



HAL
open science

Principles of Missionary Geography in Jesuit Spirituality and their Implementation in Japan (16-17th centuries)

Helene Vu Thanh

► **To cite this version:**

Helene Vu Thanh. Principles of Missionary Geography in Jesuit Spirituality and their Implementation in Japan (16-17th centuries). *Bulletin of Portuguese/Japanese Studies*, 2009, 18/19, pp.175-191. hal-01062011

HAL Id: hal-01062011

<https://hal.science/hal-01062011v1>

Submitted on 13 Jul 2018

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Bulletin of Portuguese - Japanese Studies

ISSN: 0874-8438

bpjs.cham@fcsh.unl.pt

Universidade Nova de Lisboa
Portugal

Vu Thanh, H el ene

PRINCIPLES OF MISSIONARY GEOGRAPHY IN JESUIT SPIRITUALITY AND THEIR
IMPLEMENTATION IN JAPAN (16TH-17TH CENTURIES)

Bulletin of Portuguese - Japanese Studies, vol. 18-19, junio-diciembre, 2009, pp. 175-191

Universidade Nova de Lisboa
Lisboa, Portugal

Available in: <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=36129851006>

- How to cite
- Complete issue
- More information about this article
- Journal's homepage in redalyc.org

redalyc.org

Scientific Information System

Network of Scientific Journals from Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal

Non-profit academic project, developed under the open access initiative

PRINCIPLES OF MISSIONARY GEOGRAPHY IN JESUIT SPIRITUALITY AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION IN JAPAN (16TH-17TH CENTURIES)

Hélène Vu Thanh

Paris IV – Sorbonne University

Abstract

This article explains the importance of territorial management and organization in Jesuit spirituality, and namely in the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus. Different levels of actions for the missionaries can be distinguished. The *Constitutions* pay more attention to the local scale of action and precise rules to establish a mission or to send Jesuits to a place.

As Ignatius of Loyola wrote the *Constitutions* in the European context, the question of their implementation in an Asian country, and especially in Japan, should be raised. Moreover, missionaries in Japan had to face difficulties such as civil wars or political upheavals. These uncertainties could ruin their efforts to respect Loyola's orders in the way of establishing a mission. Jesuits in Japan adapted the recommendations of the *Constitutions* to Japanese context. This determination to preserve the spirituality of the *Constitutions* also led them to superimpose their perception of the Japanese territories on geopolitics of the archipelago. The Jesuits created their own geography of Japan by dividing it in three areas of missions (Bungo, Shimo and Miyako) that had different characteristics.

Resumo

Este artigo explica a importância da gestão e do planeamento do território na espiritualidade Jesuíta, nomeadamente nas Constituições da Sociedade de Jesus. Podem-se distinguir vários níveis de acção para os missionários. As Constituições dão mais atenção à escala de acção local e a normas precisas para estabelecer uma missão ou para enviar Jesuítas a um local.

Como Inácio de Loyola escreveu as Constituições no contexto europeu, a questão da sua implementação num país Asiático, e especialmente no Japão, tinha de ser pensada. Para além disso, os missionários do Japão tiveram de enfrentar dificuldades como guerras civis ou motins políticos. Estas incertezas poderiam ter votado ao insucesso os seus esforços por respeitar as ordens de Inácio de Loyola quanto ao modo como se deveria estabelecer uma missão. Os Jesuítas no Japão adaptaram as recomendações das

Constituições ao contexto japonês. Esta determinação em preservar a espiritualidade das Constituições levou-os igualmente a sobrepor a sua percepção do território japonês à geopolítica do arquipélago. Os Jesuítas criaram a sua própria geografia do Japão, dividindo-o em três áreas de missões (Bungo, Shimo e Miyako) que tinham características próprias.

要約

この記事はイエズス会管轄下において霊的管理と計画性の重要性、すなわちイエズス会の会憲について述べている。宣教師の活動は様々な段階をもって区分する事が出来る。会憲は、ミッション設立、或いはイエズス会士派遣において、現地での活動に留意すべき点を明らかにしている。

イグナチオ・デ・ロヨラがヨーロッパで書いたことから、アジア諸国、特に日本への会憲は熟慮する必要性があった。さらに、日本の宣教師が直面している内戦や政変等の困難もあった。このような不確定要素はイグナチオ・デ・ロヨラの示すところに従うのみならばミッション設立への障害となりかねない。日本のイエズス会は、会憲において日本に適応する配慮をした。この判断は会憲の霊性を維持すべく日本列島の地政学と重ねて認識するものである。イエズス会は日本の布教管区を各々の特性により3つ(豊後、下、都)に分割した。

Keywords:

Jesuit missions in Japan, Jesuit spirituality, missionary geography, territorial management, accommodation

Missões jesuíticas no Japão, espiritualidade jesuítica, geografia da missão, gestão do território, acomodação.

