

論文

The Progression of Intercultural Communication in the  
Writings of the Early Modern Jesuits:  
Alessandro Valignano and His Rendering of the  
Japanese Social Custom of Gift-Giving

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[抄録]

This paper examines the custom of gift-giving, the act of offering presents in Japan during the Christian Century. Alessandro Valignano's *Advertimentos* of 1581 was responsible for developing a vital aspect of the "Jesuit Code" in Japan. The paper argues that the Japanese custom of gift-giving is complex yet an inseparable part of Japanese culture which was understood, mastered and wisely utilized by Jesuits that enabled them to not only forge negotiations but also pave the path for Intercultural communication.

**キーワード** Society of Jesus; Accommodation policy; Alessandro Valignano;  
Gift-Giving; Intercultural Communication; The Christian Century of  
Japan

Introduction

The Jesuits quest for finding greener pastures to execute their missionary activities was not only a complex assemblage that involved learning and reaching out to places far beyond untapped areas, but also to make and record observations about their new-found knowledge. This basic series of actions initiated several forms of enquiry, methods of creating avenues of information networks, sophisticated forms of information gathering and dissemination of information among long-distance corporations. This entire range of activities, which the author proposes to call, the 'Jesuit Code' involved unique ways of doing

things that were born out of repeated failures and learning. These included or made way for what we may interpret as possessing innovative features of Intercultural Communication.

It is intended in this paper to examine the custom of gift-giving, the act of offering presents, in its major forms, from the point of view of a non-economic activity, within the context of the Japanese Mission. This essay argues that the Japanese custom of gift-giving is complex yet an inseparable part of Japanese culture and the Jesuits attempts at understanding, mastering and intelligently employing this custom not only enabled the Jesuits to forge negotiations and win support of the local authorities but went as far as becoming a powerful tool to communicate across cultures.

Documents left behind by missionaries are not just sources of information revealing past events narrating the history and nature of the Jesuit Mission in Japan but also provide an invaluable, and deeply enriching insight into the social and psychological world as the writers recorded their views of life itself, existing cultural practices and social norms. This study will demonstrate how these sources not only provide ample insights to understand ideas, practices and actions of people believed to have been historical but also offer an opportunity to comprehend relation structures which have implications on the socio economic and politico cultural processes, particularly in the geographical space of Japan in the context of east-west contact during the Christian Century. All in all, I argue that the sources not only help in understanding how the Japanese society was discussed by the Orientalizing gaze, but also provide a basis for developing multifaceted, multifarious highways for intercultural communications.

These dispatched accounts not only formed the basis of knowledge regarding the mystifying far eastern country, but also played a vital role in engraving Japan's image onto European minds.

Previous studies on the gift-giving culture have mainly been situated around the practice of gift-giving itself,<sup>(1)</sup> material exchange and diplomacy<sup>(2)</sup> and cultural history<sup>(3)</sup> among others. I propose to employ the method of 'deconstructive reading' of the texts in the context of the gift-giving culture with specific reference to the Japanese concept of *Miyage*. The 'Probe and inquiry' method will be employed as a tool of deconstruction to find multiple or diverse meanings, recurrences, deviations, ambiguities, irony, contradiction, conflict, silences and linguistic oddities. A discursive approach will be beneficial to explore the construction of meanings in the Japanese-Jesuits social and cultural transactions under

the frame of East West interactions, which form a part of the interconnected collective human experience. While the above approach is largely based on a micro-level and does suffer from limitations in scope, nevertheless it provides a substantial platform to initiate a comparative study which will be pursued at a later stage. This essay will contribute to the discourse of intercultural and cross-cultural study.

## I : Nippon prior to the arrival of Alessandro Valignano

The island of Japan stirred the imagination of several Europeans who had little or no idea of what lay beyond Christendom. The Jesuits realized the potential Japan had for missionary activities in East Asia and had set foot on the soil almost over two centuries after first receiving information about Japan, which was initially carried to Europe through the accounts of travellers like Marco Polo. Information propagated by the Jesuits was what created Japan from *Chipangu*, the mysterious island of gold in the Far East. The Jesuits' sent back personal letters and annual letters, which were consumed first by the Jesuit headquarters at Rome, as well as branches in the Iberian Peninsula, followed by the rest of Europe and these form the bulk of the historical documentation of the Jesuit history and their interpretations of Japanese society. Accounts of the Jesuits that arrived to spread Christianity, also formed the basis for the knowledge of the eastern world in Europe.

