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Katana and the Word

**Iberian-Japanese relations (1543-1650) in the light of the
Christian order conflicts and the changes of Japanese Christian
policies**

Thesis to the Doctoral (Ph.D.) Dissertation

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Objectives and significance of research

The purpose of the research is to clarify the role played by the Iberians in the 16-17th century transformation of Japan, a state power that was organized on militaristic grounds and was more powerful than ever, in the form of the Tokugawa-Shogunate (1603). Furthermore, how did the Iberian presence shape the Japanese Christian politics and how much the revelators of the Catholic order missionary in Japan influenced these changes of that religious policy. Finally, we also look for to the reasons and explanations what led to the Iberians, more specifically, the Spanish Crown's failure in the Far East expansion experiment in the 16-17th century.

Our dissertation, therefore, examines the less frequented experiment of the Iberian spread in the Far East, its special state of formation, focusing on Japan between 1543 and 1640, in nearly eighty years.

In this thesis, the period of the first contact between the Spanish Crown and Japan is presented with special emphasis, which historical period lasted from 1571, beginning from the arrival of the Spanish in the Philippines to 1639, until their departure from Japan.

Our study seeks to capture the Iberian-Japanese, but above all, the Spanish-Japanese relations through the Christian order conflicts. We would like to clarify that under Christian order we understand exclusively the Catholic communities in Japan, the Jesuits, the Dominic and Franciscan missions, as well as the Augustinians missionaries.

It is a special feature of the dissertation that it speaks of the repercussions of the Spanish Crown and its traditional opponent, the Netherlands, on the consequences of political and religious controversy and strife between the two great powers on the island.

The international significance of the research is that in Spain and Japan, the discussed topic has only attracted the interest of professionals in the last few years. The discussion of the Japanese evangelization and the Christian order conflicts are also considered a novelty on international terms. In Hungary, this is a completely undiscovered topic. Novelty is therefore indisputable, and its disclosure is timely.

The relevance of this topic is confirmed by the fact that Spanish-Japanese relations celebrated their four-hundred-year-old centenary in 2014-2015, on which occasion several symposiums were held on the subject

Sources of research

During the research we had the opportunity to examine materials of foreign libraries and archives. Considering the primary sources we have studied earlier, we have attempted to organize the huge amount of source material we had. Based on these, from the Spanish side, we distinguished diplomatic correspondence, list of official registers, collection of private letters, journals and the collections of travelogues categories. In all cases, the documents sent by the Japanese to the European powers – to the Kingdom of Spain and to the Holy See of Rome – got through the Asian center of Spain, through Manila, to the European dignitaries, the Spanish ruler and the pope. Accordingly, we named this category the official documents sent by the Japanese Sogunato to the Governing Body of the Kingdom of Spain to the Philippine government.

By classifying the source material of the dissertation by other criteria, the religious aspect of the subject could give us some direction. Based on this view, the following categories were set up during the classification of the source material: documents of the Jesuit order; b, documents of the Franciscan order; c, the documents of the Dominic order; d, documents of the Augustinian order; and other secular documents.

A special technical challenge was the language of the processed resources in the thesis. The literal return of documents written in the 16-17th century Spanish and Portuguese would somewhat confuse the reader and reveal an incomprehensible text. To avoid that - where it was necessary - we changed the structure of the texts, paying particular attention to the fact that these changes would not modify the original message of the documents.

We started our research work with the studying of the secondary source material of the Biblioteca Nacional De Madrid (Madrid National Library). The focus was on Iberian-Japanese relations, in particular, the literature of Spanish-Japanese relations and the documents kept there. The material of the National Library has provided excellent information on understanding the history of Japanese evangelization, the foundations of Christian missionary logic, and the most important features of the Spanish-Japanese diplomatic relations. We gained a lot of information about the era on relationships, their opportunities and dilemmas, the key characters of the delegations.

Among the primary sources in the National Library, the letter collection of the Jesuit monk, Luis Frois is particularly notable, from which a prominent piece of work, the *Historia de Japón* (History of Japan) was written between 1583 and 1597. Furthermore, the work of Fray

Juan de Santa María in 1601 is one of the rarities, which contains many information about the crucifixion of the Nagasaki martyrs in 1598.

The next station in our research was the *Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos* (Spanish-American Studies School) in Seville. The institution served as an excellent center for our research in Sevilla, but also, we found an important document in this library, which contained the papal instructions from 1585 on Japanese missionary work.