日本におけるイエズス会伝道施設; イエズス会の霊性、伝道地理学; 領土管理、施設

Territorial management has always been considered as an important matter by the Society of Jesus for its operation and its cohesion. "Territorial management" here means the methods used to organize a territory according to missionary principles. It aimed at making the pastoral work more effective and at increasing accordingly the number of conversions.

As a missionary order scattered around the world, it was crucial for the Society of Jesus to govern space in order to take control of events and develop effective missionary strategies. In order to maintain its identity throughout the world it was also very important for the Society to control the chains

of authorities linking the central government in Rome to various regions. It was also decisive to ensure that decisions taken by Rome were implemented correctly and rapidly. So the question of territorial management came partly from the internal running of the Society of Jesus. Its objective was the coordination of multiple decision centres and territories.

Beyond the practical aspects of this coordination, widely studied in the historiography, this article will focus on the spiritual aspects of territorial management and their application in the Japanese mission. These spiritual aspects were broached by Ignatius of Loyola in the *Constitutions*. They were very important to the founder of the Society of Jesus and included the local scale management for which Ignatius of Loyola had set guidelines to open or settle a mission.

The Japanese mission applied these general principles in its territorial management. However, the political upheavals in Japan, as well as its geography, created constraints and difficulties, sometimes forcing the missionaries to adapt the recommendations of Rome. The Jesuits were torn between the desire to follow European instructions and the need to take into account the Japanese context. Therefore, we can see how the missionaries developed a specific organization of the Japanese territory, resulting from their singular perception of Japan. But this particular organization in Japan also questioned their identity, based on respect for the spiritual recommendations from Rome: the decisions taken in Europe were sometimes difficult to apply in Japan. At the same time, their adaptation opened a space of freedom for the Jesuits.¹

This tension had the effect of creating a polycentric space of mission, depending on the levels of Christianity of the population. These different levels generated various pastoral methods for territories. Thus, the Japanese mission had different geographical features that we propose to study.

1. The importance of territorial management in Jesuit spirituality

1.1. The importance of hierarchy in the Society of Jesus and its territorial consequences

As its framework for action was the whole world, the Society of Jesus believed that geographic planning was vital for them to set up their missionary strategy and influence events. Moreover, the need to maintain the unity

1 On this question, see also the situation in India in ZUPANOV (Ines G.), *Missionary tropics; the Catholic frontier in India, 16-17th centuries*, Ann Arbor, 2005.

and the identity of the Order while Jesuits were dispersed around the globe led to the need to control the relationships between the centre of the Order in Rome and the different peripheral missions. As a consequence, the Society of Jesus appeared to be one of the most centralized religious orders of the 16th century. To maintain a strong link between the head and its body, correspondence was the keystone of the Jesuit system.² Letters were regularly sent to Rome by missionaries to report on progress and pastoral options implemented in a province.

The extreme hierarchy of the Order can be found again at a geographical point of view. The Society imprinted its identity on territories by establishing a chain of authorities in evangelized territories. However, this organization was installed progressively along with the increasing number of Jesuits and actions around the world. The need to delegate powers to regional centres soon appeared necessary in order to facilitate decision-making. These regional powers, called “provinces”, ruled by provincials, acted as intermediaries between the General and the Jesuits sent to the various missions. The provincial could be compared to a territorial manager, since he decided the locations where the Jesuits of the Province had to be assigned as well as their admissions or dismissals.³ He reported annually to Rome on the activities of the mission. These provinces could be divided, if necessary, in vice-provinces, governed by vice-provincials.⁴ The provincial or vice-provincial oversaw a corps of rectors and superiors who might be called local managers. The latter were in charge of the houses, seminaries, colleges or missions. Finally, to maintain the coherence of the whole system and to check the compliance of missionaries’ activities with guidelines from Rome, a Visitor could be appointed. His authority came directly from the General and extended over several provinces or vice-provinces. The Visitor inspected the facilities of the province, resolved conflicts and set new guidelines for pastoral strategy.

The province of Goa in India, to which Japan was initially subordinated, was created in 1552. The vice-province of Japan was set up in 1583 and became a full province in 1611. Japan was under the authority of the Visitor of the East Indies, who was also in charge of India and China.⁵

2 See CASTELNAU-L’ESTOILE (Charlotte de), *Les ouvriers d’une vigne stérile, les Jésuites et la conversion des Indiens au Brésil 1580-1620*, Lisbon/Paris, 2000, p. 64. Charlotte de Castelnau-L’Estoile analyses here the importance of the correspondence in the running of the Society of Jesus.

3 See ALDEN (Dauril), *The Society of Jesus in Portugal, its Empire and Beyond, 1540-1750*, Stanford, 1996, p. 242 for more details on the provincials.

4 The links between India and Japan were always very close, even after the creation of the province of Japan. The question of separating Japan from India was raised in 1580. See ARSI, *Jap-Sin 2*, fol. 12.

