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Japanese Manners Through the Eyes of a Late-Renaissance Jesuit: Alessandro Valignano's *Advertimentos* of 1583

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ABSTRACT

In 1582–83, Alessandro Valignano, S.J., Visitor of the Jesuit missions in Japan, authored the *Advertimentos e avisos*, a behavioral manual instructing missionaries on adopting Japanese customs to gain credibility and facilitate conversions. His approach, emphasizing etiquette, hygiene, and social rank, clashed with Father General Claudio Acquaviva's concerns about cultural accommodation. This study examines *Advertimentos* as both a practical guide and an educational text, drawing from European humanist traditions and Jesuit training manuals. It highlights Valignano's strategic use of adaptation in missionary education and explores how his pedagogical model influenced Jesuit engagement in Japan and broader global missions.

Keywords:
Jesuit missionary education, cultural adaptation, Alessandro Valignano, Jesuits in Japan, missionary training manuals

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Introduction

In 1582–83, the Visitor of the Province of India, Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606), wrote the *Advertimentos e avisos acerca dos costumes e catangues de Jappao* [*Warning and Advice About Habits and Traditions of Japan*]. This was meant to be a guide for Jesuits stationed in Japan, to teach them to behave properly in every public and domestic situation, where "properly" stands for "in the Japanese way." Valignano's handbook, together with the Visitor's broader intervention in the Indian province, was at the root of the Jesuit "adaptation" strategy, including the accommodation implemented in China by Matteo Ricci. Behind Valignano's plans for the Japanese province lay heavy differences of opinion with the Portuguese Father Superior Francisco Cabral (in charge from 1570 to 1581) and his Vice and successor Gaspar Coelho (1581–90) on how the mission had to be guided.

The purpose of the *Advertimentos* was highly practical. According to Valignano, the only chance for Jesuit missionaries to be taken seriously by Japanese people and therefore to convert them to Christianity, was to adopt Japanese dress in every exterior detail and, paramount, relate themselves to other people in the Japanese way. This was not a matter of a shortcut or choosing a less demanding way to evangelize a recalcitrant flock. Once in Japan, Valignano carefully observed Japanese people and was surprised at how refined their culture was. He came to the conclusion that, in order to be persuaded, the Japanese had to be able to recognize something of their own way of being in the *nanbanjin*[1] missionaries, something that made the missionaries worth listening to and that was appreciable to the naked eye, without the need for rhetorical art:

> [1] For the time being I will list some indispensable recommendations, with which the Fathers and Brothers can properly follow the customs and *katangi* [habits] in what they need. Without following these recommendations, they will necessarily commit many improper and discourteous actions, and compromise their own reputation and that of the Christian religion, with much harm to both Christians and Gentiles.[2]

1 The first meaning of *nanban* was "Southern barbarians"; it changed to indicate Portuguese traders and clergymen in the second half of the sixteenth century, keeping its derogative meaning. Luíz Filipe Thomas, *Nanban-jin: Os Portugueses no Japão* (Lisbon: Correios de Portugal, 1993).

2 "Per adesso si metteranno sommariamente alcuni avvisi necessarii, coi quali i Padri e Fratelli potranno, quanto per essi basta, procedere con buona creanza riguardo ai detti *katagi* e costumi. Senza questi avvisi non possono a meno di cadere in molte inurbanità e scortesie, con grande pregiudizio della loro propria reputazione e della religione cristiana, e con molto detrimento del frutto che si può fare tanto fra i Cristiani quanto fra i gentili." Valignano's quotes from *Advertimentos* were edited and translated into Italian in 1946 by German scholar Franz

More precisely, Jesuit priests should enter the social ladder of Japan and place themselves, as a group, at the same level of *bonzes*, Buddhist monks, who in sixteenth-century Japan "had great power and were revered."[3]

> [5] To this effect, it seems that the Fathers and Brothers, who are the bonzes of the Christian religion, should at least put themselves on the same level as the bonzes of the *Zenshû* sect, which among all sects is held in Japan for the most important, and the one that keeps contact with all sorts of people.[4]

To achieve this ambitious goal, Jesuit missionaries needed a specific instruction, as the European colleges and houses where they had been educated did not prepare them for that kind of mission. Not only was it normal to portray the peoples of mission lands as crude and primitive; for Japan in particular, Valignano complained of a dangerous manipulation of first-hand news: the reports that missionaries sent to Rome had been edited and circulated in sweetened and censored versions, presenting an image of the Japanese mission that was not problematic and, in fact, was unreal.[5] Valignano's criticisms were also aimed at the letters of Francis Xavier (1506–62), the "founding father" of the Japanese mission, whose voice had a very strong influence on young men who dreamed of devoting their lives to the evangelization of pagan peoples.[6] The *Advertimentos* were meant to be the kind of training Jesuit missionaries had been lacking until then.

Schütte. They were reprinted in 2011 as *Alessandro Valignano, Il cerimoniale per i missionari del Giappone* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2011). I quote from this edition, translating Italian into English. Square brackets indicate that list numbers did not appear in the original manuscript but were assigned by the editor. I think it is useful to keep them because they allow the reader to place the quotation within the text. Here I quote from p. 121.

