit Antonio Criminali was born in Sissa, and was appointed mission superior of the fishery coast at the young age of

he appointed Nunes Barreto (1520-71) as Rector of the school of Bassein (Vasai), Xavier wrote 'Digo yo, Francisco, que confiando en la virtud y prudencia vuestra, Melchor Núñez, tengo por bien, y os mando en virtud de obediencia, que tengáis cargo de esta casa de Bazáin'.⁶⁰

In April 1552, Xavier appointed Gaspar Barzeus (1515-53) as Rector of the San Paul college of Goa.⁶¹ Henrique Henriques (1520-1600) acknowledged that he was put in charge of Cape Comorin: 'me mandam estar lá e que tenha cargo.'⁶² Later in 1570, Francisco Cabral was sent to Japan explicitly as superior by the Provincial of India, to replace the aging Torres, who by then it was widely acknowledge as the superior of the Japanese mission.

According to Alcáçova, in 1552 in Malacca, en route to Japan, Gago was designated as their superior by Xavier. But when Fróis

twenty six years old, he is the first martyr of the Society of Jesus.

⁶⁰ See Xavier to Nunes Barreto (Goa, 29 February 1552) in *X. Cartas*, p. 420. Rector is a clergyman presiding over an ecclesiastical institution.

⁶¹ Xavier to Gaspar Barzeus (Goa, 6 April 1552) in *X. Cartas*, pp. 429-33.

⁶² See Henrique Henriques to Loyola (Cochin, 27 January 1552) in *Documenta Indica*, II, p. 300.

copied Alcáçova's letter in his *História* (1584-94), he removes this sentence:

Alcáçova's letter	<i>História</i>
<p>Llegando a Malaca [Xavier] determino de enviar con nosotros al padre Baltazar Gago <i>por nuestro superior</i>.⁶³</p>	<p>Partio o Padre [Gago], com estes dous Irmãos, em companhia do o P.e Mestre Francisco, de Goa, a 17 de Abril de 1552, e de Malaca se partirão para Japão.⁶⁴</p>

Alcáçova's text is ambiguous. It could be interpreted as Xavier designating Gago as superior of the Japanese mission itself, or simply for the duration of the voyage to Japan. If it was for just the duration of the trip, then it is interesting the fact Alcáçova felt the need to mention that Gago was put in charge.

⁶³ My own emphasis, see Alcáçova to the Jesuits in Portugal (Goa, 1554) in *Cartas que los Padres y hermanos de la Compañía de Jesús*, I, p. 23r, henceforth referred to as Évora Cartas.

⁶⁴ See *História*, I, ch. 9, p. 64.

This statement would have been unnecessary, since Alcáçova and Silva were both brothers and therefore hierarchically below Gago, who was an ordained priest. In 1549, when Xavier requested fathers Gaspar Barzeus, Baltasar Gago and brother Domingo Carvalho, to come to Japan, he specifically asked Gago and Carvalho to obey Gaspar Barzeus who was to be in charge during the trip:

Maestro Gaspar, Baltasar Gago y Domingo Carvalho, vengáis a Japán donde yo estuviere, que será, placiendo a Dios, en Miaco. Y vos [Gago and Carvalho] en el viaje tendréis obediencia a maestro Gaspar.⁶⁵

Since Xavier was hoping their arrival would coincide with his stay in Miaco (Kyoto), he designates Barzeus as being in charge during the voyage.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ See Xavier to Gaspar Barzeus, Baltasar Gago and Francisco Carvalho in Goa (Kagoshima, 5 November 1549) in *X. Cartas*, p. 373. The Dutch Jesuit Gaspar Barzeus was born in Goes and travelled from Lisbon to Goa together with Juan Fernandes and Fróis, see Barzeus to Loyola (Goa, 16 December 1551) in *Documenta Indica*, II, 247-49. On Domingo Carvalho see Torres to Loyola (Goa, 25 January 1549) in *Documenta Indica*, I, 477-8.

⁶⁶ When Gaspar Barzeus returned from Ormuz, being asked by Xavier to go to Japan, he reunited with Fróis in Bassein and together

There are also discrepancies within Fróis's chronicle. When Fróis wrote about the arrival of the new members in chapter 6 of the *História*, he explained that they went directly to visit Torres in Yamaguchi:

História ch. 6

Chegados ao porto de *Firando* [Hirado], *se forão logo dalli direitos ter com o P.e Cosme de Torres, que estava em Yamanguchi.*⁶⁷

História ch. 9

E a primeira terra que tomarão foi a ilha de Tagoxima [Tanegashima] [...] Dahi seguirão sua viagem para *Bungo*, [...] *Torres soube em Yamanguchi* que estavam em Bungo.⁶⁸

Both chapters in the same text vary considerably on the route the Portuguese Jesuits followed. In chapter 6 the route is:

visited Chaul, the famous caves of Mandapeshvar and Kanheri on the Elephant islands (Gharapuri) and Taná, see *História*, I, Intro., p. 4.