5 The Visitor Alessandro Valignano was the one who greatly influenced the missionary work in Japan. He came three times in Japan (1579-1582, 1590-1592 and 1598-1603). For more details

Different levels of the Japanese mission should be explored. First of all, we propose to study it on a continental (Asian) scale. This scale seems relevant for several reasons:

- Missions in Asia were dependent on the Portuguese Crown, under the Royal Patronage (*Padroado*) that financed and controlled them. The missions were part of the Empire's overseas operation. The Crown, represented in India by the Viceroy, was installed in Goa. The Jesuits realized that this scale was also relevant for them and instituted the Visitor, whose actions extended across the entire Asian area;
- Although each mission retained its own characteristics, the management of the whole area by the Visitor enabled him to take into account the continental scale owing to the religious or cultural proximity that brought together these different countries. Consequently, comparisons between different Asian missions could be established;
- Taking into account the continental scale allowed to bring out different missionary strategies between continents, including America. Therefore, specific aspects of Asian missions can be highlighted.

Then, on a national scale, the provinces or vice-provinces had to be examined, since they were often modelled on a country. Comparisons within the same level or between different levels highlight not only the hierarchy among territories, but also individuality and differences in the pastoral strategy. Japan may thus be studied within the Asian region, as opposed to the American area, but also in relation to other Asian countries like China or India. Missionary strategies or pastoral options could not be set or chosen without taking into consideration these different scales of actions and authorities and the need to coordinate them. The decision to open a mission location made by a provincial could be challenged by the Visitor.

If the global and national organizations evolved gradually and empirically, on the contrary, the local levels were subject to special consideration by the founder of the Society, Ignatius of Loyola, while working out the *Constitutions*.

1.2. Local management in the Constitutions

Section VII of the *Constitutions* was related to local management of territories and to Jesuits' assignments. It set up guidelines and criteria about:

on the personality and work of Valignano in Asia see TAMBURELLO (Adolfo), ÜCERLER (M. Antoni), DI RUSSO (Maria), dir., *Alessandro Valignano, uomo del Rinascimento: ponte tra Oriente e Occidente*, Bibliotheca Insituti Historici SJ, volume 65, Rome, 2008, 394 p.

- Locations to set up missions: the main criterion was efficiency, measured by the number of converted people. That is why places likely to welcome Jesuits or where people wished to hear the Gospel had to be favoured. This was especially true in non-Christian areas. These people, once converted, would be better able to spread the Gospel. Similarly, places where the Jesuits received support from the population should be preferred. This criterion applied particularly where the Society had already located a place. Finally, places where authorities were located were subject to special attention. This choice could be explained by the Jesuit political evangelism from the top: Christianity spread more quickly and easily when it was supported by the local elites. But there was also a long-term objective: the moral and religious education of these elites by the Jesuits in their colleges, which would have anchored Christianity solidly in this area. In addition, these places were also more conducive to the recruitment of qualified staff for the Society.
For non-Christian or hostile areas, although there was no desertion, it was recommended to be very cautious and to send specific and experienced staff.
- Jesuits' assignments to different missions: the decision was left to the Superiors. But some freedom was granted to the Jesuits in the choice of a local mission⁶: if they felt that the mission would be more successful in one location than another, they were expected to choose the former, since it was unnecessary to go to a place where the missionaries' actions could be ineffective. The *Constitutions* established a link between the location of the mission and the missionary's choice. The success of the mission depended on good coordination of these two factors.

Another element emerges from section VII of the *Constitutions*: Ignatius of Loyola stressed the importance of having permanent and itinerant missions.

The instability of the Jesuits' establishments appeared as one of the main characteristics of missionary activities. Sent to different parts of the world to convert pagans, movement was constitutive of the identity and spirituality of the missionaries. The more places were visited, the greater the chances of converting the population. Moreover, Jesuits rarely stayed in one place throughout their missionary careers. The instability was stronger in the early days of a mission and in non-Christian countries: it took time for the Jesuits to get permission to open colleges or houses, and to raise the necessary funds.

6 LOYOLA (Ignace de), *Ecrits*, Paris, 1991, pp. 542-558.

Political upheavals could also force the Jesuits to close down a mission. But this instability was not the result of disorganization. It followed a simple guideline: to go to places where a maximum number of people could be converted rapidly, "for the greatest glory of God". However, Ignatius of Loyola made it clear that the instability of the mission was inseparable from permanent settlements. Colleges and houses served as the backbone for missions. If Loyola initially conceived the Jesuits as an itinerant Order, the importance of education would soon appear. Colleges were opened to members of the Society, but also to external students.⁷ Stability allowed missionary work in the long-term. It strengthened the link between the mission, the territory and the converted people. We can speak of a gradual sedentism of the Society of Jesus.

We can also point out that itinerant missions were not opposed to permanent ones. On the contrary, the *Constitutions* established links between these two forms of actions. Itinerant or temporary missions were started from colleges or houses. Stability did not mean immobility: it allowed concentration of staff and better distribution of forces in accordance with mission objectives.