3 Jose Fernando Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits: Alessandro Valignano in Sixteenth-Century Japan* (London: Routledge, 1993), 62. It seems that the Jesuits chose to present themselves at the same level as the Rinzai Zen school, the most influential Buddhist group of the time, whose priests occupied the hierarchical rung immediately below the great feudal lords. See I. Higashibaba, *Christianity in Early Modern Japan: Kirishitan Belief and Practice* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 17–18.

4 Valignano, *Il cerimoniale*, 125: "A questo fine, pare che ai Padri e Fratelli, che sono i bonzi della religione cristiana, almeno convenga mettersi al medesimo livello in cui stanno i bonzi della setta dei Zenshû."

5 Valignano had complained about that directly to General Mercurian. See Gian Carlo Roscioni, *Il desiderio delle Indie: Storie, sogni e fughe di giovani gesuiti italiani* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001), 98.

6 Elisa Frei and Laura Madella, "Dimostrare autorità e usare cortesia. L'etichetta giapponese nel Cerimoniale di Alessandro Valignano S.J. (1583)," *Bruniana & Campanelliana* 27, nos. 1/2 (2021): 310–11. The essay offers a first overview of Valignano's *Advertimentos* as a manual of conduct for missionaries.

Valignano Goes to Japan

Alessandro Valignano was born in 1539 into an aristocratic family in Chieti, central Italy.[7] He joined the Jesuits as a grown man and a well-educated one, having a law degree from Padua University and a preliminary, humanistic background. Furthermore, before undertaking the novitiate, Valignano had gained some experience of the Roman Curia while acting for a couple of years as *auditor* for cardinal Marco Sittico Altemps (1533–95), who was a relative of Pope Pious IV (Giovan Angelo Medici, r. 1559–65). An auditor had several juridical tasks that, at that time, were often linked with the proceedings of the Roman Inquisition. It could be the first significant step of a career in the Roman clergy. Yet Valignano turned the tables and in 1566 entered the Society of Jesus.[8]

He performed an excellent *cursus studiorum* at the Roman College, was ordained priest in 1570, and in 1571 was appointed master of novices; among those novices, he first met Matteo Ricci (1552–1610). One year later we find him rector of the College of Macerata, but he had already realized that he yearned for the mission lands. In 1573, Flemish general father Everard Mercurian granted Valignano's desire and appointed him Visitor of the Indian province, as a substitute for Gonzalo Alvares (1522–ca. 73), who was leaving India for Japan. In 1574 Valignano reached Goa, yet his travels had only just begun. He soon acknowledged the need to directly oversee the Japanese mission founded in 1549 by Francis Xavier, since he knew that the mission was in dire financial straits and conversions were not progressing as hoped. In 1579 Valignano landed in Kuchinotsu, Kyūshū Island, near Nagasaki, and three years later he was back in Goa with a project as sophisticated as it was tough: to help the Japanese mission develop and succeed.[9]

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7 On Valignano's biography, see Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*. Also see M. Antoni J. Üçerler, S.J., "Alessandro Valignano, Man, Missionary, and Writer," *Renaissance Studies* 17, no. 3 (September 2003): 337–66; Antonio Tamburello, M. Antoni J. Üçerler S.J., and Marisa Di Russo, eds., *Alessandro Valignano S.I., uomo del Rinascimento, ponte tra Oriente e Occidente* (Rome: Institutum historicum Societatis Iesu, 2008); Vittorio Volpi, *Il visitatore: Alessandro Valignano, un grande maestro italiano in Asia* (Milan: Spirali, 2011).

8 According to Üçerler, in *Alessandro Valignano S.I. [. . .]*, 338, it was the direct or indirect consequence of a traumatic event he experienced in 1562. Valignano was accused of assault with a knife in Padua and ended up in prison. He always declared himself innocent and only obtained his release through the intervention of powerful figures such as Carlo Borromeo (1538–84).

9 Jack B. Hoey III, "Alessandro Valignano and the Restructuring of the Jesuit Mission in Japan, 1579–1582," *Eleutheria* 1, no. 1 (2010): 23–42.

A crucial initiative of the program was the establishment of seminaries and colleges for the education of young people and the training of Jesuits and local clergy.[10] But the most impressive among Valignano's ideas was the famous Tenshō embassy: four young Japanese gentlemen, who attended the Jesuit seminars and were related to the prestigious *Kirishitan* families, were being sent to Europe to meet the hierarchies of the Catholic Church and monarchies.[11] Other actions depended upon the Tenshō embassy. For instance, the delegation was to come back with a printing press for the Japanese mission, which punctually happened, promoting the process of print in Japan.[12] Also, Father Diogo de Mesquita (1551–1614),[13] who personally accompanied the Japanese boys, was to submit the manuscript of Valignano's *Advertimentos* to General Claudio Acquaviva because, before setting a new behavioral code for missionaries, the Visitor needed his superior's consent. The Visitor knew well that his proposal could be perceived as not modest at all, since embracing some of the dress of a non-Christian culture had some sensitive aspects. He should understand how far he could go without affecting the Roman orthodoxy, and in the end he needed the General's authorization to act. Once he received the manuscript, Acquaviva actually found several doctrinally scabrous passages in it—such as those that permitted for fathers the enjoyment of luxuries and honors—and he rejected them. This gave rise to a lengthy exchange of correspondence between Acquaviva and Valignano. In the 1590s, the Visitor sought to satisfy Acquaviva's demands when he revised the *Advertimentos* and had them merged into a new *Book of Rules* (*Libro delle regole*). Therefore, the handbook's original version lapsed a few years, but remained unofficially the

10 Marisa di Russo, "Prefazione," in Valignano, *Dialogo sulla missione degli ambasciatori giapponesi alla curia romana e sulle cose osservate in Europa e durante tutto il viaggio*, ed. Marisa di Russo (Florence: Olschki, 2016), 7.