The year 1549 saw transformation in the religious scene of Japan for a second time, when St. Francis Xavier landed in Kagoshima to preach the gospel and evangelize the natives. After this a series of individuals appeared on the stage of missionary activities in Japan. Notable Jesuits like Alessandro Valignano, Luis Frois, Luis de Almeida, Gnecci-Soldo Organtino, conducted missionary activities by understanding, digesting and accommodating the various cultural aspects of Japanese society. Undoubtedly, while some orthodox Jesuits like Francisco Cabral insisted on conducting missionary activities that ignored and rejected Japanese Cultural contests.

Francis Xavier's hope of reaching *Meaco* (Miyako 都) to receive permission for missionary activities in Japan ended in failure after a mere eleven days stay.<sup>(4)</sup> This failed attempt drove him to Yamaguchi and opened his eyes to a possibility for a new dream. To realize his dream, Xavier armed himself with a present laden message wrapped in a letter to Ouchi Yoshitaka, the Lord of Yamaguchi. He had carried with him thirteen kinds of lavish items in the name of the Governor of Portuguese India, Garcias de Sá and the Captain of Malacca, Pedro da Silva.<sup>(5)</sup> This heralded the beginning of a new relationship

between the Jesuits and the Japanese and a saga which ended in the challenges and accommodation of the Japanese custom of gift-giving.



Portrait of Alessandro Valignano holding a Latin Bible showing one stanza *Actus Apostolorum* 9:15, “VT PORTET NOMEN MEVM CORAM GENTIB [VS]”. This portrait dated “An. Dni. M.D.C.”, 1600, is one which was engraved while he was alive. The title of the portrait in Latin reads as General *Visitor* to India, Society of Jesus including a nuanced comparison to his predecessor ‘XAVERIO, ORIENTIS APOSTOLVS’. See the frontispiece of Maki (1949).

## II : Alessandro Valignano’s path to compilation of the *Advertimentos*

Alessandro Valignano, the Visitor of the Jesuit missions in Asia, took control and responsibility of the Japan “Empresa,” enterprise, three decades, after its commencement by St. Francis Xavier. Padre Valignano standardized Japanese missionary methods, and also commenced activities of recording and compiling mission reports for the headquarters in Rome. Shortly, two years after his arrival, Valignano compiled the *Advertimentos e avisos acerca dos costumes e catangues de Jappão* (*Observations on the Habits and Particular Customs of Japan*)<sup>(6)</sup> at Bungo 豊後 (present day Oita 大分 prefecture) in 1581, wherein he concisely recorded the first official regulations connected to customs and manners necessary to preserve the dignity of the Jesuits in Japan. This *Advertimentos* will form the bulk of our scrutiny. In the preface Valignano makes two broad explanations, first being the purpose of the instructions, and the second, a set of basic principles which must be followed by the Jesuits in Japan. The first proclamation is as follows:

“Ainda que, pera os Padres e Irmãos procederem conforme aos costumes e catangues de Jappão, fora necessario escrever muytas cousas, todavi [a] por agora summariamente se porão alguns avisos necessarios, com os quais poderão os Padres e os Irmãos com boa criação proceder, quanto pera elles basta, com os ditos catangues e costumes, e sem os quais não podem deixar de cair em muytos maos ensinos e descortesias, com muyto damno de de sua propria estimação e da relegião christão e com muito detrimento do fruto que se pode fazer assi com os Christãos como com os gentios.”<sup>(7)</sup>

The above can be interpreted as follows: On the outset, Valignano mentions that a lot needs to be written, however on this occasion brevity will be maintained. Fathers and Brothers should follow the instructions related to the Japanese customs and *catangues* carefully, in order to keep them from losing their focus. Failure in doing so would cost the Jesuits their reputation and also show Christianity in bad light. Further, it would also nullify the fruits expected to be achieved from missionary efforts among the Christians as well as the gentiles. Further Valignano states, “...o que os Padres pretendem acerca da converção e da Christandade hé saber tratar com os Jappoens de tal maneira que por huma parte tenham autoridade e por outra usem de muita familiaridade...”<sup>(8)</sup> The main points of the above can be summarized as, a twofold policy which emphasizes 1. maintenance of “autoridade,” authority on one hand and 2. expressing a “familiaridade,” familiarity on the other. This is appropriate when dealing with the Japanese. This is particularly important for Fathers in their conversion endeavors as well as for Christendom.