Places visited by missionaries had been chosen to convert new people or to reinforce the faith of the recently converted. Therefore, it prevented excessive stability of the missionary: when he arrived in a fixed location, the Jesuit had to be prepared to move again.

The last important point was mentioned in the fourth chapter of section VII of the *Constitutions*. It defined the relationship between the missionary's movements and the pastoral methods. Ignatius of Loyola highlighted three pastoral tasks: the administration of sacraments, mainly confession and communion, preaching and charitable works. These recommendations applied, at first, to permanent establishments located in Christianized areas, but were also useful during itinerant or temporary missions. All these tasks were quite traditional for people belonging to a religious Order. But we can notice that Loyola's prescriptions were conceived in a European context and for areas that had long been Christianized. The conversion of a pagan population, using methods combining mobility and specific pastoral actions, had never been addressed in itself. Nor had the question of places that the missionaries rarely visited. The shortage of missionaries meant that for several years some areas remained without a Jesuit or without access to the sacraments. Thus the writing of the *Constitutions* revealed Loyola's lack of knowledge of the situation in the Indies. The founder of the Society just mentioned quickly the

7 For more details on the educational programme of the Jesuits, see GIARD (Luce), *Les Jésuites à la Renaissance: système éducatif et production du savoir*, Paris, 1995.

Indies in section VII, but then preferred to give full freedom of action to the missionaries who were on the spot.

To conclude, two elements emerge from the study of the *Constitutions*: firstly, Loyola gave only spiritual recommendations to guide the work of the Jesuits and to make it more effective. He left to the Provincial or Superiors who knew the local situation better to take concrete decisions, provided that they respected the spirituality of the religious Order. Then, Loyola urged the missionaries to think in terms of mission area rather than establish a list of visited places. The local scale had to be favoured by missionaries, even if they should consider other levels to set up their strategies of actions and settlements.

Different kinds of missions conducted from fixed facilities can be defined, depending on the geographical range of action and the categories of people to whom such actions were directed.

As aforementioned, fixed establishments such as colleges or seminaries are proof of a strong presence of converted people: the area had been already Christianized.⁸ They were essential in organizing the mission. They structured geographical mission areas, acting as hubs or bases from which missions could be carried out “for the conquest of souls”. Three types of missions could be run from these institutions⁹:

1) Exploratory missions: missions were limited in time, but sometimes they could last several years. They were intended to assess the chances for a permanent settlement. It was the first essential step on the way to sedentarizing a mission. The missions were directed to convert pagan populations and could have a broad geographical range.

2) Regional missions: a priest was sent to catechize children or inhabitants of a village. These missions aimed to preserve or nurture the faith of recent converts and to listen to Christian denominations. They might have for scope Christian enclaves in pagan territories. In this case, there were also preachings to non-converted people.

8 For example see *Resoluciones que el padre visitador da acerca de los preganmtos dela consulta hizo en Jappon en diversas partes el año de 1581* in ARSI, *Jap-Sin* 2, fols. 73v-74: the Jesuits discussed the places where they were going to establish the colleges and the seminaries. Valignano wanted to set up a college in Funai (Bungo): he explained his choice by the proximity of Usuki where Ôtomo Yoshishige lived and where the novitiate was. Therefore, it underlined the choice of a place where there were already Christians and where the power was settled.

9 See the article of Marie-Lucie Copete and Bernard Vincent, «Missions en Bétique, Pour une typologie des missions intérieures», pp. 261-286, in FABRE (Pierre-Antoine), VINCENT (Bernard), dir., *Missions religieuses modernes, «Notre lieu est le monde»*, Rome, 2007, 410 p. I do not completely follow the authors, since their analyses are applied to European and Christianized populations, whereas in Asia, missions were conducted for pagan people.

3) Missions of proximity: they were part of the normal activities of a college or residence. The Jesuits visited several villages near the settlements, at the request of the local *daimyô* (lord). The usual duration of these missions was two months. The trip was quite long, with many stops but halts lasted only two to three days. The geographical range was limited and the missions were directed towards converted people, generally with a good knowledge of Christian dogmas.

How were these principles of missionary geography applied in Japan?

2. The implementation of these principles in Japan

The Japanese mission had characteristics common to missions in distant and pagan foreign lands: from the arrival of Francis Xavier in 1549 until the beginning of the 1580s, mobility was at the core of the operation of the mission. At that time, the two main Jesuit objectives were the conversion of people and the geographical extension of the Christian faith. The missionaries applied the recommendations mentioned in section VII of the *Constitutions*, concerning spiritual movements. It is true that the writing of the Society's *Constitutions* only began in 1541 and continued until 1558.¹⁰ Since Francis Xavier was one of the founders of the Society, Jesuits in Japan probably knew the main guidelines before the text was completely finished. Moreover, Francis Xavier knew, at least, about the spiritual principles on space management. Therefore, the first missionaries settled down mainly in places where the Christian faith would be well accepted by the local lord. Christianity spread from these bases.