11 *Kirishitan* was the Japanese term used to refer to converts to Catholicism. On the Tenshō Embassy, see at least Giovanni Pizzorusso et al., "L'ambassade Tenshō, entre croisements interculturels et entreprise médiatique, Dossier Tématique," *CECIL* 8 (2022), https://doi.org/10.4000/cecil.279; and Derek Massarella, *Japanese Travellers in Sixteenth-Century Europe: A Dialogue Concerning the Mission of the Japanese Ambassadors to the Roman Curia (1590)* (London: Routledge, 2013).

12 Christopher Thomas Lough, "Strangers in a Strange Land: Translating Catholicism in Early Modern Japan," *ASIANetwork Exchange* 28, no. 2 (2023), https://doi.org/10.16995/ane.8141. Also, Rui Manuel Lourero, "Alessandro Valignano and the Christian Press in Japan," *Revista de cultura* 19 (2006): 135–53.

13 Diego Pacheco, "Diogo de Mesquita and the Jesuit Mission Press," *Monumenta Nipponica* 26, nos. 3/4 (1971): 431–43.

core of the Jesuit adaptation strategy in Japan, and numerous excerpts can be found in the *Regulae Provinciae Japoniae*.[14]

The manuscript of *Advertimentos* is kept in the Archivum Romanum Societatus Iesu (ARSI) and written in Portuguese.[15] Scholars agree that Valignano dictated it in a rush to some Portuguese brothers, shortly before the Tenshō embassy left Goa for Europe; it was edited in 1946 by Franz Joseph Schütte, who also translated it into Italian. A new edition came out in 2011, refreshed by an essay by Michela Catto. I quote from this last edition, translating Italian to English.

Perceived Similarity: A Civilization of Good Manners

The *Advertimentos* is a practical text with a practical aim, articulated as a to-do and not-to-do list, whose paragraphs the modern editor numbered from 1 to 159. The writing does not pursue any artistic form; rather, it is concise and even dry. Yet it is cleverly informed with the knowledge of rhetorical functionality, with some features probably meant to soften the reaction of the reader and make the text sound not too disruptive. Significantly, for instance, the utility of the handbook is directly connected to a fundamental aspect of the Japanese way of living which could sound familiar to Catholic missionaries:

> [2] Now, one of the most necessary things in Japan, in order to do what the Fathers resolved about conversion and Christianity, is to know how to deal with the Japanese in such a way that, on the one hand, the Fathers enjoy authority, and on the other hand they behave much friendly.[16]

In Renaissance culture, the combination of authority and courtesy was one of the hallmarks of the true man of power, and it was theorized in one of the most famous courtesy books of the Renaissance: Baldassarre Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* (1528). During the sixteenth century, many other etiquette treatises were published, occasionally even objecting to some of Castiglione's passages, but the descriptor "authoritative-urbanity" was never questioned.[17] In the same way, several aspects of the Japanese-like

14 Valignano, *Il cerimoniale*, 73.

15 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 64.

16 Valignano, *Il cerimoniale*, 119–21: "Ora, una delle cose principali che nel Giappone sono necessarie per far ciò che i Padri si propongono circa la conversione e la Cristianità, è di saper trattare coi Giapponesi di tal maniera, che d'una parte godano autorità, e dall'altra usino di molta domestichezza."

17 Worth mentioning is *Galateo, overo de' costumi* [Galateo, or About Habits] by poet and clergyman Giovanni della Casa (1558); and *La civil conversatione* [The Urbane Conversation] by Stefano Guazzo (1574).

demeanor prescribed in the *Advertimentos* could be seen as consistent with aspects of the European demeanor, in both their worldly and Christian backgrounds.[18] More specifically, the *Regulae Societatis Iesu* also contained thirteen "Rules of Modesty" that prescribed norms of posture and demeanor marked by calmness and restraint. Here are some Jesuit *regulae* for facial expression:

> [5] Avoid wrinkling your forehead and even more so your nose, so as to show outward serenity, which of inner serenity is evidence.
>
> [6] Keep the lips neither too tight nor too open.
>
> [7] Show cheerfulness in the face, rather than sadness or another less moderate emotion.[19]

And here are Valignano's recommendations to his Jesuits brothers in *Advertimentos*' first chapter:

> [3] So much so, the Fathers must be extremely careful and take much account of religious modesty and gravity; they must therefore avoid doing light acts or careless movements that show little prudence and gravity.
>
> [13] And so they must be moderate in walking, showing no haste nor turning easily to look this way and that, nor moving their hands much, when they speak, nor laughing loudly and too often; however, they always have to show a cheerful and gentle countenance . . . and much more they must avoid showing themselves angry, manifesting perturbation in the movements of their face and in their words.

In such representation, Japanese gestures and movements appear consistent with those of Europeans as they seem to follow principles of temperance and moderation, and Valignano was smart to stress them at the beginning of his essay, as it served the purpose of reassuring the public (and the superior general), introducing something familiar rather than something strange.