The *Archivo General de Indias* (The Archives of India), an institution located in Seville, was also a prominent feature of the subject. The archives included priceless information on the relations between the Spanish Governing Body of the Philippines, New Spain and Japan in the 16-17. century. These documents mostly contained information on the missionary activity in the island, the conflicts of the Catholic orders, the anti-Christian political causes of the Japanese, and the victims of martyrs. In addition, the archives have retained documents that provide information on events affecting the Spanish-Japanese relationship.

As a result of the aforementioned researches, the evolution of the Japanese evangelization process became more and more outlined, underlining the times of the most important relations between the Spanish Crown and Japan, which has led to the conclusion that Japanese evangelization can be divided into five major phases, while the order conflicts can be divided into three major categories, which was the base for our studies.

The *Biblioteca de Palacio Real de Madrid* (Royal Palace Library) was an important venue, where we received an invaluable document about the practical steps of the Japanese anti-Christian policy, more specifically the verdicts made by the Japanese on Christians. The research helped highlight the causes of the anti-Christian actions of the Japanese state power, the periods of tolerance and persecution, and the circumstances of convictions. Based on these, we could conclude that Japan has always had independent religious policy ideas, and this is especially true of the Tokugawa Sógunate.

The *Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia* (Historical Academy Library), also located in the Spanish capital, can also be considered as an important station. In this institution – primarily – documents about the Japanese journeys of Spanish diplomats have been preserved, and we have also found useful information about the work of the Catholic communities on the island.

Apart from the institutions that we could personally visit, we called modern technology, the Internet for help, which made our work a lot easier and also accelerated its course. Through the web, we got to the full correspondence of Ferenc Xavéri, just like Luis Guzman's writings

and also, we found on the web many Spanish diplomats who were sent by the Spanish Crown to Japan during this era.

Structure of the thesis

To present the Iberian-Japanese relations and the Christian systemic conflicts that shaped the relationship to a great extent, as well as the changes in Japanese Christian politics, I chose a gap-filling, synthesizing approach.

Because of the fact, that 16-17th century Iberian-Japanese relations - apart from a relatively narrow professional circle - are less well-known in Hungarian historiography, so the introductory section of the dissertation provides a more comprehensive review of the nodes of Japanese history and the overview of the island state's status in the Far East.

The essay essentially follows the logic of the Spanish literature of the subject, as the Spanish textbooks put great emphasis on the antecedents of the Asian spread of the Iberian, their medieval and early modern foundations. The logic of the Spanish books is also reflected in the structure of the central part of the thesis, which focuses on the Iberian-Japanese relationship and Japanese evangelization opportunities and limitations through the era of three major political leaders, Oda Nobunaga, Tojotomi Hidejosi and Tokugava Iejaszu.

The dissertation consists of the introductory section, four chapters, the conclusion, a short term, supplemented with chronology, maps and other attachments, and pictures were embedded in the main text in many places.

The first chapter presents the most important first and secondary resources used in the dissertation and the locations of the research work.

The second chapter provides a more comprehensive overview of the junctions of Japanese history, from the beginning to the 16th century, until the arrival of Europeans. Then we show what knowledge Europeans had about Japan in the middle ages and at the beginning of the early new age, before it was reached in 1543. Then we continue with showing the Asian explorations and expansion of the European great powers, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands and England, how Europeans arrived in the Far East, within that, in Japan in the 16th century.

The third thematic unit presents the first encounter between the Iberians and the Japanese, the formation of the Iberian-Japanese system of relations, the evangelization of the island and the evolution of Japanese Christian politics. In this chapter, particular emphasis is given to describe the militaristic-political careers of two of the main characters of the era, Oda Nobunaga and Tojotomi Hidejosi, and also discussing the role of the Iberians in the 16th century Japanese political transformation. Particular mention should be made of the appearance of the Spanish Crown in Japan in this chapter, the analysis of the internal conflicts of the Catholic order, the effect of the oppositions on the appearance of the Japanese anti-Christian policy.

The fourth chapter focuses on the relationship between the Spanish Crown and Japan. Through this network, it presents the circumstances of the emergence of the new Japanese state power Tokugawa-shogunate and analyzes the relationship between ever-increasing order conflicts and the anti-Christianity of the Japanese state power. In a separate subchapter it discusses the opposites of the Spanish Crown and the new European power, the Netherlands, the impact of their rivalry on the formation of modern Japanese foreign policy. The political-religious color of the Spanish controversies in the Netherlands, the appearance of the black legend in Japan and its role in banning the Iberians from the island are exposed. Finally, it demonstrates the Japanese Christian persecution after the banning, to show martyrs and their best-known victims.