However, Japan had some features that were distinct from other distant missions. Fixed establishments such as colleges, seminaries or residences had been implanted in the archipelago. This could be done in distant missions, where a strong European and Portuguese presence could facilitate paperwork and the funding of such institutions. But Europeans were always a minority in Japan and the Portuguese came only once or twice a year. The creation of colleges and seminaries brought Japan closer to the missionary models of Brazil or India, even though Japan was always governed by its own political leaders. The pair itinerancy/stability, advocated by Loyola, could be applied around the settlements. Densely Christianized areas around colleges and seminaries were created. However, a large part of the Japa-

¹⁰ See the introduction to the *Constitutions* by Pierre-Antoine Fabre, in LOYOLA (Ignace de), *Écrits*, Paris, 1991, pp. 385-391.

nese territory had hardly been Christianized and remained lands covered by itinerant missions.

Missions conducted in densely Christianized areas such as the Nagasaki region were similar to inland missions conducted in European countries at the same period.¹¹ In these areas, missionaries undertook frequent visits to ensure the level of conversion, the quality of the Japanese Catholics' faith, and to control practices of sacraments or the use of religious objects. The Christian space was materialized in the form of crosses or churches. Nevertheless, two nuances should be made: first of all, these areas were the results of a long evolutionary process: the decision of some *daimyô*, such as the one of Ômura in 1574¹², to convert all his subjects, at first facilitated the establishment of Christian enclaves in Japanese territory. But it was not until the 1580s that these densely Christianized areas emerged. Secondly, geographical coverage of such areas remained limited and uneven. If some areas were entirely Christianized in Kyûshû, others were only slightly Christianized or settled in strong minority enclaves.

As a country of Buddhist and Shintoist traditions, Japan on the whole should be considered as a mission land. Nevertheless, in order to highlight the relationships between geography and missionary practice, it is necessary to distinguish several missionary areas that were superimposed:

1) At national scale, a distinction between densely and slightly Christianized areas existed. Highly Christianized areas were located in Kyûshû, while areas with reduced presence of Christians were scattered throughout Japan. In these regions, punctual missions were conducted and aimed at maintaining the faith of the Catholics as well as converting new populations.

2) At regional scale, the Jesuits divided Japan in three areas of mission: Bungo and Shimo, both located in the island of Kyûshû, and Miyako (Kyôto). This division imperfectly corresponded to the Japanese political geography of the 16th century. "Shimo"¹³ represented the North-West part of Kyûshû, and this name was not in common use in Japan. Shimo corresponded mainly to Christian areas of Ômura, Arima, Amakusa and Nagasaki and formed the heart of Japanese Christianity. There, some places were inhabited exclusively by Christians. Local lords were often converted starting from the 1560s.¹⁴

11 On the similarities between missions in Europe and the evangelization of remote and pagan countries, see DESLANDRES (Dominique), *Croire et faire croire: les missions françaises au XVII^e siècle, 1600-1650*, Paris, 2003, 633 p.

12 FRÔIS (Luís), *Historia de Japam*, (ed.) Mourato (Anabela), Camarinhas (Nuno) and Miranda (Tiago C. P. dos Reis), Biblioteca Virtual dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, n.º 10, Lisbon, 2002, chapter 104.

13 «Shimo» means «below».

14 The first *daimyô* to be converted was Ômura Sumitada in 1563.

Bungo represented the East of Kyûshû and overlapped with various geographical and political situations: Bungo was a Japanese province, but also the kingdoms ruled by the Ôtomo family. This name was probably given when Ôtomo Yoshishige, at this time the most powerful *daimyô* of the Eastern Kyûshû¹⁵, gave preferential treatment to the Jesuits. Until 1562, Bungo and its capital, Funai, were the main base of the Jesuits in Japan. Thus, the division of the mission areas in Kyûshû only imperfectly corresponded to the political geography of the island: Satsuma was incorporated by Valignano in the Shimo of the Jesuits while it was an independent kingdom and rival of Ômura or Arima. Valignano noted that although Shimo and Bungo belonged to the same island, they had been separated because of a high number of non-Christian lands in Bungo.¹⁶ In contrast, Shimo was the strength of the Japanese Christianity and Portuguese ships reached the Japanese coast at this place.

So, the degree of Christianization of the population was the key criterion used by the Jesuits in the definition of the missionary geography. They superimposed their Christian geography to Japanese realities.

3) At local scale, Jesuits defined areas of mission in terms of fixed establishments (colleges, seminaries, and residences). Accordingly, annual letters described events and actions grouped by area of mission. Some residences could be tied hierarchically to a college or to a seminary. Missions were always launched from a residence that acted as a base. Thus, it should be noted that the Jesuits did not think in terms of different and distinct visited places, but grouped them into areas of missions.