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18 Dilwyn Knox, "Disciplina: The Monastic and Clerical Origins of European Civility," in *Renaissance Society and Culture: Essay in Honor of Eugene F. Rice Jr.*, ed. J. Monfasani and R. G. Musto (New York: Italica, 1991), 107–35. In the end, the Renaissance princely court also derived from the curtial models of the princes of the Church.

19 *Regulae Societatis Iesu* (Rome: In Collegio eiusdem Societatis, 1580), 29–30. "5. Rugae in fronte, ac multo magis in naso evitentur, ut serenitas exterius cernatur, quae interioris sit indicium. 6. Labia nec nimins compressa, nec nimium diducta. 7. Tota facies hilaritatem potius prae se ferat, quam tristiam, aut alium minus moderatum affectum."

Nonetheless, the reasons behind the Japanese serene demeanor were profoundly different from those of Europeans. If we only look to facial expression, we see that, according to the ethical ideal of the Early Renaissance it was the product of a man's humoral health and interior life—mind and soul—so that a serene expression reflected good health and, most important, wisdom, rationality, inner peace, and all other renowned humanistic virtues. This idea had arisen from the new role and responsibility that the Renaissance man gained in society as an individual,[20] and went along with the ancient Christian tradition mentioned by the fifth Jesuit *regula modestiae*: "so that serenity may be perceived outwardly, which is a sign of the inner state."[21] Nevertheless, such a background had nothing to do with the Japanese culture of facial expression, as Evgeni Steiner explains:

> . . . the idea of a face as a mirror of the soul was basically alien in traditional Japan, or, broader, in the East Asian Sinosphere. A notion close to Cicero's *imago animi vultus est* was basically alien to this type of culture. The face was not an index of the mind, and in a culture where the ideal of an individual was the Buddhist concept of *muga* (no-self), there could not appear anything compatible with an understanding of a man as *copula mundi* or Marsilio Ficino and other Renaissance humanists brilliantly expressed in the art of portraiture.[22]

Social conventions related to expressiveness, gesture, and body posture were instrumental to enhancing social cohesion and mutuality because in modern Japan there was "no idea of personality as a unique and independent actor."[23] Therefore, what appeared to be the easiest of the elements that Valignano offered to his Catholic brothers as an example of similarity was instead the result of the most alien thought to the western-Christian idea of individual.[24]

Perceived Differences: Tidiness

We will not argue here whether Valignano divined the anthropological roots and historical significance of all the things he saw. What matters is that those aspects impressed him, that he saw them as characteristic and

20 John Martin, "Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence: The Discovery of the Individual in Renaissance Europe," *American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (December 1997): 1309–42.

21 ". . . ut serenitas exterius cernatur, quae interioris sit indicium."

22 Evgeni Steiner, "Faces Without Individualization: The Art of Portraiture in Premodern Japan," in *L'éloquence du visage entre Orient et Occident*, ed. O. Voskoboynikov (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2022), 320.

23 Steiner, 321.

24 On the philosophical and theological roots of the humanistic idea of the individual, see Francesco Mattei, *Persona* (Rome: Anicia, 2015).

relevant, essential to what he judged urbane and polished in that foreign world. It is easy to see that Valignano's *Advertimentos* deal much more with aspects of Japanese gestures and demeanors that he perceived as unfamiliar, different from those of Europeans, and that, for this reason, needed to be learned by Jesuit missionaries. In this regard, admonitions of tidiness are quite frequent.

Valignano often prescribed basic standards of hygiene for people, as he implied that fathers and brothers tended to neglect them, especially in comparison with Japanese *bonzes*:

> [38] When [the Fathers] go out in public, they must treat themselves, the Brothers, the *Dōjuku*[25] and the servants each according to their own quality, and cleanly. Therefore, all the *Dōjuku* and servants that join them must wear clean clothes for the festive days and for when they go out, different from those they use at home. For in Japan, for the reputation of the person, one cares no less for the dress and manner of servants than for those of their masters. . . . The Fathers as well, when they go out to say Mass or for funerals, have to bring their tools clean . . . so that there is neatness in everything.[26]

On several occasions, the call for cleanliness of spaces returns. Great attention must be paid to the tea room, which Valignano calls in Japanese, *chanoyu*:

> [45] In all their homes, therefore, Fathers must keep their *chanoyu* clean and neat.[27]

The concept of the tea room was completely unknown to Europeans. Upstream of this, the entire concept of the Japanese aristocratic dwelling was alien to them, from the materials used to build it (wood and paper, considered noble materials) to the arrangement of rooms (movable walls, porch, correspondence with the outdoors) to the arrangement of interior objects (*feng shui*). Valignano does not fail to reflect on this issue as well, on local

25 *Dōjuku* were converted Japanese who helped Jesuits with their ministries and daily activities.

26 Valignano, *Il cerimoniale*, 153–55: "Similmente, quando escono di casa, devono trattare se stessi, i Fratelli, i *Dôjuku* e i servitori, ciascuno secondo la propria qualità, pulitamente. Perciò i *Dôjuku* e seventi tutti che l'accompagnao hanno d'avere le loro vesti nette per le feste e per quando escono fuori, differenti da quelle che usano in casa. Perché nel Giappone, per la riputazione della persona, si bada non meno al vestito e al modo d'agire dei servitori, che dei propri padroni . . . Anche i Padri, quando escono a dire messa o per funerali, portino gli utensili puliti . . . di modo che in tutto ci sia nettezza."

