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Validation and Propagation – Mutio Vitelleschi’s Letters from Surviving Japan Mission Jesuits (1625 – 1627)

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Introduction

Resolute. Glorious. Triumphant. These were words that the surviving Jesuits used when writing to their leader and confidant Mutio Vitelleschi about the deaths of their brothers in Japan. The glorification of death of the early 17th century Jesuits in Japan was not new as it was a practice that stems beyond the early Christian Church and well into Biblical scripture and the archaic period. Each civilization had an underlying purpose for such descriptions, such as ethnocentrism or rights activism, but what purpose did such vivid albeit horrific descriptions of death serve to the Society of Jesus? ¹ Without the appropriate amount of understanding of the aim of the Jesuits as well as their view of the Japanese, these deaths cannot be understood from the perspective of the Jesuits; as martyrdoms. This chapter provides insight on why these letters written to Vitelleschi

¹ Despite differences in opinion of what constitutes martyrdom among scholars it can be agreed that the audience reaction to people such as Socrates, Martin Luther King Jr. or Che Guevara could be deemed as a modern form of martyrdom.

pertaining to martyrdoms in Japan were crucial to the validation of their Order and their comprehension of the Japanese.

At the heart of this chapter is Superior General Mutio Vitelleschi, a man of the upmost authoritative power within the Jesuit Order when it came to promulgating the letters written to him. His skillful influence perpetuated the glorification and ultimately the spiritual success of the Jesuit mission to Japan despite their banishment from Japan. The information that Vitelleschi had in his grasp is paramount to our understanding of the earliest order of the Jesuits as well as what had happened to their Order in Japan. This chapter discusses the 1632 Dutch publication of Mutio Vitelleschi's *laerliicksche Brieven van Iaponien der Jaren 1625, 1626, 1627*² in a way that observes the Jesuit perception of the Japanese.³ It is noted that these letters also exemplify an early form of travel writing despite the publication's lackluster and crude format. In essence, this chapter aims to bolster the idea that the Jesuit understanding of the Japanese is intimately connected with the nature of the early Jesuit missions - the propagation of the faith as well as the urgent need of validation.

In accordance with this publication this chapter will, in the first half, discuss the history in which Vitelleschi's book was written, the method of communication between the Jesuits in China, Japan and Rome as well as a brief biography of Vitelleschi. The second half observes that the Japanese are described in stark contrasts between the converted and the murders with little to no middle ground. This description is related to Rietbergen's concept of knowing the Other through travel writing. Unlike most books of seventeenth century travel writing *laerliicksche Brieven* disregards itinerary, cultural, linguistic and physical differences and focuses on the description of death. Depending on which side this Other fell on, the Japanese were portrayed either positively, purely on the basis of their Christian habits, or negatively based on their aggression towards Christianity. This was done with the validation of the Jesuit order in mind. There is particular emphasis that these books are an early form of travel writing and as such do not contain information similar to that of later travel writings such as Kreitner or Kaempfer. The Jesuit publications, the closing chapters to the Jesuit mission in Japan, are perpetuated by the idea of piety in the face of adversary and 'evil' despite the events that had unfolded after 1614 were clear consequences of the anti-Christian edict.

2 Yearly Letters from Japan in the Years 1625, 1626, 1627

3 There are two previous volumes: *Rerum Memorabilium in Regno Iaponiae Gestarum Litterae an MDCXIX. XX.XXI.XXII* (1619 - 1622) and *laerliicksche brief van Japonien van het iaer 1624 aenden seer eerweerdighen*

The Jesuit Hierarchy and Their Mission in Japan

The 16th and 17th centuries are two of the most fascinating periods of Roman Catholic and Japanese history as both East and the West were in a state of upheaval and civil and international wars. Japan until 1600 and Europe officially beginning in 1618 though indicators of resolve and conflict can be observed much earlier than these times.⁴ The focus of this chapter is narrowed to the Jesuit Order and the man who promulgated the closing chapters of the Japan mission in 1631.⁵

The foundation of the Society of Jesus' from the year 1540 promulgates in their official document that their mission is; 'to strive especially for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine and for propagation of the faith.' (O'Malley, et.al, 2006, p.14) Unlike other Catholic dioceses, which lived mainly in contemplation and isolation, their propagation of faith meant that this society was not only there to make learned theological and philosophical men, but it meant for the brotherhood to 'journey to the infidel' (O'Malley, et.al, 2006, p.16). It was an international religious order of the Holy Roman Empire in the sense that the order was accumulated of missionaries from the respective countries of Italy, Portugal and Southern Netherlands. Their priestly vows consisted of chastity, poverty and obedience. As such Jesuits should not hold political loyalty or be affiliated with politics or policy making of any sort.