A hypothesis stating that the co-operation of the Japanese *Irmãos* or Brothers, the influential Otomo Sorin 大友宗麟 (Yoshishige 義鎮) who had connections with the powerful *Zen* 禅 sect temple, Daitokuji 大徳寺, was sought for this compilation.<sup>(9)</sup> Sorin is known to have had a welcoming attitude towards the Jesuits and had even been baptized by Francico Cabral in 1578, just a year prior to Valignano’s arrival.

It was the continuing legacy of Cabral that European missionaries constantly pelted insults at the Christian warlords, *Kirishtan Daimyos* including Otomo Sorin and then Valignano himself. On this basis, the reason for Valignano’s compilation probably was the criticism as well as the unappreciated efforts of Daimyos who had destroyed Buddhist temples following the advice of the Jesuits. Some of the latter believed that, the Jesuits were insensitive to Japanese customs, etiquette and manners despite their favours. A letter from Valignano to the General in Rome on November 23, 1595 from Goa recollecting the above episode<sup>(10)</sup> provides justification in this context, at least to some extent. In the letter

Valignano also criticizes Francisco Cabral *Superior* of the Japan Mission from 1570–1581.<sup>(11)</sup> Cabral is known for being old-fashioned, orthodox and rigid with an “idealist” traditional outlook towards missionary practice. This is attributive to his Eurocentric, non-accommodative attitude towards Japanese culture and society. Qualities such as the former were not suitable for Japan and Valignano was quick to realize that the only way forward for the Jesuits was to transfer him to a region which did not have complex social code such as the Japanese. Cabral was whisked out of Japan and sent to Macao. In order to understand Valignano’s “foundation building” for the Japan Mission this paper will deploy the aforementioned *Advertimentos*. The compilation consists of seven chapters in Portuguese as a set of instructions for Jesuit activities in Japan. The following is a tabular representation of the list of contents divided in *Capítulo*, or chapter form:<sup>(12)</sup>

**Table 1 : Representation of the Chapters of the *Advertimentos***

CAP. 1	Do modo que se ha de ter pera adquirir e conservar autoridade tratando com os Jappoens;
CAP. 2	Do modo que se ha de ter pera fazer familiares os Christãos;
CAP. 3	Dos cumprimentos que os Padres e Irmãos han de ter com os foresteyros;
CAP. 4	Da maneira que se a de ter en dar e tomar sacanzuque e sacana;
CAP. 5	Do modo que se á de ter no tratar dos Padres e Irmãos e entre ssi [e] com os demais de casa
CAP. 6	Do modo que se ha de ter em agazalhar embaixadores ou outras pessoas de respeito e dos convites e praesentes ( <i>sic</i> ) que se hão de fazer;
CAP. 7	Do modo que se há de ter em fabricar nosas casas e igrejas em Japão

The following is a tabular representation of the interpretations of the above.

**Table 2 : Interpretation of the Chapters of the *Advertimentos***

CH. 1	The method of maintaining the prestige of the Jesuits while interacting with the Japanese.
CH. 2	The method in which Japanese Christians could familiarize with the Jesuits.
CH. 3	The method in which Fathers and Brothers are required to greet the outside locals.
CH. 4	The method of using <i>sakazuki</i> 盃 and <i>sakana</i> 肴.
CH. 5	The method of behaving and interacting with internal people, Fathers and Brothers living in the <i>Casa</i> , the dormitory of the Jesuits.
CH. 6	The method of greeting and receiving messengers and persons of high rank and the rules of relating to banquets and gift giving.
CH. 7	The method of building <i>casas</i> and <i>igrejas</i> in Japan.

The above interpretation of the chapters of the *Advertimentos* give a clear picture of the method recommended as a form of instruction imparted by Valignano. The latter half of

Chapter 6 of the *Advertimentos*, which is specifically dedicated to the topic dealing with the custom of gift-giving, is a part of the *costumes e catangues de Jappão*.<sup>(13)</sup> As a practice, mentions Valignano, missionaries could give gifts in the form of general items such as food, cloth and others. In the case of food items, it is courtesy that the gift should not reach before one's arrival and gifts must be sent to all the necessary persons involved irrespective of being restricted to persons of high ranks such as non-Christian feudal lords but also to the messenger who comes to visit the Jesuit. However, says Valignano, the gifts especially in the case of food and drink, to be presented could be broadly divided into “cinco degraos” or five degrees, according the relationship with the receiver. A tabular representation in the following will be helpful in understanding these categories:

**Table 3 : General gifts bifurcated in *cinco degraos* or five degrees.**

First degree	Combination of <i>sacana</i> a form of relish which included fish and fruit or <i>peixe com huta</i> (肴=魚+果) and <i>vinho</i> or <i>sake</i> ; Four <i>bules</i> , bottles or one <i>tocori</i> 德利.
Second degree	A set of <i>taro</i> or cask 樽 of <i>vinho</i> and <i>jiquiro</i> 食籠 container containing <i>mochi</i> (餅) rice cakes and <i>sacana</i> .
Third degree	Two <i>taros</i> and one <i>jiquiro</i> or one <i>vorinomono</i> 折物 that includes <i>bem feitos</i> or well cooked <i>aves</i> 鳥 bird, <i>peixe</i> fish <i>caramuios</i> or mollusks.
Fourth degree	A four layered <i>uorinomono</i> . <sup>(14)</sup> Sweet meat <i>manju</i> 饅頭, <i>aletria</i> Vermicelli noodles <sup>(15)</sup> and <i>sacanas</i> . Accompanied by four or six <i>taros</i> of <i>vinho</i> and <i>quatro dentro bem concertados</i> four layers of well-portioned <i>uorinomono</i> .
Fifth degree	<i>Dalgumas conservas</i> ...or some preserved food in other words <i>Nabão</i> 南蛮 styled (our kind of) food.

The above Table 3 tells us how Valignano not only categorized the general type of gifts in five degrees with specific examples but also emphasized the hierarchy of the relationship with the receiver. In continuation of the above, he sets aside five kinds of recipients of gifts and their relationships with the Jesuit mission while making a specific mention of the influential persons vital for the future of the Mission in Japan.

The first degree is applicable to close “Christãos familiares” meaning, close Christians, and also for persons who are especially poor or are lower class messengers of familiar Christian Lords. The second degree of gifts is for *menos familiares* meaning, less familiar persons who belong to a lower class. The third degree is for “senhor honrado” meaning, Lords who deserve respect. This is especially in the case when, the lord is a local *Yacata* (Yakata 屋形) and has on other occasions been a recipient of a gift. In such a case it is

customary to give a gift. The fourth degree is not as frequent and is rarely used by the Fathers. It is presented to persons who are not familiar and are slightly higher in status than *Kunishu* 国衆 and also to “Embaixadres gentios de muita dignidade”, noble gentile ambassadors sent by high class Lords. These gifts are given when the missionaries could not invite the above-mentioned persons earlier. Further when an invitation is sent, and they have to stay on for quite some time these gifts are customary. The fifth degree is the category of the local *Yacatas* and “senhores grandes gentios” or chiefs and other powerful gentiles, non-Christian Lords. The aim of sending gifts to them is to earn their benevolence and goodwill. These gifts are to be sent every fortnight, once every twenty days, or monthly.

He makes it clear that the receivers should be gifted something of their liking and that is of *Nanban* style. This should be done in the similar manner in which, Lord Nobunaga and *el-Rei de Bungo* or King of *Bungo*, Otomo Sorin would be treated. It can be deduced that these *Nanban* articles were necessary for not just associating with these members of society but initiating and engaging in meaningful exchange through various levels of communication and negotiation.

There is no doubt that Valignano specifically names Nobunaga and Otomo Sorin because both these figures continuously granted favours and were seen as valuable supporters of evangelical and missionary activities. This is seen in the fast-developing nature of Jesuit establishments taking root in Japan. For instance, the setting up of a *Seminario*, in Azuchi in May 1580 and another college to educate and nurture Jesuits in higher learning in Funai, the capital of the Bungo province in October of the same year. Furthermore, in December another institute namely the *Noviciado, Casa de Provação* in Usuki the place where Sorin built his castle, are all proof that Valignano’s activities were favoured.

Valignano cautions sending certain items like cloth and items that should be avoided and emphasized that due consideration be given to the timing of sending the gift, such as appropriate seasons for exchange, in addition to the amount or quantity of the items to be sent. In the case of cloth, Valignano suggest that locally manufactured cloth is ideal.<sup>(16)</sup> For instance, when the sender of the gift is a person from *lugar da Nao* literally place of the vessel, hailing from Nagasaki, the gift should be a *Nanban* item for sure, similarly when a person goes from *Meaco*, cloth from *Cami* region namely the area around Kyoto should be taken as a present. Finer details about the outward appeal of the gift such as the use of wrapping paper and even the type of paper (for example *Suibara* 杉原) and finally when



physically offering the gift, carefully placing it on a tray were among other important aspects that Valignano paid special attention to.