⁶⁷ *História*, I, ch. 6, pp. 48-9.

⁶⁸ *História*, I, ch. 9, pp. 63-4. In the Coimbra letter compilation is written *Tanuxuma* (Tanegashima), see Alcáçova to the Jesuits in Portugal (Goa, 1554) in *Cartas que os Padres e Irmãos da Companhia de Jesus*, p. LVIIr, henceforth referred to as Coimbra *Cartas*.

- Hirado (island on the north of Nagasaki, Kyushu) – Yamaguchi (in Honshu).

While in chapter 9, which coincides with the accounts of both Gago and Alcáçova, is:

- Tanegashima (the easternmost of the Ōsumi islands south of Kagoshima, Kyushu) - Bungo (Modern day Oita) - Yamaguchi.

Chapter 6 suggests that as an act of obedience, they went directly to visit Torres. But when Fróis copies Alcáçova's letter later, in chapter 9, he contradicts himself and the narrative is different: Gago and Alcáçova wrote, in their respective letters, that on 14 August, they arrived in Tanegashima first (and not Hirado), and then they went to Bungo (rather than Yamaguchi), where they stayed and departed separately en route to Yamaguchi.⁶⁹ According to Diego Pacheco S.J. there is no doubt that 'the three missionaries did in fact call in at

⁶⁹ See Gago to the Jesuits in India and Portugal (Hirado, 23 September 1555), in Coimbra *Cartas*, p. XCIX; Alcalá *Cartas*, pp. 53r-v; and Évora *Cartas*, I, pp. 23r-v. See also Alcáçova to the Jesuits in Portugal (Goa, 1554) in Coimbra *Cartas*, pp. LVIIr-LVIIv.

Tanegashima.⁷⁰

It would be near Christmas in 1552 when all the foreign missionaries would finally be together. Historian Hubert Cieslik S.J. pointed that Gago was ‘anxious to meet his Superior [Torres]’ when he arrived in Bungo on 7 September 1552.⁷¹ However, when the new group arrived in Bungo, Gago sent Alcáçova to Yamaguchi in October, and a few days later he sent da Silva. Perhaps Gago was anxious to meet with Torres, but it would not be until more than three months after his arrival in Bungo, when, at the end of December, he would finally arrive with Fernandes in Yamaguchi.⁷²

Alcáçova fails to note that Torres was the ‘superior’ and only writes that the new arrivals (Gago, Silva and himself) needed to speak to Torres because of his experience of Japan:

⁷⁰ See Pacheco, ‘Xavier and Tanegashima’ pp. 477-80.

⁷¹ See Cieslik, ‘Early Jesuit Missionaries in Japan 2’, p. 2.

⁷² Alcáçova to the Jesuits in Portugal (Goa, 1554) in Coimbra *Cartas*, pp. LIXr- LIXv.

Alcáçova's letter

Teniamos necesidad de vernos con el padre Cosme de Torres, por ser mas antiguo y experimentado en la tierra.⁷³

História

Tinhão necessidade de se ver primeiro com o P.e Cosme de Torres, que alem de ser superior, era mais antigo e experimentado na terra.⁷⁴

When Fróis copies the above passage in Alcáçova's letter, he almost repeats word by word. but he inserts '[Torres] besides being the superior'. This casual addition is puzzling. Why does the author of the *História*, who copies the letter, feel the necessity to add this detail 30 years later, which does not appear anywhere else in the correspondence of the time? Likewise, Valignano also emphasised this when writing his own version years later, in his *História del Principio* [...] (1601-03): 'se fue él [Xavier] [...] encomendando la xpiandad de Japón al Padre [Torres] que dejava por *superior de todos* los que él embiasse.'⁷⁵ When the second group of Portuguese Jesuits arrived in Japan (Gago, Alcáçova, and Silva), either there seems to

⁷³ Alcáçova to the Jesuits in Portugal (Goa, 1554) in Alcalá *Cartas*, p. 54r.

⁷⁴ My own emphasis, see *História*, I, ch. 9, p. 63.

⁷⁵ My own emphasis, see Valignano, *História del Principio*, p. 140.

have been confusion as to who was the superior, or for some reason they all failed to acknowledge Torres as the superior in their letters.