The spirituality of their Order relied on defining the spectrum of their missionary programme within the stipulations that "The world is our home" (O'Malley, 1994, p.146) and "God who does all [and] is in all matter" (Evennett, 1968, p.53). Under this development, the Jesuit expansion took hold of nearly every continent and ranged their activities from theatre to agriculture from teaching to confession. (Quattrone, 2004, p. 667) They grew massively "by 1615 the Order attained a worldwide presence, with 372 colleges and 123 residences for its estimated 13,000 members ." (O'Malley, 1994) To keep it under control, a hierarchy was created - a type of reductionism - the head being the (Superior) General and under him in descending order were the assistances, provinces, colleges, prefect and procurators. This system relied on the enactment of spiritual self autonomy. The lowest ranking missionaries relied on their priestly vows and spiritual integrity, while being kept

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- 4 According to Bireley; Europe's Thirty Years War began officially in 1618 but conflicts can be observed earlier than this within the scope of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. Japan was divided among clans until its unification and national hegemony until 1600.
 - 5 *laerliicksche Brieven* is the second version written one year after its original predecessor *Lettere annue del Giappone degla'anni MDCXXV, MDCXXVI and MDCXXVII*

in check by higher ranking officials from Provinces through extensive three year period evaluations, which monitored their spiritual mission and well being. Correspondence through letters was absolutely crucial; it allowed for Jesuits of higher ranking to maintain their respective station without the need to visit other nations.⁶

Despite the hierarchical nature of the order, the position of General is not to be confused with that of a dictator, as the Jesuits were accountable to him not under pure directive but under the glorification and search for God. In other words, the Jesuit missionaries fulfilled their mission of 'saving souls' and the General's success was based on their execution of the mission whether it be to procure funding or report on the numbers of saved throughout foreign lands. The power of the General himself was also intended to be kept in check by meetings between himself and the Congregation. However by 1618 these meetings discontinued to convene due to the complications of the Thirty Years War giving the Order's Superior General Mutio Vitelleschi absolute decision within this hierarchy.⁷

6 Quattrone in his article '*Accounting for God: accounting and accountability practices in the Society of Jesus (Italy, XVI-XVII centuries)*' gives a comprehensive layout of the hierarchical and administrative accountability from pages 654 - 656

7 See above at n.6

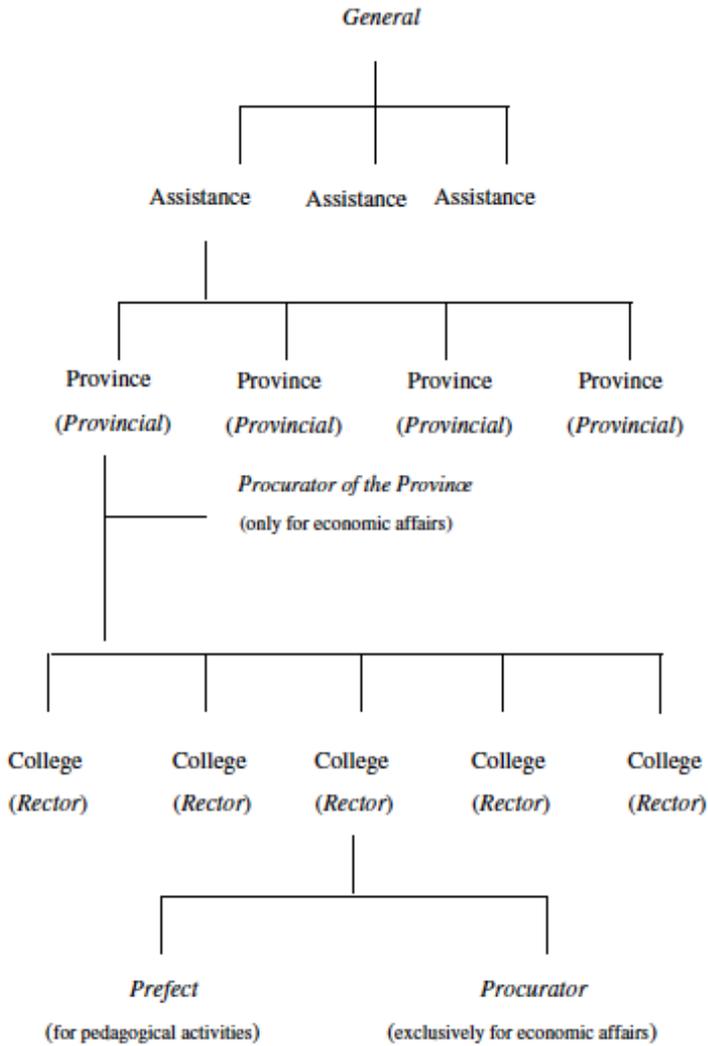


Fig 1: *The hierarchical organisation of the Society of Jesus*

Source: Quattrone, P. (2004) Accounting for God: Accounting and accountability practices in the Society of Jesus (Italy, XVI-XVII centuries). *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 29, 647-683. (p. 655)