Valignano is a keen observer of Japanese society especially of class stratification and social status in Japanese society. He is sensitive to the interclass interactions maintained within its structure, as well as the interactions of Japanese with outsiders. He also makes it a point to let it be known to the recipients that their position and role in Japanese society is well understood and appreciated. His classification of gifts on the basis of the above division of social classes was apt enough for the recipient to feel deserved and rewarded.

Finally, Valignano summarizes his section on gift-giving with a few points of caution.<sup>(17)</sup> It is important that the Jesuits do not compromise their position when it comes to gift-giving, he points out, when it involves the Christians, and especially when it involves the gentile Lords, who must be shown special courtesy. Furthermore, these points of caution in addition to the ones mentioned earlier must be followed with great care, as and when the situation demands. Points of caution are known by the Japanese, especially those who are well versed with such matters. Valignano further reiterates, that members must consult with Japanese persons from within as well as from outside of the *Casa*. However, in case one is going to act as per one's own will, there is a big chance of committing several blunders which shall further lead to impairing the Jesuit reputation.

## Conclusion

Valignano was aware of the benefits of the custom of gift-giving for the Jesuits specific to the Japan Mission. On the other hand, he was also well aware of the dangers of not being sensitive to the local code of conduct in a cultural setting. He is cautious and careful and points out that this practice should never be the reason for inviting a bad reputation or enmity of any sort. The document speaks of Valignano's understanding of his target audience and his keen observation and interest in detail combined with his acumen to use this new knowledge for the good of the mission in Japan. He paid keen attention to the fact that the Jesuits must be courteous at all times and this in the long run left a positive mark. However, it cannot be ignored that Valignano's manual was not welcomed by everyone alike from within the Jesuit community.

Valignano had been creative, timely, pragmatic and futuristic. His ability to embrace the difference in the East-West ways of doing things especially Europe-Japan was novel and

rewarding. His instructions involved unique ways of doing things that were born out of repeated failures and learning. In order to highlight the overall impact of Jesuit activities on the history of feudal Japan, C.R. Boxer devised the title, “The Christian Century in Japan.” In a paper, by Nakasuna Akinori the term “Iezusukai no Seiki イエズス会の世紀” (The Jesuit Century), further enhances the former for a wider and deeper understanding of the global aspects of the Jesuit enterprise in regard to time and geographical space. It is within the framework of this Jesuit century, one needs to explore the meaning and perception of the Jesuits and their culture of gift-giving in the Asian expanse. This fits within the entire range of activities the author calls the ‘Jesuit Code’ which can be included or made way for what we may interpret as possessing innovative features of Intercultural Communication.

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Note: Unless when quoted, the author emphasis on translation in context rather than literal translation.

〔注〕

- (1) (Mauss 1990)
- (2) (Biedermann 2018)
- (3) (Davis 2000)
- (4) (Kono 1988 : 246-247)
- (5) (Kono 1988 : 248-249)
- (6) English translation borrowed from (Laven 2018: 221). Henceforth, the *Advertimentos*.
- (7) (Scütte 1946 : 118-120). For the Japanese translation see (Valignano 1970 : 53).
- (8) (Scütte 1946 : 120; Valignano 1970 : 53)

- (9) See Hubert Cieslik's introduction in (Valignano 1970 : 46).
- (10) (Valignano 1970 : 42-43).
- (11) (Valignano 1970 : 41). See also (Boxer 1951: 86-87) for Cabral's attitude towards Japanese.
- (12) (Schütte 1946) *See also* (Carmen 1994: 62)
- (13) For a discussion and analysis of chapter 6 see (Scütte 1946: 258-268; Valignano 1970: 105-109).
- (14) Spelt interchangeably with a "U" also means '折物'.
- (15) The Japanese version translates it as '素麵' or *somen* noodles.
- (16) For a discussion and analysis of the paragraph see (Scütte 1946: 260-266; Valignano 1970: 106-109).
- (17) For a discussion and analysis see (Scütte 1946: 266-268; Valignano 1970: 109).

(アイシュワリヤ スガンディ 英米学科)

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