In Yamaguchi in 1552, around Christmas, it was decided that brother Alcáçova should return to India: ‘Neste tempo se determinou, que tornasse eu a India buscar algumas couzas necessarias.’⁷⁶ Fróis whose tendency is to expand on the letters in his *História*, and who would have been aware of the reasons for Alcáçova’s return, since he was in Goa at the time, only paraphrases: ‘se determinou tornar o Irmão Pedro de Alcaçova à India buscar algumas couzas necessarias.’⁷⁷

The decision for sending Alcáçova back to Goa occurred when all the missionaries were together in Yamaguchi. It is then unusual Alcáçova does not write it was Torres as ‘superior’ who sent him back. In 1554, the Jesuit Ayres Brandão

⁷⁶ Alcáçova to the Jesuits in Portugal (Goa, 1554) in Coimbra *Cartas*, p. LIXv.

⁷⁷ *História*, I, ch. 9, p. 65. The reasons for Alcáçova’s return are unclear, and in the Alcalá *Cartas* there are no letters from Japan for the years 1552-3. In fact, the title of Alcáçova’s letter of 1554 states: ‘cuenta algunas cosas de Japón de mil y quinientos y cinquenta dos y cinquenta y tres, que alla estuvo. Ponese aqui, porque destes dos años no ay cartas de Japón’, see Alcalá *Cartas*, pp. 53r-v.

only points: 'Pedro Dalcaceva [Alcáçova], que vinha de Iapão com recado do padre Cosme de Torres.'⁷⁸ That same year, the vice-provincial Nunes Barreto travelling to Japan, with Fróis and other Jesuits, wrote vaguely about the same issue:

Destas y otras muchas nos embiaran los padres de Jipón aquí al Hermano Pedro d'Alcáçova para que nos informe dellas, y de la mengua gramde que allá avía de operarios, siendo la miesse tamta.⁷⁹

It must be noted the way in which Nunes Barreto wrote that Alcáçova was sent by 'the fathers of Japan', *los padres de Jipón*, whom at the time were Torres and Gago, and not by the 'superior' or just Torres.⁸⁰ The Portuguese adventurer and author Fernão Mendes Pinto (c.1510 -1583) who accompanied Nunes Barreto to Japan as an ambassador/ novice of the Society of Jesus, mentioned Cosme de Torres in his famous

⁷⁸ Ayres Brandão to the Jesuits (Goa, 23 December 1554) in Coimbra *Cartas*, p. LXXIIv.

⁷⁹ See Nunes Barreto to Loyola (Between Goa and Cochin, May 1554) in *Documenta Indica*, III, p. 75.

⁸⁰ Alcáçova left Japan on 19 October 1553, see Alcáçova to the Jesuits in Portugal (Goa, 1554) in Coimbra *Cartas*, p. LXIXr.

book the *Peregrinação*.⁸¹ Again, Mendes Pinto does not mention that Torres was the superior of Japan, neither when he arrived with Nunes Barreto in July 1556, nor when he left Japan.⁸² Rebecca Catz, who has researched extensively on Fernão Mendes Pinto's writings, repeats the common assumption: 'Francisco [Xavier] regressou à Índia, em 1551, deixou o padre Cosme de Torres como superior dos demais missionários.'⁸³ When Nunes Barreto left Goa he was considering to remain in Japan, perhaps as superior of the Japanese mission.⁸⁴ As a former vice-provincial of India, he was one of the

⁸¹ Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinação*, p. 272v-73r. Nunes Barreto to Loyola (Cochin, May 1554) in Catz, *Cartas de Fernão Mendes Pinto*, pp. 26-7. On Fernão Mendes Pinto's biography see Leite de Faria, *As muitas edições da "Peregrinação" de Fernão Mendes Pinto*, pp. 153-81; Catz, *The Travels of Mendes Pinto*, pp. xxxvi-xxxix.

⁸² On the departure of Mendes Pinto with Nunes Barreto to Japan see Aires Brandão to the Jesuits in Coimbra (Goa, 23 December 1554) in *Documenta Indica*, III, p. 178-3. Mendes Pinto travelled also as an ambassador for the Viceroy Afonso de Noronha (1510-?) see Sousa, *The Portuguese Slave Trade in Early Modern Japan*, p. 336.

⁸³ See Catz, *Cartas de Fernão Mendes Pinto*, p. 95.