The first Jesuit and pioneer of the Jesuit mission to Asia, Francis Xavier, had arrived in Japan in 1549; six years after Portuguese shipping made its first arrival in China and nine years after the Jesuit order was initially created. The local territorial warlord, or Daimyo, feared Christianity might weaken his influence, and thus cut the mission short after only a year. As the daimyo's edict was absolute and Xavier left.⁸ In 16th century Japan, real power resided not with the emperor of Japan, but with these daimyo, turning Japan into a country divided by clans. The accumulation of more Jesuits to arrive in Japan and China did not take place until the Portuguese had rented Macau as a trading port from the Chinese in 1557, four years after Xavier's death. Macau became the major trading port for the Portuguese who had exchanged firearms and spices with the Chinese. Asia mission Jesuits permanently settled in Macau in 1563, created the University of Macau, and made it a central communication hub between the East and West.⁹

Although Jesuit expansion back in Japan was initially not deemed a threat, the conversion of certain daimyo to Roman Catholicism produced fears similar to those expressed by Xavier's daimyo. In 1600 the decisive Battle of Sekigahara brought Japan's warring state to an end. Tokugawa Ieyasu took control by creating a Shogunate. (Mass, 1985, p.9)¹⁰ This Tokugawa Shogunate entailed a reign of national hegemony and lasted until 1868. By 1614 an official anti-Christian edict was promulgated by the Shogun under the influence of the VOC.¹¹ Daimyo, Jesuits and other converts of lower rankings who had accepted the Christian faith were told to renounce it or face death or banishment under this edict. The propagation of the faith had become effective and the number of reported converts ranged nearly 300,000 by 1600.¹² Eager to consolidate his newly found power

8 During his brief mission to Japan Xavier had learned that evangelical poverty, the fundamental basis of Christianity, did not appeal to the Japanese. As a result he wrote to his future brothers wishing to venture to Japan how its customs were drastically different from that of his missions in Europe and India. Under Xavier's written counsel, it was essential that missionaries must adorn themselves with similar apparel, attain similar customary manners and culinary etiquette as well as learning their language. Above all, it was of grave importance to obtain permission of the local daimyo to propagate their faith. Japan was at civil war and as such there was not one overarching ruler, or shogun, to come to in order to acquire permission to do so throughout their entire land in the 16th century. It was through this civil tension that began the acceptance and suppression cycle the Jesuits encountered for the next eighty-two years. (Hubert, p. 7)

9 Sonnenburg, P. M. 'Macao (Macau)' p.359 in *Colonialism. Vol. 2., N - Z*

10 Mass states on this page that the Tokugawa shogunate was more effective in their consolidation of territories than their predecessors

11 Reference to Angles, et. al 'Western Intervention and National Seculsion' in p. 1046

12 Reference to S. Smee's article 'West meets East in 'Portugal, Jesuits, and Japan' The Boston Globe 04, April 2013 however the exact number is contested.

and daimyo, the Shogun severed relations with the Jesuit order and other dioceses that had taken hold of the 250 churches that he had once helped to reestablish in Japan.¹³ Christians were no longer welcome and any pursuit in breaching this edict was met with the penalty of death. The edict was put into relentless and systematic effect causing converts to renounce their faith or suffer the penalty of death by sword or fire. Absolute banishment had reached its pinnacle and from 1635 onwards another edict, Sakoku, was promulgated to dissolve all Spanish and Portuguese trading relations in Japan. (Laver, 2011, p.14) The Holy Roman Empire's establishment in Japan was officially over and the VOC at its pinnacle within Japan's only open port near Nagasaki.

Despite the anti-Christian edict there were remaining Jesuits in Japan well into the 1620's.¹⁴ Discovered surviving Jesuits were banished and set sail for Macau, China. It was here in Macau that they had sent detailed letters from the years 1625 to 1627 reporting these deaths to Rome addressed to the Jesuit leader and confidant Superior General Mutio Vitelleschi. The sources Vitelleschi had used are letters or travel reports from purported eye witnesses. No matter their accuracy these direct testimonies through letters, despite the horrific descriptions of deaths that will be analyzed in the next section, were typified as a whole as a successful mission.