We can conclude that the Jesuits drew a new map of the Japanese territories by superimposing their own missionary geography on that of the archipelago. However, this overlapping would be increasingly at odds with Japanese realities, mostly after the restructuring of fiefs in Kyûshû in 1587 by Hideyoshi, or after the battle of Sekigahara in 1600.

These different areas of missions had implications for the conduct of the pastoral work and enable a definition of various geographical features of the Japanese mission.

15 In 1551, Ôtomo Yoshishige was only in possession of the province of Bungo. At this time, he conquered wide portions of Higo and Chikugo. After the war with Môri Motonari, Hizen, Buzen and Chikuzen came into his possession. In 1578, Bungo, Buzen, Chikugo, Chikuzen and Higo were under Ôtomo's rule. The word "Bungo" can at this moment be applied to all the lands dominated by the Ôtomo. See MURDOCH (James), *A history of Japan*, volume II, *The century of early foreign intercourse (1542-1651)*, Yokohama/London, 1903, pp. 97-101.

16 VALIGNANO (Alessandro), *Les Jésuites au Japon*, Paris, 1990 (French edition of the *Sumario* of 1583), p. 99.

3. Geographic characteristics of the mission in Japan

The missionaries were the first to establish a relationship between their pastoral work and their knowledge and mastery of the Japanese territory. The study of sources reveals this constant preoccupation.

The *Sumario* by Valignano described with precision the three regions of Japan (Shimo, Bungo and Miyako) and the actions to undertake in each area. This relationship was also mentioned in the letters of missionaries in Japan. Those written before the first visit of Valignano (1579-1582) did not follow specific plans, but revealed the Jesuit keep track of the places visited and where pastoral work had been carried out. Every missionary had to report the preachings or sacraments that he delivered on each visit. In this way, through the letters it is possible to trace the Jesuits' route throughout Japan, and, eventually, to compare their pastoral methods. The detailed description of the places visited gave indications of the geographic spread of Christianity in the Japanese archipelago and highlighted one of the characteristics of the Japanese mission: the converts often had to walk several miles to meet a missionary or to receive the sacraments.¹⁷

The relationship between the pastoral work and missionary geography became more obvious with the introduction of annual letters.

The system of annual letters, set up by Valignano during his first trip to Japan, called for a description of events and pastoral actions carried out in localities where the Jesuits had been. Letters always followed the same pattern, beginning first with "state of Japan", i.e., a report of the past year's political events, and then with the "state of the Society", i.e., a detailed account of the Jesuits in Japan, their distribution, arrivals and departures in the Society and eventually their deaths. After these general considerations, the letters described the main residences and missions attached to them: often, they started with settlements in Kyûshû and ended with those of the Miyako region. The annual letters were intended to avoid the multiplication of sometimes contradictory letters written by various authors from Japan. Annual letters had the advantage of providing a unique and unified view of

17 Letter of Luis Frois, written in Hirado for the Jesuits in India, 3rd of October 1564 in *Cartas que os padres e irmãos da Companhia de Jesus que andão nos reynos de Japão escreverão aos da mesma Companhia da Índia & Europa, desde anno de 1549 até o de 1580, Primeiro tomo, Nellas se conta o principio, socesso, & bontade da christandade daquelles partes, & varios costumes, & idolatrias da gentildade, Impressas por mandado do Iluustrissimo, & reverendissimo senhor dom Theotónio de Bragança Arcebispo d'Evora, Em Europa, Manoel de Lyra, MDXCVIII (1598), microfilm, fol. 147: "Todo o tempo que estiuemos nesta ilha de Taquxima, que he de dom Antonio polas festas principaes, & pascoas do anno, concorrião aqui os Christãos de Firando, & de todas as outras ilhas pera se consolarem no Señor."*

the Japanese mission to the central authorities in Rome. The precise sequence of themes facilitated the reading and also allowed for a better understanding of Japanese realities.

However, the fixed sequence of regions with their residences, adopted in the letters, was not merely for the sake of convenience. The ordering of the places was not trivial. Indeed, the letters almost always started with areas of high Christian densities: the regions of Nagasaki, Ômura and Arima (the Shimo of Valignano) were detailed at the beginning of the letters. In these territories, the pastoral work had come closer to the European model¹⁸: confessions had been the most numerous and the liturgical calendar was modelled on that of Europe. These regions served as good examples to illustrate the Jesuits' success in Japanese lands. The area of Bungo generally came second in the annual letters: the Christian densities were less strong, and pastoral work encountered setbacks at the end of the 16th century because of the redistribution of fiefs imposed by Hideyoshi. If the missionaries had establishments in Bungo, their presence was less important compared to Shimo and pastoral care had been more diffuse. The letters ended with the Miyako and Ôsaka regions, which had the lowest converts and where Christians were scattered. Pastoral work was directed mainly towards the upper classes of society, since the rulers of Japan stayed there, but this strategy experienced only mixed success.