27 Valignano, *Il cerimoniale*, 161: "Devono dunque tenere in tutte le case il suo chanoyu pulito e ben ordinato."

architecture; at the bottom of the *Advertimentos* he adds a paragraph in which he calls for building Catholic churches and houses according to local criteria, which he assesses as being perfectly functional given place and lifestyle.[28]

It was not only the tea ceremony and its spaces but also the entire Japanese ritual of receiving guests that was unlike the hospitality offered by the Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese (the nationalities most represented in Southeast Asian missions)—a ritual not only dissimilar but, it would seem, accustomed to cleaner rooms and objects:

> [54] But it is therefore necessary for the food to be in the Japanese way, and for the *zashiki* and everything else to be kept clean, because otherwise, living as *Nambanjin*, it is not a tolerable thing.[29]

Since the word *nanbanjin* denoted European people, one should think that the level of hygiene proper to Jesuit missionaries was the opposite of that recommended by Valignano's instructions, to the point that Japanese took it as being offensive:

> [129] The first [thing to know] is cleanliness, which there must be not only in the things that are eaten, but also in the trays and vessels, all of which must be clean and sometimes new, and the *hashi*[30] must never be used, because it is an insult to the guests when the Father treats them any different.[31]

Once more, the expression "insult to the guests" is reminiscent of language in European etiquette books used by the aristocracy and reserved for matters of honor and precedence. Yet the *Common Rules* (*Regulae communes)* of the Society explicitly required personal cleanliness, not just for the traditional religious equivalence of spiritual and physical purity but as a factor in health and physical performance:

> [19] Let everyone take care of cleanliness, which is so beneficial to the health of body and spirit, both of oneself and others. [32]

28 Valignano, 271–82: "How to build Our Houses and Churches in Japan."

29 Valignano, 173: "Ma è perciò necessario che il cibo sia al modo giapponese, e che gli *zashiki* e tutto il resto si tengano puliti, perché altrimenti, vivendo alla *Nambanjin*, non è cosa sopportabile."

30 Asian chopsticks.

31 Valignano, 255: "La I[a] [cosa da sapere] è la nettezza che ci deve essere non soltanto nelle cose che si mangiano, ma anche nelle mense e nei vasi, che tutti hanno da essere puliti e alle vote alcuni nuovi, e le *hashi* [le bacchette] non devono essere mai usate, perché si fa ingiuria agli ospiti, se si trattano d'altra maniera."

32 *Regulae Societatis Iesu*, 23: "Mundities, quae & ad valetudinem, & ad aedificationem confert, omnibus cura sit, tam circa se ipsos, quam circa alia omnia."

It seems that the hygiene problem of the missionaries was not only, or not so much, the care of the person but that of the spaces and objects of ritual use, since the offering and taking of food and drink on formal occasions always takes on a ritual connotation, which is intensified in the *sake* convivialities and especially in the tea ceremony. On a socio-anthropological level, the tea ceremony is compared to the Catholic mass because the liturgy is performed around a symbolic liquid and because direct participation in the ritual creates a community.[33] In the Catholic mass, the sacred element is concentrated in the matters of the Eucharist, in the act of their transmission to the faithful and in the words that accompany it; the appearance of objects and apparatus does not play an important role—it does not need to convey a message.[34] On the contrary, "tea uses a sacred space where sacred symbols are on display. . . . The 'sacred' in tea is not a separate entity but rather the entire *communitas* assembled in the sacred space of [the] tearoom."[35] In Japan, gestures and objects of hospitality serve to honor and respect the host, making themselves sacred in turn by virtue of this function, which is also fulfilled through aesthetics. Nothing, therefore, can do without cleanliness and order.

Moreover, Douglas Biow has shown that cleanliness was a frequent topic of discussion and representation in Renaissance Italy, and that the perceived cultural superiority of humanists was based on the belief that they were the cleanest people in the known world.[36] According to Biow, the Italian obsession with hygienic practices and their attitude toward such practices manifested a focus on individual responsibility and thinking in

33 Herbert Plutschow, "An Anthropological Perspective on the Japanese Tea Ceremony," *Antropoetics* 5, no. 1 (1999), https://anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0501/tea/. Also, M. L. Carriger, "Consuming Culture: The Japanese Way of Tea," in *Performance, Embodiment and Cultural Memory*, ed. C. Counsell and R. Mock (Newcastle u/Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 140–57.

34 Gold and gems that may be present on Catholic *paraphernalia* are not about either the sacred or the aesthetic; they are about power. On the gradual rejection of sobriety in the Catholic liturgy and the connection between the display of luxury and the concept of *Ecclesia triumphans*, see Anna Modigliani, "Le ragioni del lusso e il rifiuto della povertà evangelica. I papi e la ricchezza terrena nel Quattrocento," in *Pompa sacra, lusso e cultura materiale alla corte papale nel basso medioevo*, ed. Thomas Ertl (Rome: Istituto Storico Germanico, 2010), 145–66. On the role of luxury in the affirmation of papal primacy, see Francesco Pertegato, *Vestiarium: Le vesti per la liturgia nella storia della Chiesa* (Florence: goWare, 2019), 613–834. As for it as an anti-Protestant function, see Jörg Bölling, "Liturgia di cappella e cerimonie di corte," in *Pompa sacra*, 37–54.