Life of Mutio Vitelleschi

Born in Rome on 2 December 1563, Vitelleschi was of a prominent Roman noble lineage. He was the third born of his three brothers raised among servants and a maestro. Under his maestro's influence and his father's disapproval Vitelleschi joined the Jesuit order at nineteen. The inner circles and connections that Vitelleschi's family had moved him procured a position as assistant amongst the more notable Jesuits such as the 6th Superior General Acquaviva. His studies were similar to that of Trigault's and all brothers within the Society however his connections earned him after his teaching a position as rector in 1592 and provincial superior of the Neapolitan Province in 1602. By 1608 he became an assistant to Acquaviva. His background and resumé of ascending the hierarchical Order ultimately enabled him to becoming elected by the Congregation of the Order as the first non-Spanish Superior General in 1614. (Bireley, 2003)

13 'History of the Jesuits Before the 1773 Suppression': subsection: Japan <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14086a.htm>

14 *Theatre de la constance laponoise ou martyre de cent et dixhuict valeureux champions de lesvs-Christ crvellement occis povr la foy chrestienne av lapon l'an 1622* is the epitomized pamphlet relating this.

“Vitelleschi’s overall policy as general was to advance the many apostolic works of the Society in service of the church. Necessary for this was the maintenance of harmony within the Society at a time of intensifying national rivalries.” (Bireley, 2003, p.30) When the Thirty Years War began in 1618, Vitelleschi was tasked with the same duties that Superior General’s had held before him such as surveying corresponding letters from Provinces about overseas and European missions as mentioned in the previous section as well as deciding what new missions should be undertaken. But the war brought with it unintended hardships. Vitelleschi was faced with negotiating the demands of the Pope, the insurmountable expectations of royal benefactors as well as the Jesuit court confessors who had differing views on exercising political power.¹⁵ Vitelleschi attempts to steer the confessors away from offending their royal benefactors by their individual interpretation and manipulation of what is known as fine line of moral and political guidance. As a result of the internal feuding of loyalties and agendas Vitelleschi turned more of his attention towards the court confessors rather than the missionaries overseas. Royal benefactors, especially from Spain and Portugal, were disgruntled by some of the confessors prying influence.¹⁶ Their investment into the Jesuit missions to Japan showed no positive outcome. In light of this the publication of *laerliicksche Brieven* in 1632 can be seen from the perspective that Vitelleschi utilizes it to validate the Jesuit Order to his benefactors amidst the strife caused in court.¹⁷ Thus it is postulated that what seemed to be a unsuccessful mission to Japan was deemed to a glorious victory through resolute martyrdoms.

15 New Catholic Encyclopedia”: ‘Jesuit Confessors’ - “they [the Jesuits] acted as royal confessor to all French kings for 2 centuries, from Henry III to Louis XV; to all German emperors after the early 17th century; to all Dukes of Bavaria after 1579; to most rulers of Poland and Portugal; to the Spanish kings in the 18th century; to James II of England; and to many ruling or princely families throughout Europe.”

16 According to Bireley, this was not the first nor last time the Jesuits came under fire for their prying influence in matters of the court.

17 *Rerum memorabilium in regno laponiae gestarum litterae annuae, ab anno 1619 - 1622* was published in 1625, three years after the retrieval and compilation but was not translated in other languages and *laerlijken brief van het jaer 1624 aenden seer eerweer* the second published in 1628 and is the second edition. While letters were received in the past and Vitelleschi had published them as well the very fact that Vitelleschi waited over four years to publish the first version leaves the question as to why he had waited so long to publish this round of letters.