In the main text of our dissertation, the use of Japanese names and words was a special challenge, for which we did not use the internationally used *Hepburn*-transcription but the Hungarian phonetic rules. In the footnotes we followed the same rule for Japanese words, in contrast, in the footnotes - for the exact presentation of international literature - the phonetic and *Hepburn*-transcription was used at the same time. In addition, for the sake of greater transparency, the Japanese, Spanish, Portuguese, English, Dutch and Chinese terms were written in italics throughout the dissertation.

Finally, our dissertation is provided with source selections, chronologies, maps and other attachments that are absolutely required by the subject's specialty. In our main text we also included pictures, illustrations and a few copies of the original documents, which are intended to make the events even more illustrative.

New scientific results of the dissertation

The author of this thesis assesses the history of Indies as a story of success and failure, which explains why it is possible to have a very small amount of literature on the expansion of the Spanish Crown, compared to the many library material of the conquest of the American continent. The scientific purpose of the thesis is therefore to provide information on the Spanish Crown's Asian expansion in the 16-17th century, to create a clear historical image.

The paper is a pioneering work for presenting the presence of the Iberian states in the Far East in Hungarian language, the history of the relations of the Spanish Crown and Japan in the 16-17th century, and success and the long-term effects of evangelization on the island, the causes of banning Christianity and ultimately persecution.

The international novelty of the dissertation is the discussion of the opposites of the Catholic orders in Japan and the presentation of the impact of conflicts, particularly in the analysis of the special relationships between the Christian mission leaders and the Tokugawa-shogunate. The exploration of the initial interdependence and later of the stages of gradual alienation is certainly a novel approach to the Iberian-Japanese relationship.

What were the possibilities and limitations of evangelization in Japan?

What role did the ecclesial and secular subjects of the Spanish Crown have in the Japanese transformation?

What role did the Iberians play in the creation of the new Japanese state power Edo-Sógunato?

How did the Christian order conflicts lead to the emergence of Japanese anti-Christian policy and to the banishment of the Spanish Crown from Japan?

And finally, how did the ecclesiastical and secular contradictions affect the creation of modern Japanese foreign policy thinking?

These are all professional issues that have become far less attention from professionals in international terms, and which issues and the answers given to them play a prominent role in our dissertation.

It should also be noted that in our paper, the extension of the black legend story to Japan is an absolute novelty, discussed in the fourth part of the paper, in the context of the Spanish-Dutch conflicts and their consequences on the island.

Opportunities for further development of the subject

As part of the subject presented in the thesis, the Iberian trade and its role in the Far East, and also the Iberian traders' role in the Asian long-distance trading is worthy of further consideration. The author of this thesis discusses trade in the context of Japanese missions and Japanese relations only and does not deeper deal with the role played by Europeans in the Far East.

Further research can lead us to a more meticulous exploration of the causes of tensions within the Catholic orders in the case of ordinary conflicts. In our dissertation, we have explained that the primary causes of conflicts between the members of the Church were the underlying affiliation, the methods of evangelization in the island and the secularity of credibility backgrounds, namely the debate on the possibility of the acquisition of wealth. However, it is suspected that there were other reasons. This is why we think that the issue is worth further investigating.

Finally, with regard to the black legend, further investigation is needed to reveal the impact of the legend and its implications on the Spanish-Dutch rivalry in the Far East.

Publications related to the doctoral dissertation of the author

- “*Sinkoku siszó* – the birth of Japan's great power in the 19th century.” *Sic Itur Ad Astra*, 2002/4. issue. ELTE, Budapest, 2004.
- „Sources to study the Japanese period of Spanish expansion (1587-1636).” *Documenta Historica 90*. JATEPress, Szeged, 2012.
- „A hundred years of "conquistadors" in Japan (1543-1640), reflecting the causes of the collapse of the Spanish expansion in the Far East.” *Mediterranean World 27-28*. Veszpremier Pro Human Sciences Foundation of Hungary, Veszprém, 2013.
- “Hidalgo and Samurai – Spanish-Japanese relations between 1587 and 1636.” *2016 Spring Session Conference Volume IV*.
http://www.dosz.hu/dokumentumfile/TSZ_IV_kotet_161114_504o.pdf
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- “Possibilities and limitations of Spanish expansion in Japan (1543-1640).” *World history* 2016/4. issue, MTA Institute of History, Humanities Research Center, Budapest, 2016.
- “Edictos contra los cristianos en Japón (1587, 1597, 1636)”. *Mediterranean Studies XXVI*. Department of Modern History and Mediterranean Studies, University of Szeged, Szeged, 2017.