35 Plutschow, "Anthropological Perspective."

36 Douglas Biow, "Introduction," in *The Culture of Cleanliness in Renaissance Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

line with other cultural manifestations of the time, but it also expressed a yearning for a goal not too dissimilar from what Steiner noted about the public demeanor of the Japanese: "This culturally embedded notion . . . tacitly constructs a collective body of like-minded people," and, in so doing, it could help to legitimate the social group who shared it, which were the same who led politics.[37]

In real life, and again with reference to Steiner, the analogy is only apparent, or at least arises from very different assumptions. Unlike what happened in the European Renaissance, the Japanese culture of cleanliness that Valignano encountered did not arise from an unprecedented role of the individual that conditions collective behavior and creates a model; on the contrary, it bound individuals to follow an ancient model handed down by custom and, in part, codified in writing.

For example, the Engishiki code ("Procedures of the Engi Era"), which dates back to the tenth century, meticulously regulates ceremonies, rites, and religious and civil procedures of the imperial court. Among these, it establishes rules for the periodic cleaning of the imperial palace, with detailed explanations of the symbolic meanings of the various stages of cleaning and tidying, which survive to this day.[38] Even older, according to records, is the Japanese custom of bathing for religious and therapeutic reasons. The popularity of therapeutic bathing seems to have depended on the availability of hot springs and was less socially defined. Bathing for purification, however, was the prerogative of the ruling classes and courtiers, who actively participated in ceremonies and, over the centuries, established the methods for ritual bathing.[39]

So, all in all, this aspect of Japanese custom could be turned into a valuable tool of cohesion for the Jesuit community, as well as serving as a way to overcome the distrust of the natives. Probably, finding that the Japanese people had stolen the alleged Italian record for tidiness nurtured Valignano's cultural shock, but his book also conveys the slight impression that he considered the missionaries' hygienic defects more serious than his own.

37 Biow, 20. The author refers here to Della Casa's works, where the topic of filth is also related to invaders and enemies, so to oppose Italian indigenous and legitimate governments to foreigners and external threats (i.e., the Spaniards and Turks).

38 Felicia G. Bock, "The Enthronement Rites: The Text of Engishiki, 927," *Monumenta Nipponica* 45, no. 3 (Autumn 1990): 307–37.

39 Lee Butler, "Washing off the Dust: Baths and Bathing in Late Medieval Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica* 60, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 1–41.

Perceived Differences: Non-contact Culture

Beyond the issue of cleanliness, the differences between Europeans and Japanese were manifested in the general attitude toward things other than themselves, be they objects or people. We read in the *Advertimentos*:

> [20] [The Fathers] shall avoid taking men by the arm or hands, either to show familiarity or for other respects.[40]

> [123] . . . Moreover, everyone, even Superiors, should consider that it is the custom of Japan, when speaking or showing anything, not to touch it or point to it with the foot, as the Portuguese sometimes are used to do; for even speaking to very low people, such as *hyakushō*,[41] it is a gross insult.[42]

At first, we cannot avoid noticing that the Jesuit from Chieti, when he decides to bring an example of wrong behavior, adduces a custom that he says is Portuguese, not Italian or Spanish, although the Japanese mission hosted Italian and Spanish missionaries.

It was perhaps difficult for missionaries to understand that touching anything or anyone implied a lack of respect comparable to "a gross insult." We seem to discern the mutual shock of the encounter between a non-contact culture such as the Japanese, and the Mediterranean anxiety of empirical knowledge, acquired through the most reliable sense of all, touch.

Clearly there again arises a dissimilarity in the idea of respect, which harbors deeper roots than a rude sense of superiority. Indeed, in much of Christian Europe, with the waning of the Middle Ages, touch had established itself as a tool for knowledge and appropriation, losing its sacred significance in favor of sight: worshippers witnessed the display of the chalice, looked at the relics, and admired the publicly displayed images; however, they no longer touched them.[43]

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40 Valignano, *Il cerimoniale*, 139: "[I Padri] Si guardino bene di prendere, o per mostrare familiarità o per altri rispetti, gli uomini pel braccio o per le mani […] come usano alle volte i Portoghesi."

41 In the Tokugawa era, *hyakushō* were farmers with few possessions, thus poor and humble yet independent.

42 Valignano, *Il cerimoniale*, 245, 247: "Inoltre, tutti, anche i Superiori, hanno da notare che è costume del Giappone, quando si parla o si mostra qualche cosa, di non toccarl[la] col piede, come i Portoghesi alle volte sogliono; perché, persino parlando con persone molto nasse, come *hyakushô*, è ingiuria molto grande."

43 The infamous late-medieval plague epidemics had taught that touching people could be dangerous, and the Bible taught that Adam condemned man to sin the moment he grasped the forbidden fruit with his hands. Constance Classen, *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 151–52.