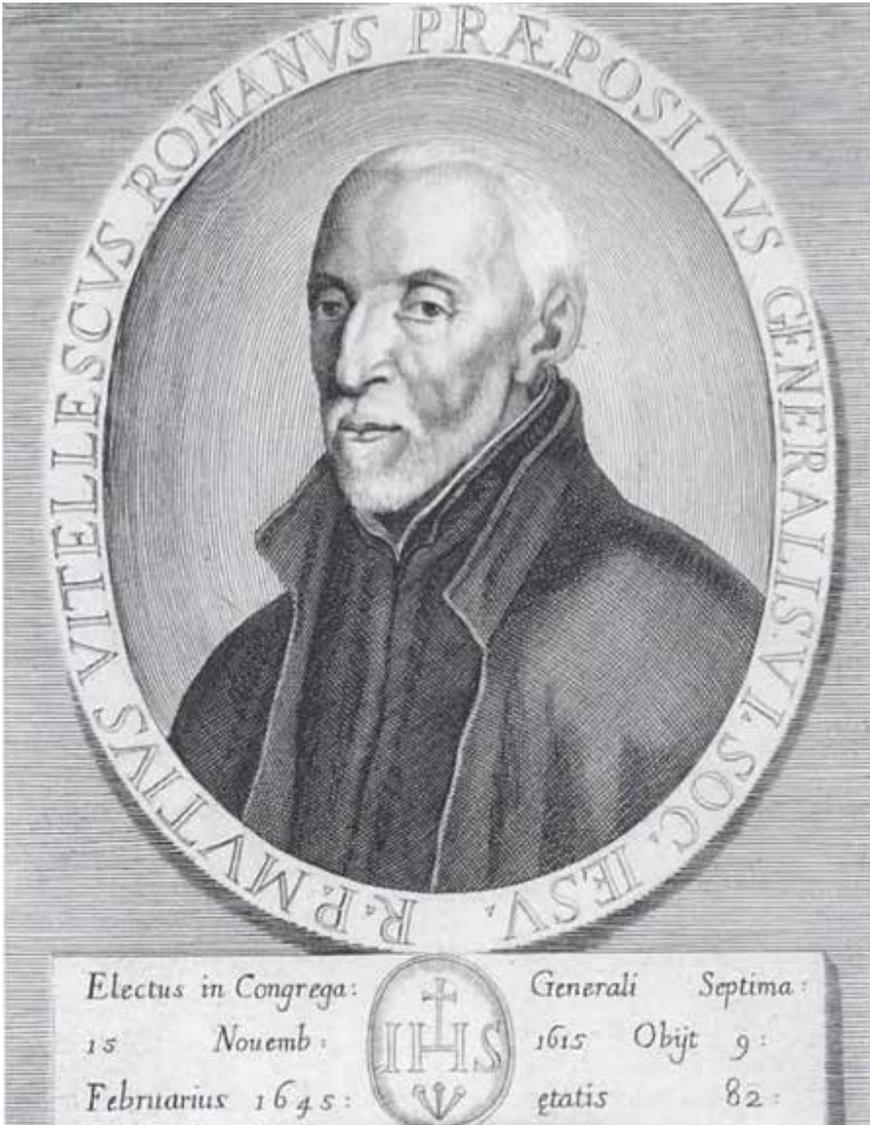


Fig. 2: Mutio Vitelleschi, superior general of the Society of Jesus from 1615 to 1645.

Source: Arnold van Westerhout, *Imagines Praepositorum Societatis Jesu* (Antwerp, 1748), quoted by R. Bireley (2003). *The Jesuits and the Thirty Years War: Kings, Courts and Confessors*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 129.

The *laeliicksche Brieven*

The sanctioned publication of *laeliicksche Brieven* was announced as the closing chapter on the mission to Japan and its translation of the original Italian version was written by one of the surviving Jesuits who had written on the year 1625, Joannes Baptista Bonelli. Other than in the Dutch language it was translated into other languages for supporters of the Holy Roman Empire amidst the Thirty Years War.¹⁸ Within it were the letters written directly to Vitelleschi from the years 1625 - 1627 by four surviving Japan mission Jesuit priests¹⁹ that detailed the events, lives and deaths of the Jesuit missionaries and their Kirishitan converts. With a total of 390 pages, *laeliicksche Brieven* was translated by Jacobus Susius and published in Antwerpen by Jan Cnobbaert in 1632, a gezworen boekdrukker (sworn printer) and active devotional works publisher.²⁰ The specific location was Sint-Pieter, bij het Professenhuis van de Sociëteit Jesu in Antwerpen - the previous center of the printmaking world in the 1570s. It was a port city that only allowed Catholicism as protestants had been evicted in 1585. The book contains no images or annex. It is crudely divided into three yearly sections between the four Jesuit authors of these letters written directly to Vitelleschi from 1625 - 1627. With the exception of the original Italian version, within each translation is a different dedication. This Dutch version is specifically dedicated to Petrus Scribus, a refugee Benedictine monk residing in Leuven and diocese friend to the Jesuit Order.²¹

Ambiguous Content

From what can be understood by Vitelleschi's biography the publication of *laeliicksche Brieven* was written with a two-fold intent: the first to validate the Jesuit Japan mission to royal benefactors and the second to bolster the spirit of their Jesuit brotherhood and other friendly diocese such as the Benedictines by showing that the deaths due to the salvation of souls was pure, pious and in the glory of God. Another fact looms over this is

18 Italian 1631 (original - badly damaged), Dutch 1632, French 1633, English (circa 1638 - 42), French (under different title - only 1 copy left in the world being sold by a the Dutch antiquities dealer 'Antiquariaat Forum B.V' for 17,5k)

19 V.E. Joannes Baptista Bonelli, Petrus Moricon, Joannes Roiz Giran, Christophorus Ferreria

20 CERL Thesaurus cnio035667 Cnobbaert, Jan [STCV] <http://thesaurus.cerl.org/record/cnio0035667>

21 Information on Petrus Scribus taken from Abdij van Vlierbeeck - <http://abdijvanlierbeeck.be/geschiedenis/htm>

that Vitelleschi had never visited Japan but it can be agreed that their sources were based on the letters they had received from the Japan Jesuit mission and that all affiliated persons mentioned were of Catholic faith.