So the contents of the annual letters and their structure revealed the link between missionaries' implantations and pastoral strategy. This raises the question about the balance between the teaching of the faithful and the geographic coverage of the mission. Maintaining the same order of regions in the letters over time showed that this problem was never really resolved, due to the shortage of missionaries. They were assigned primarily to the densely Christian Shimo, while the dissemination of missionaries' locations remained the rule for other territories.

If the letters bring out the relationship between the Jesuits' territorial management and their pastoral work, the geopolitical situation of the archipelago also had a significant impact on the Jesuits' work.

Indeed, at this time, the Japanese territory was highly fragmented. This fragmentation resulted from the presence of many islands, as in Kyûshû. It came also from an important political disunity, leading to the formation of many independent fiefs. This situation had been aggravated by wars between *daimyô*, which were frequent in Kyûshû. This political instability had a dual effect on the pastoral work: in case of refusal to open a mission by a lord,

18 See KATAOKA (Rumiko Ignatia), *La vita e la pastorale di Luís Cerqueira, SJ, vescovo del Giappone (1598-1614)*, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome, 1985, 276 p.

the Jesuits played on the rivalries between *daimyô* to develop geographical expansion of Christianity. But this instability could also endanger a new Christianity, implanted in a territory favourable to Christianity, when it came under the domination of a new *daimyô* hostile to the Jesuits. Thereby, the Christian community could remain isolated several years before forging new contacts with a missionary. Thus, continual recomposition of the Japanese territory had led to the existence of “autonomous” pastoral care where some communities had lived their faith by themselves and without the sacraments. This autonomous pastoral care had also been exacerbated by the presence of many small islands in Japan. The loneliness of these communities, and their geographical remoteness from the centres of missions, meant that pastoral work was needed to constantly bolster the Christians in their faith and beliefs.

Finally, three main geographical features of the Japanese mission may be put forward:

1) The first characteristic is the permanent mobility of the mission, even after the inauguration of fixed establishments in the 1580s. This characteristic may be explained, on the one hand, by Ignatius of Loyola’s recommendations to conduct individual missions from colleges and seminaries. But it was also the result of the dispersion of the Christian communities. On the other hand, mobility also concerned the fixed establishments: the numerous wars and sudden political changes in Japan had repeatedly forced the Jesuits to move their colleges or seminaries. The seminary of Arima, opened in 1582, was followed some time later by the opening of the seminary of Azuchi. With the fall of Oda Nobunaga in 1582, who had established Azuchi as his main residence, the seminary was transferred to Takatsuki, under the protection of Takayama Ukon Dom Justo. When Hideyoshi took possession of Settsu, Dom Justo lost his fief. The seminary moved again to Ôsaka, before merging with that of Arima. As to college, courses had been given in Funai, then the college moved to Miyako and finally to Nagasaki. Therefore, itinerancy did not spare fixed establishments, and prevented continued pastoral actions.

2) The second geographical characteristic of the Japanese mission was the grouping of most missionaries and Christians in Kyûshû and Miyako. The centralization of the mission in Kyûshû can be explained by two reasons: on the one hand, the Portuguese docked in the southern harbours once or twice a year.¹⁹ Their help was essential because they brought goods from Europe and from India to the missionaries, as well as subsidies. Their commercial importance for the *daimyô* was also an effective means for the

19 See BA, *Jesuítas na Ásia*, 49-IV-56, *Lista dos annos, viagens, e capitães mores do trato de Jappão (1549-1639)*, fol. 71v-72. For more details on the annual trip of the Portuguese to Japan, see BOXER (Charles Ralph), *O grande navio de Amacau, Macao*, 1989 (first edition in 1960), 330 p.

Jesuits to gain concessions from the local lords. On the other hand, the gift of Nagasaki to the Jesuits by the *daimyô* of Ômura in 1580 contributed to a rally of Christians in this area. From the start, Nagasaki stood as a symbol and a place of refuge for Christians.²⁰ Ômura was then under attack by Ryûzôji Takanobu, who took control of Hizen in 1579 and wanted to seize Nagasaki. Being the masters of the harbour, the Jesuits supported a Christian *daimyô* against a fierce enemy of Christianity. Moreover, because of the numerous political upheavals, Nagasaki became a safe place for persecuted Christians and also for missionaries. The donation was, therefore, signed on 9 June 1580, by Dom Bartolomeu and his son Dom Sancho. The territorial government of Nagasaki was assigned to the Jesuits, but the *daimyô* retained his sovereignty. Nagasaki then constituted the main bases for Christianity and helped to centralize the mission in Kyûshû.