The spread of printing had further ennobled sight and moved men away from physical contact with handwriting and its tools. This might explain, in part, the curious recommendation not to touch the things or the desk of those who are writing:

> [124] Similarly, if they pass by one who is reading or writing, they have to give regard not to touching either the cards or the desk.[44]

It sounds as if Valignano was alluding to a group of activities of great interest to the fathers but very delicate or personal to the Japanese. In fact, in premodern Japan, the acts of reading and writing possessed an intrinsic dignity due to the fact that written texts were extremely rare, produced by the social elites for the social elites, either in handwritten form or through woodblock printing that reproduced the format of handwritten writing. The exceptional nature of the product required that it be treated, "consumed," with equally exceptional care. At the same time, a sort of fetishism toward writing instruments and texts as objects had developed over time.[45] In this blend of practical and aesthetic concerns, the gestures and postures with which the Japanese wrote and read should have appeared to Europeans as particularly ritualistic and solemn, all the more so when compared to the writing practices of the Jesuit fathers, which were very frequent and predominantly functional.

Perceived Differences: "Placement Culture"

Valignano considered the tea ceremony too complex and delicate for Europeans to properly conduct, so he recommended that the fathers entrust it to a Japanese expert. Instead, he devotes many paragraphs to convivial *sake* rituals, where he provides details of two actions, taking place either in the reception room of a residence or in the house of the Jesuit fathers. In

44 Valignano, *Il cerimoniale*, 247: "Similmente, se passano davanti a uno che sta leggendo o scrivendo, hanno da usare riguardo di non toccare né le carte né il banco."

45 Linda H. Chance and Julie Nelson Davis, "The Handwritten and the Printed. Issues of Format and Medium in Japanese Premodern Books," *Journal of Manuscript Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 90–114, especially 100–102. On the specific material aspects of poetry books and poetry writing, see Radu Leca, "Dynamic Scribal Culture in Late Seventeenth-Century Japan: Ihara Saikaku's Engagement with Handscrolls," *Japan Review* 37 (2022): 77–100. The great divide between European and Japanese-Asian writing techniques has long been a subject of debate. As for the consequence for writing education in modern Japan, see Raja Adal, "Japan's Bifurcated Modernity: Writing and Calligraphy in Japanese Public Schools, 1872–1943," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, nos. 2/3 (2009): 233–47.

the first place, we see how guests and hosts should arrange themselves and move around the room, according to their social status:

> [68] One of the most necessary things is for the Fathers to know what is the place for the guests and what is their place in the *zashiki* [room]. But the rule in what is to be given, is, that one must warn from which side comes the service of the *sakazuki* and trays that are brought to the *zashiki*. For the place of the hosts always remains on the side from whence the service comes, and the place of the guests remains on the other side, so that when those who serve the courses appear, their sight must meet first with the guests than with those at home.[46]

Secondarily, Valignano explains how the objects of the so-called *sakazuki*[47] should be handled. The act of lifting the cup and tray above the head, in particular, conveyed some Eucharistic suggestion:

> [102] As for the giving and receiving of the *sakazuki* . . . some touch the ground with their elbows, and raise the *sakazuki* with the whole tray above their heads, and, placing the tray on the ground, take wine in the *sakazuki*, drinking in the same attitude. Others hold it thus raised, and then to their lips, or a varying amount of time, according to the ceremony they are performing, and then they drink, while bowing.[48]

To the European eye, the intimate atmosphere of the tearoom likely clashed a little with the formal, ritual movements of people. As mentioned earlier regarding the hygiene of objects, for Catholic clergy the solemnity of the rite was intricately tied to the Mass, to large spaces like churches, and to an imposing display of hierarchy through staircases, pulpits, and altars, as well as shining and gilded objects. These elements contrasted with the sober Japanese settings, where all participants acted on the ground level and the

46 Valignano, *Il cerimoniale*, 185: "Una delle cose più necessarie è che i Padri sappiano quale è il posto dei forestieri e quale è il posto loro negli *zashiki* (sala). Ma la regola che in ciò si deve dare è, che bisogna avvertire da qual parte viene il servizio del *sakazuki* e delle mense che si portano allo *zashiki*. Perché il posto di quelli di casa rimane sempre dalla parte donde viene il servizio, e il posto dei forestieri rimane dall'altra parte, di modo che, quando appaiono quei che servono con le portate, la loro vista si deve incontrare prima coi forestieri che con quelli di casa."

47 Valignano writes *sakazuki* meaning the drink already poured into the cup and not the ceremonial cup alone.

48 Valignano, *Il cerimoniale*, 229: "Quanto al dare e ricevere il *sakazuki* . . . alcuni toccano coi gomiti il suolo, e elevano il *sakazuki* con tutta la mensola sopra la testa, e posta la mensola al suolo, prendono vino nel *sakazuki*, bevendo nello stesso atteggiamento. Altri lo rattengono così alzato, e poi nelle labbra, più o meno tempo, conforme alla cerimonia che fanno, e poi bevono inchinati."

most formal tools were pottery, lacquerware, and wooden objects, which favored simple designs, dark tones, and matte surfaces.