laerliicksche Brieven are letters that contain purported first-hand information of the Jesuit missions in Japan as well as the treatment of the Jesuits by the Japanese authorities, vivid descriptions of the Jesuit and convert martyrdoms and stories about the Japanese empire itself in its customs, usages and daily life. However there is more emphasis placed on Jesuit and convert deaths and the later information is masked or rarely discussed as this information of customs and daily life is only described in the 'first book' by Bonelli. It should be noted that the residences discussed in these letters are from the southwest region of Japan, including Nagasaki, Omura, Bungo, Firando, Arima, Buygen, Cicugo. Their mention is only done so in ambiguous chronological order rather than regional. This implies that the four Jesuit brothers who had written these letters to Vitelleschi had not seen most of the events they depicted but had extraneous sources. For example; the distance between the island of Firando and the town of Omura is nearly 150 English miles and yet the two subsections that mention them (pages 42-47 and 48-52) are side-by-side without any indication of the distance of time between them other than that they are from the year 1626. Given the fact that such a travel by a Jesuit priest would not go unrecognized as Japan continued to be divided into borders and checkpoints there is the implication that the letters had sources behind them which were most likely oral.

Continuing with this theme of ambiguity and as mentioned previously this book of letters does not contain an annex and indiscriminately discusses the aforementioned topics with main emphasis on deaths. It alternates between simply listing the deceased and giving vivid description without reason. It is crudely divided by its years and requires a considerable amount of time to make distinctions. For the sake of saving the a potential reader heartache, I have devised my own here: The year 1625, which I will call the first book, spans from pages 1 - 130, has 29 subsections and was written by Ioannes Baptista Bonelli. The year 1626, the second book, spans from pages 131 - 219 has 21 subsections or what Petrus Morción attributes as 'het capittels'. The year 1626, the third, is written about once again and spans from 219 - 294 with 19 subsections is written by Ioannes Roiz Giran. The year 1627, the final and fourth book, from pages 294 - 384 with 14 subsections written by Christophorus Ferreria.

All of this considered, it would not be a stretch to say that *laerliicksche Brieven* is an advocate of an early form of travel writing. Despite not following the rules of

Ars Apoedmica²², as prescribed by Rietsbergen, this book does have dedications and a prologue and to a certain extent in their introductions a type of description of the the Japan region's happenings. The intent of Vitelleschi is to make his readers understand why they necessarily were successful in their mission in Japan despite their banishment. The main emphasis on the martyrdoms key to this success. While the itinerary of the letters are not clear they can be ascertained as having an integral role in the continuation of European imperial expansion in the 17th century. *laerliicksche Brieven* does not only reveal the activities of the Jesuits abroad but also their attitudes and ideologies that form a clearer understanding of their Order as well as their description of the Other in terms that they understand. (Thompson, 2011, p. 3)

Murderers and Converts: The Two-Fold Interpretation of the Other

Dedications and prefaces of books are the best way to understand the mindset of the author especially when it comes to how they perceive the Other. However it can be understood that "The very fact of recognizing someone as 'other' implies, of course, a conscious or, more likely, unconscious concept of 'self', a notion that enables the "I" to judge in which ways he is different from "You"." (Rietbergen, 2002, p. 66) This rings true to Vitelleschi's description of the Other which is dominantly with religious intent. This section will determine the two-fold description of the Other in terms of those who are converted and those who are 'murderers', 'tyrants' or 'executioners'. This description of the Other undeniably differs from the other chapters as it is rather overly simplistic; an 'us' versus 'them' idea without any information regarding the specific geographical or other anthropological interests that come with travel-writing. In other words, Vitelleschi's sole interest is completely immersed within the religious context of martyrdoms. In his book there is main emphasis more on the concept of 'self' than there is 'you' as will be depicted. This leads to the overarching premise that the description of the Other bolsters the idea that the Jesuit understanding, or what can fundamentally be known, of the Other

22 Rietbergen, 2002 p.74 mentions the accepted scheme of texts that came from traveling writing such as distinction in chapters as well as attributing specific approaches starting with a geographical or historical introduction then onto more anthropological interests such as flora, fauna, physical appearances, et cetera.

is intimately connected with the nature of the early Jesuit missions - the propagation of the faith as well as the urgent need of validation amidst Western and Eastern civil and international war.