⁸⁴ Pacheco, *El Hombre que Forjó a Nagasaki*, p. 33.

highest ranking Jesuits in the Portuguese Padroado in Asia. In 1554, Ayres Brandão calls Torres only padre: ‘honde já o Padre Cosmo de Torres, que laa anda.’⁸⁵ In 1555, when Brandão wrote a catalogue of the socius of the India Province he put Nunes Barreto at the top of the list for those in Japan.⁸⁶ In 1555, when Gago wrote a letter to king John III of Portugal, as a way of reporting to his king the current state of the mission he noted:

Nesta terra [Japan] ha duas Igrejas, e dous padres, e dous irmãos. Em Amanguche [Yamaguchi], que he cidade grande, que esta pera a parte do Norte, que he hum Reyno principal desta terra, esta hum padre [Torres] com hum irmão.⁸⁷

Again, as late as four years after Xavier’s departure Torres

⁸⁵ Ayres Brandão to the Jesuits (Goa, 23 December 1554) in *Documenta Indica*, III, p. 179, 183.

⁸⁶ Unknown to Brandão, Nunes Barreto was still travelling, see Catalogue of the Jesuits in the India Province (Goa, between 21-31 December 1555) in *Documenta Indica*, III, p. 412.

⁸⁷ At the time the two fathers were Gago and Torres, and the brothers Duarte da Silva and Juan Fernandes, see Gago to King John III (Hirado, 20 September 1555) in Coimbra *Cartas*, p. CVIII.

is still not addressed as leading the mission. In 1557, while listing the Jesuits in Asia, Fróis notes: ‘em Japão os padres Cosmo de Torres, Baltazar Guaguo, e Guaspar Vilela.’⁸⁸ Here although not acknowledged as superior he appears first of the priests in Japan.

We begin to see Cosme de Torres acknowledged as Rector in letters in 1558, such as Antonio da Costa: ‘Em Japão ao presente estaa o P. Cosme de Torres por reytor.’⁸⁹ And superior in the letters by 1559. In 1559, Gaspar Vilela (c.1526-72) wrote: ‘Cosme de Torres nuestro superior.’⁹⁰ That same year Francisco Cabral (c.1533-1609) called Torres Rector: ‘En Japam estão 3 Padres a 5 Irmãos, scl.: P. Cosmo de Torres por Reitor.’⁹¹

Was it perhaps taken into consideration, at least at the be-

⁸⁸ Fróis to the Jesuits in Coimbra (Goa, 30 November 1557) in *Documenta Indica*, III, p. 715.

⁸⁹ Antonio da Costa to the Jesuits in Portugal (Goa, 26 December 1558) in *Documenta Indica*, IV, p. 177.

⁹⁰ See Vilela to the Goa College (Japan, 1 September 1559) in *Alcalá Cartas*, p. 93r.

⁹¹ Francisco Cabral to General Diego Lainez (Goa, 25 November 1559) in Schütte, *Monumenta Historica Japoniae*, I, p. 38.

ginning of the Japanese mission, that Torres was not educated enough to be considered a superior? In 1548, when Lancilotto describes Torres, his opinion is of someone with limited education: ‘Cosmo de Torres sacerdote valentiano, b[ono] homo e de mediocre letre’⁹² This contrast, for example, with the description in the same letter of fathers Gomes and Barzeus: ‘Antonio Gomes è doctor; mestre Gasparro [Barzeus], flamengo, è molto bon literato.’⁹³

The lacunae of Torres being acknowledged as mission superior in the early letters could be just an omission on the part of all the above-mentioned Jesuits, who forgot to note this in their correspondence. However, it is more conceivable that there was a power vacuum left by Xavier in 1551, or that a hierarchy was not clearly addressed. This must have been aggravated by the sudden death of the most senior members of the Society of Jesus in Asia and the departure of Nunes Barreto from his post as vice-provincial to embark on a new mission in Japan.

⁹² Lancilotto to Loyola (Cochin, 26 December 1548) in *Documenta Indica*, I, p. 443.

⁹³ Lancilotto to Loyola (Cochin, 26 December 1548) in *Documenta Indica*, I, p. 440. When Xavier left for Japan Antonio Gomes became the Rector of the Saint Paul college in Goa, and Barzeus was destined to be vice-provincial, see *Ibid*, p. 442.

What is definitely clear is that Fróis felt the need to address this in his *História*, whether to be more informative and precise, or with an exact agenda to give a neat image of the beginning of the mission. One is more inclined to believe that Fróis and Valignano intentionally inserted the title *superior*. Although this is a minor addition, it is quite an important one as it gives an image of the mission as being well-organised from the start and resolves any disputes that may have arisen during those early years. As commented previously, Fróis painstakingly reviews the sources. What is revealing is that this process is not just intended to provide more detailed and accurate information as he stated in his paratext. It also included censorship and insertions when convenient, as well as conveying information in response to changes in the circumstances within the mission.

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