The following quotes demonstrate that the topic of placement of things and people runs through the entire treatise in all its parts and chapters. After establishing that the fundamental criterion of Japanese habits is membership in a social group, and thus mentally recognizing which rung of the ladder an individual occupies, Valignano seems to read the entire protocol of Japanese behavior as a strategy of precise, exact placements:

> [3] In the first place, one has to know that, as well among *bonzes* as among seculars, there are different ranks of status and dignity, which they all endeavor to observe with supreme diligence, dealing with each one in the manner that is proper and convenient to his status, so that he does neither more nor less than what corresponds to his person and dignity.[49]

The placement of people in a space was always important, but it became crucial in the first phase of the meeting, devoted precisely to mutual recognition, which usually took place in the entrance of a house, between the garden and the actual reception room. Equally important was the placement of objects and, again, their aesthetic and functional appropriateness to what was happening:

> [129] The 2nd [thing to know] is, that the things that are eaten are to be brought in the vessels and trays that are proper and usual for such foods, in accordance with what is used in the place, observing the particular customs. . . . The 3rd is, to observe the time and order that one has to keep in bringing these things, because inaccuracy in this appears to the Japanese as a ridiculous thing.[50]

By meticulously observing all these aspects, Valignano also notices the deep symbolic connection between people and objects, which manifested itself, once again, in the reception room:

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49 Valignano, 123: "In primo luogo si ha da sapere che, così fra i bonzi come fra i secolari, esistono diverse gradazioni di stati e dignità, che tutti procurano d'osservare con somma diligenza, trattando ciascuno nella maniera che è propria e conveniente al proprio stato; di modo che non faccia né più né meno di ciò che corrisponde alla sua persona e dignità."

50 Valignano, 255: "La 2 [cosa da sapere] è, che le cose che si mangiano si portino nei vasi e nelle mense che sono proprie e usuali per tali cibi, conforme a ciò che nel posto si usa, osservando le usanze particolari [. . .] La terza è, osservare il tempo e l'ordine che si ha da tenere nel portare queste cose, perché dei mancamenti in questo appaiono ai Giapponesi come cosa ridicola."

> [131] While the *sakazuki* is in the *zashiki*, the guest cannot leave. But he must stay, either by talking or through other occupations, until the hosts bring what they shall give to him.[51]

Actually, there was a connection between the communal consumption of *sake* and religious rites, although it is not possible to determine whether, at that time, Valignano was already aware of it. At the core of everything was the centrality of rice in the subsistence of the Japanese, who, from time immemorial, had endowed the grain with enormous symbolic value. While the gestures of offering and sharing *sake* in domestic spaces served to create or strengthen a bond among those present, they were inspired by ancient Shinto rituals in which a priest (or the emperor, in very solemn ceremonies) offered the rice-based drink to the gods and sipped it in their honor or, symbolically, along with them.[52] During these ceremonies, every movement of the face, torso, and limbs had to convey care and gratitude for the beverage and for any accompanying dishes, as well as respect for the fellow participants (a respect that was, in any case, proportional to their social status). It is worth adding that, after the Council of Trent, and especially in the administration of the sacraments, Catholic ritual tended to become more rigid and standardized, with a meticulously regulated set of gestures, which had been codified in the first edition of the *Rituale Romanum* (1614). Considering this, the discipline that Valignano desired from his missionaries in terms of Japanese etiquette may also have helped them adapt to the increasingly demanding Catholic etiquette.

Conclusions

For early-modern Europeans, good education was quintessentially European. As Daniel Knox writes, "monastic and clerical comportment and secular derivatives were recognized as European because Europeans were becoming familiar with the behavior of other, supposedly primitive, peoples." Before becoming Christians, therefore, the new peoples had to match, even outwardly, the idea of man that Christian Europe had.

In such a context, Japan constituted, in Valignano's eyes, an exception to the rule: it was the Europeans who were judged barbaric for their out-

51 Valignano, 257: "Mentre il *sakazuki* sta nello *zashiki*, l'ospite non se ne può andare. Ma si deve trattenere, o parlando o con altri negozi, finché portino ciò che gli hanno da dare."

52 Ernest Satow and Karl Florenz, *Ancient Japanese Rituals and the Revival of Pure Shinto* (London: Routledge, 2012), esp. 134–45. As for the influence of Shinto religion on premodern Japan, see an overview by Robert S. Ellwood, "Shinto and the Social Order," *Journal of Church and State* 14, no. 1 (Winter 1972): 43–58.

ward behavior. This observation, for the Jesuit, not only concerned the cultural sphere but touched the fate of the mission in Japan, since the indigenous population would never convert to a religion and a clergy considered crude and uncivilized. Changing the lifestyle of Christians and the way they related to the locals also openly contested the policy pursued for more than a decade by Portuguese superiors Francisco Cabral and Gaspar Coelho, which involved a strict division between European and Kirishitan Catholics and the almost total subordination of indigenous Christians to European Christians. For this reason, when Valignano criticizes *nanbanjin* and the Portuguese for unpleasant behaviors, such as poor hygiene and excessive gestures, we can assume that there was a deliberate intention to criticize the Portuguese government of the Jesuit province through the reprehensible behaviors of its most fragile fellow citizens, the missionaries.

Despite everything, the careful directions given to the Jesuits by Father Visitor also reflect a keen sensitivity to the details of foreign culture and a sincere desire to cope with the high standard of refinement demanded of *bonzes* and intellectuals by the most powerful groups in Japanese society. The code of conduct prescribed in the *Advertimentos* illustrates the great insight of its author that, accepting a part of Japanese customs, continued the path of Renaissance humanism, which was never afraid to welcome into its heritage many contents of unorthodox origin, built, on the one hand, around the idea of harmony between inner spiritual dimension and, on the other, around the social and personal relations among people.