The letters written to Vitelleschi describe the Other in a manner that steers away from the causes and describes the decaying state in which their residences are in which mostly involves a form of imprisonment or excruciating public execution of the Japan Jesuits and their converts. The letters rarely provide a narrative setting, often making the details of the region in which the deaths had taken place indistinguishable. The beginning of nearly all subsections detail those who died and how they had died with the exception of the first chapter of the first letters sent by Bonelli in 1625. To clarify once again there is more vivid description of how the men who had died, Jesuit or Japanese convert, than that of the person who had murdered them. There is a mechanical ambiguity in the description of those who carried out the executions. 'They', the Other, are known as 'judges', 'murderers', 'executioners' or 'tyrants' and there is not much more said of them other than this and how they carried out their method of torture.

Explaining the Unexplainable – A Depiction of the Pious Death Equates Success

Simply choosing the topic of 'death' will not suffice as it is too broad of a topic in itself especially in relation to the martyrdoms. For this reason I will choose to delegate between two topics of key interest amidst the mayhem of persecutions that point to the Jesuit understanding of the Other while validating their mission as a triumphant success. The first is the depiction of an obscure sense of 'jurisdictional' system - more notably the term 'rechters' or 'judges' on pages 75 through 76 in Vitelleschi's *laerlicksche Brieven* and the second on its relation to the eager death of one convert which is synonymous to the crucifixion of Christ.

The New Testament iterates that persecution is an accepted norm for Christians or those that abide by the commandments and teachings of Jesus Christ and his benevolent father God. These anecdotes bid fair warning to those who accept and live by his teachings.

²³ Invigorated by this type of piety and spirituality that had been taught by Jesuit priests,

23 Most notable of these is when Jesus spoke to his disciples on several issues at the Feast of the Passover or what is better known to as the Last Supper. He acknowledged with a troubled spirit the betrayal he would suffer and also spoke to them about manners pertaining to love and persecution for their faith in him and God. "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you." John 15:18, NIV

laerliicksche Brieven demonstrates converts resonating their teaching's of Christ in the most profound manner possible. This one in particular draws up on this reverent action.

“...a few days later he (Thomas Quiyemone) was summoned before the judges and asked by them if he was Christian.. which he assured them; they began to advise against it with multiple reasons; but not progressing they sent him to prison. And Tono who was far from everything witnessed: of who came after four months the order that they should put him to death. Judges brought him before them and asked if he felt the same, but understanding that he didn't change ordered the sentence to be carried out. (p.76)

This passage depicts the well-known method of ‘judges’ compelling converts to renounce their faith under the penalty of death under the Tokugawa shogunate.²⁴ The key actors in this passage; the convicted Thomas, the judges, the guards, the orderer of this execution and the executioner. However it should be pointed out that from the perspective of the Jesuit who had written this letter, it cannot be conceived that he clearly understood the jurisdictional order of the Tokugawa shogunate. As such for Bonelli, the Jesuit who had written this letter to Vitelleschi, it made sense to place deaths such as the one described above, in terms of an ad hoc jurisdictional system similar to that of one in Europe that contained a trial with judges, executioners and witnesses.

Bonelli was not far off with the exception of names and what their function was. “In the Tokugawa period there was no one set of laws unifying the country. While the shogunate did issue basic guidelines and directives to various provinces, the internal operation of each domain remained under the control of largely independent daimyo.” (Botsman, 1992, p 2) What is more is that trials, such as the one depicted above, were rare with the exception of the *rōya* in Edo.²⁵ However to state this conflicts with the passage above where the convert by the Christian name of Thomas was incarcerated for four months then brought before the judges. How can these two facts, one from seventeenth century travel writing and the other from scholarly study, be synchronized without implicating that one provides false information?

24 Hsia, in his book *The World of Catholic Renewal 1540 - 1770* details the sporadic executions and the pinnacle of the expulsion of Jesuits and their converts by various methods via ‘judges’ on p. 208

25 Botsman, p. 13 - The *Kodenmachō Rōya* refers to a select imprisonment camp much like the gaol systems used in Europe where there would be a warden, execution ground, office and official investigation into the suspect's crime

The fact is that neither provide a false interpretation of the type of jurisdiction carried out but it is about representation of the mechanical and murderous Other.²⁶ From the year 1625 and onward those Christians were mostly hidden in fear in public execution and this fear was faceless up until the time that they were imprisoned. While Thomas, who was Japanese, may have understood better what and whom he was facing, the very fact that it was a Jesuit who wrote on his behalf implies that what is written in this passage says more about Bonelli's understanding of what he had heard from extraneous sources or what he had, which is less likely as depicted in the previous sections, witnessed. The passage continues on:

While leaving the prison the servant of God was eager to be put to death having tasted over time of his binds, how sweet the bitter chalice falls which is drank for Christ suffering; turning to the guards said: 'Oh if thou love me, bind these hands more tightly.' And speaking to the people who had come to witness said: 'Oh ye who see me, know that I am brought to death no different than the confessed Christ; of whom I thank the divine mercifulness; and confess that nothing more pleasant can happen to me.' Coming to the place of death and now kneeling, presented his head to the executioner, which was chopped off on the first of December in the 1624 in the empire of Bugem by order of Teciundona Foso Caua, Tono of this empire." (p. 76)

This reaction of the convicted conveys the Jesuit invigoration of their convert's spirituality which demonstrates the upmost spiritual success. Beyond their mission to propagate their faith was the mission to 'save souls' and imbue their converts with Christ-like consistency. This true test of faith, to be ripped from the corporeal vessel we embody on this temporal plane and to ascend to one infinite, is marked throughout Catholic history. Acting like Christ under the harshest penalty however says more about the Jesuit Order in this mission to save souls than it does the convert. In a sense this can also relate to Spivak's silencing the subaltern when it comes to representation. Quite interestingly this pious representational testimony is not with, as Spivak would put it, noble or altruistic intent but it has sinister implications that are infused with making the pious Other more manageable, malleable and reaffirms their superiority and appropriates the Other for their own purposes. (Kapoor, 2006, p.633) Crudely put, it is as if the entire book made of letters to Superior General Vitelleschi goes onto say, 'We came to this land and, despite the fact they banished us, we have so many converts doing exactly what we have taught them.'

26 This 'Othering' allocated to a jurisdictional and mechanical duties can also be found in select paragraphs from the first book of Bonelli on pages 98, 99, 106 and 117.

Conclusion

This chapter briefly contextualized the history of 16th and 17th century Europe and Japan and the biography of Mutio Vitelleschi in order to place the Jesuit propagandized book - Mutio Vitelleschi's *laerliicksche Brieven van Iaponien der Jaren 1625, 1626, 1627* - within a setting that utilizes the Jesuit understanding of the Japanese in the time of their banishment. However in doing so the Japanese, who are described by the Jesuits in contrasts between converts and murders, says more about the Jesuit Order than it did about the Japanese and their culture. In this sense, the Japanese became the unknowable Other and are depicted within this book of letters as being intimately connected with the nature of the early Jesuit missions - the propagation of the faith as well as the urgent need of validation of their Order to supporters. The Other is described within a two-folded setting that is both positive and negative in order to support propagation and validation.

While Vitelleschi's letters do not take on the classical role of travel writing that systematically describes geography and other indigenous depictions *laerliicksche Brieven* can be deemed as a an early form of it. The depiction of the Japanese, or the Other upon the Jesuits confrontation with the unknown, in this book explores the religious zeal of their converts who had willingly accepted death and the mechanical explanation of the murderous Other. These depictions were used to validate the Jesuit Order to their benefactors amidst the strife caused in the Holy Roman Empire's court, the Thirty Year's war and the anti-Christian edict. Thus it is postulated that what seemed to be a unsuccessful mission to Japan by onlookers who saw the waning influence and ultimate banishment of the Christians from Japan was deemed by Vitelleschi, as well as the entire hierarchical body that constitutes the Jesuits, to be a glorious victory through the depiction of resolute martyrdoms.

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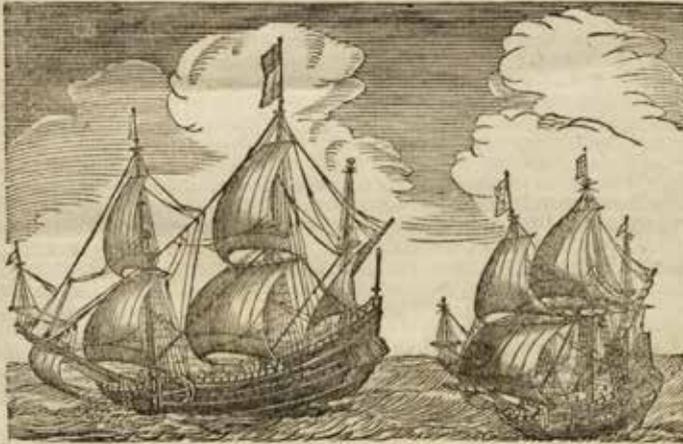
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Beschrijvinghe
Van het Machtigh Koningbrijcke
J A P A N,

Verbattende

Den aerdt en eyghenschappen van 't Landt,
manieren der Volckeren, als mede hare grouwelijcke
wreedtheydt teghen de Roomfche Chri-
ftenen, ghefeldt

Door *Françoys Caron.*



AMSTERDAM,

Door Joost Hartgers, Boeck-verkooper op den Dam/ in de Boeck-
winkel/ bezjden het Stadt-huyf. 1652.

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's-Gravenhage.

Titlepage of the third edition of Caron's *Beschrijvinghe*.