Regarding the concentration of Christians in the region of Miyako, it stemmed from a deliberate focus of the Jesuits on the upper classes of the Japanese society and institutions of power. Valignano asked the Jesuits to favour Miyako in the pastoral work. He explained his choice with four arguments.²¹ Firstly, the missionaries should seek proximity with the country's leaders, as they might authorize the Jesuits to preach and they might facilitate the expansion of Christianity, by imposing their new faith on their vassals. Miyako, where the Imperial Court lived, had the largest noble population of the whole of Japan. Secondly, the wealth of the area, as opposed to Kyûshû, would allow the Jesuits to survive without the assistance given by the *daimyô*. A clear link could be established between the location of a Christian society in Miyako and its possible extension to the rest of Japan. Unlike Kyûshû, the concentration of missionaries in Miyako had been decided for strategic reasons. Thirdly, the reputation of a person in Japan was built in the capital, and the Jesuits had to gain credit in Miyako if they wanted to be well considered in the rest of the archipelago. Finally, Valignano stressed that the interests of the Society in Miyako were not linked to those of the Portuguese. Therefore, the conversion of lords was more truthful. However, it should be noted that Miyako always had less Christians than Kyûshû despite the Jesuits' efforts.

3) The last geographical characteristic of the Japanese mission is its extreme dispersion.²² This fact did not conflict with the centralization of the

20 RODRIGUES (Helena Margarida Barros), *Nagasáqi Nanban, das origens à expulsão dos Portugueses*, polycopied Master thesis, FCSH-UNL, Lisbon, 2006, p. 45.

21 VALIGNANO (Alessandro), *Les Jésuites au Japon*, Paris, 1990, pp. 142-143.

22 See ARSI, *Jap-Sin 2*, fol. 4v: the missionaries examine the problems of the extreme dispersion of Christianity in Japan.

mission in the two aforementioned areas. Communities existed outside these two main, densely Christianized regions. They were scattered throughout the country and could count only a few family members. Therefore, at national scale, it was difficult to know about all these Christian communities.²³

These considerations lead to three comments related to the question of pastoral work: first of all, Christianity was well accepted by both Christian and non-Christian *daimyô*. Accordingly, evangelization spread on a large scale and enjoyed the protection of several lords. In the area of Nagasaki, even after Hideyoshi reshaped the map of the fiefs in 1587, some “Gentile” *daimyô* continued to give preferential treatment to converts.²⁴ Many Christians were living in territories ruled by non-Christian lords, without being persecuted: pastoral care should take into account the coexistence of people of different religions, living together in the same area. Difficulties in administering sacraments, such as marriage²⁵, between Christian and pagan people had to be solved. Secondly, the issue of the teaching and education of the faithful again arose. The extreme dispersion of Christians led to the formation of quasi-independent communities, rarely, if at all, visited by a missionary. The question of the survival and doctrinal orthodoxy of these communities was raised. The pastoral work had to train leaders capable of supporting these autonomous communities. Finally, the mix of Christian and pagan populations, and the dispersion of Catholics, could increase conversions, facilitated by constant contacts between different religions. This Christian extension continued even at the beginning of the 17th century, when the Tokugawa toughened their policy towards the foreign religion.

Therefore, we can say that the geographical dispersion of the Christian communities attested to the success of the Jesuits’ pastoral methods in quantitative terms (the large number of conversions), as well as in qualitative terms, which relates to the capacity to promote the Christian faith among non-Christian people.

In conclusion, the spirituality developed by Ignatius of Loyola in the *Constitutions* was applied by the Jesuits on Japanese territorial management. The Japanese territory had to be viewed in a global space, marked by the centrality of Europe. However, commands or decisions coming from Rome or from India arrived late in Japan because of the distances and difficulties

23 COSTA (João Paulo Oliveira e), “The Brotherhoods (*Confrarias*) and lay support for the early Christian church in Japan”, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, volume 34, n.º 1, 2007, p. 69.

24 BA, *Jesuítas na Ásia*, 49-IV-59, fol. 254.

25 See ARSI, *Jap-Sin* 22, fols. 212-243.

of communication. This factor gave the Jesuits some freedom to implement the principles defined in Rome. This liberty was also the result of the Japanese political situation: the many wars obliged the Jesuits to adapt the spiritual recommendations of Ignatius of Loyola even though the missionaries tried to respect them most of the time. This desire to find a balance between the European decisions and this necessity of adaptation led the Jesuits to superimpose their own perception of the Japanese territories on the real geopolitics of the archipelago. They divided Japan in three areas (Shimo, Bungo and Miyako) and created, in consequence, a missionary geography that did not fully correspond to political realities.

Finally, it should be noted that the territorial management of the mission had to take into account the dispersion of Christians in the archipelago. This context led the Jesuits to invent innovative pastoral methods suited to this situation. In this sense, territorial management had been an integral part of the missionary strategy in Japan. However, the Jesuits will eventually have had less and less leeway to pursue their territorial strategy because of the gradual unification of Japan under one ruler²⁶, who could therefore impose his decisions on the entire country.

26 Three personalities unified the country: Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616), who established the *Bakufu* of Edo. For more details on the political events of this period, see HERAIL (Francine), *Histoire du Japon des origines à la fin de Meiji*, Paris, 1986, 455 p.