

Japanese Travellers in Sixteenth Century Europe: A Dialogue Concerning the Mission of the Japanese Ambassadors to the Roman Curia (1590): Some New Source Material

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Since the publication of *Japanese Travellers in Sixteenth Century Europe: A Dialogue Concerning the Mission of the Japanese Ambassadors to the Roman Curia (1590)* in 2012,¹ new source material about the embassy has come to light. Carlo Pelliccia has combed the local Italian archives and found material relating to the boys' journey through Camerino, (10 June 1585, *Japanese Travellers*, p. 326), Loreto (12–14 June, *ibid.*, pp. 326–27), Ancona, (14–15 June, *ibid.*, p. 329), Fano, (15 June, *ibid.*, pp. 329–30), Cesena/Forlì, (17 June, *ibid.*, p. 330), Imola (18 June, *ibid.*, p. 330 n. 2) and Vicenza (9–10 July, *ibid.*, pp. 363–64). Most of Dr Pelliccia's discoveries involve snippets of information about the boys' itinerary and additional details about the preparations and expenditure of their Italian hosts.²

There are some gems, however. In the Archivio di Stato di Forlì-Cesna, Dr Pelliccia found a brief description of the boys' physical appearance and other personal attributes written by Nicola Aldini in Rome on 23 March 1585 for his superiors in Cesena. Aldini noted that they had "olive skin", were aged about twenty, spoke some Portuguese and previously had worshipped the idols that most of their fellow countrymen still adore.³ In the Biblioteca Bertoliana in Vicenza, Dr Pelliccia found the oration delivered by Livio Pagello (Livius Pajellus, various spellings) in the Teatro Olimpico during the boys' visit to Vicenza. Pagello compared them to the Magi, rejoicing at the sight of such noble individuals from afar, exulting in the fact that although the earth was vast, it was not empty of people. Nature had connected them, he commented, and, in a flight of rhetorical fancy, he went on, the Christian religion has united them and made them one and the same.⁴

¹ Hakluyt Society, series III, volume 25, London, 2012.

² Carlo Pelliccia, 'Japan Meets the West' in *Annals of "Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University Linguistics, Literature and Methodology of Teaching*, 17:1, 2018, pp. 108–10, 118–20; *idem*, "'E sono venuti a rendere ubidienza a Sua Santità': viaggiatori giapponesi a Roma nel 1585' in Raffaele Caldarelli and Alessandro Boccolini, eds, *Il viaggio e l'Europa: incontri e movimenti da, verso, entro lo spazio europeo*, Viterbo, 2018, appendix 2. In addition, Dr Pelliccia's doctoral thesis is an edition of MS Ital. 159 in the Jesuit archives in Rome, the Japanese translation of which was utilised in *Japanese Travellers*. See Carlo Pelliccia, 'La prima ambasceria giapponese in Italia nel 1585: Relazioni e lettere di viaggio nell'Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu', unpublished Ph.D thesis, Università degli Studi della Tuscia di Viterbo, 2016.

³ Pelliccia, "'E sono venuti...'", appendix 1; *idem*, 'Japan Meets the West'. esp. p. 112. For other descriptions of the boys' appearance, see *Japanese Travellers*, p. 289 n. 1. Unfortunately, Rotem Kowner's ambitious discussion of European racial attitudes to the Japanese, a work in which he mentions the embassy, promises more than it delivers (*From White to Yellow: The Japanese in European Racial Thought, 1300–1735*, Montreal, 2014).

⁴ Mariagrazia Russo and Carlo Pelliccia, 'Teatralità e ambascerie in epoca moderna: l'uso del teatro in ambito diplomatico tra Portogallo, Italia ed Estremo Oriente' in Michela Graziani and Salomé Vuelta García, eds,

Kathryn Bosi's account of the boys' reception in Mantua (13–18 July 1585, *Japanese Travellers*, pp. 363–69) quotes a letter written to the Duke of Mantua from Gabriele Calzoni, the Mantuan resident in Venice, now in the Archivio di Stato di Mantua, describing the boys' likes and dislikes in food and drink to help the duke and his staff prepare suitable dishes for them. Calzoni records that they abhor meat, cheese and dairy products but have a very sweet tooth with a particular fondness for blancmange, which they eat copiously. They also like fruit, but prefer to drink cold, rather than iced, water, which upsets their stomachs.⁵ This description is somewhat at variance with Lourenço Mexia's comments on Japanese food preferences in a near contemporary letter he wrote from Macao to the rector of the Jesuit college in Coimbra. Mexia, who had come to Japan along with Valignano in 1579 and supported his policy of accommodation, wrote that "their food is totally different from all other nations because they do not eat fruit or sweet things" but, he noted, they abominate milk and cheese as if they were venomous.⁶

Dr Bosi, an expert in Italian Renaissance music, has some interesting things to say about the music and musical instruments the boys would likely have listened to in Mantua, a Mecca for music in Italy and beyond thanks to the duke, Guglielmo Gonzaga, and his accomplishments, impeccable taste and sponsorship of music and musicians. In 2012 she introduced and provided commentary for a concert of music such as the boys might have heard during their travels through Italy. The event was held in the Cappella Palatina in the Palazzo Pitti in Florence.⁷

Marco Musillo provides some minor detail about the boys' reception in Imola (18 June 1585, not mentioned in *Japanese Travellers*, but touched upon in Fróis's account of the embassy)⁸ from the Archivio Storico Comunale di Imola, and of their reception in Rimini (16 June 1585, *Japanese Travellers*, p. 330).⁹ Alas, his eagerness to see the embassy as a "chance to look at the corpus of cultural legacies from the Renaissance as something not yet fossilized but as narrations that are continuously being represented and negotiated" is not matched by

Incroci teatrali Italo-Iberici, Florence, 2018, pp. 73–75, esp. p. 73. Despite his claim to the contrary ('Japan meets the West', p. 113), Dr Pelliccia is not the first person to identify the orator as Pajellus (see *Japanese Travellers*, p. 363 n. 5).

⁵ Kathryn Bosi, 'Tenshō Shōnen Shisetsu: The Reception of a Japanese Delegation at the Court of Mantua in 1585' in Simona Brunetti, ed., *Maestranze, artisti e apparatori per la scena dei Gonzaga 1480–1630: atti del convegno internazionale di studi (Mantova, 26–28 febbraio 2015)*, Bari, 2016, p. 248.

⁶ *Cartas que os padres e irmãos da Companhia de Jesus escreuerão dos Reynos de Iapão & China aos da mesma Companhia da India & Europa de 1549 até o de 1580*, Evora, 1598, vol. 2, f. 123. Valignano himself had little to say about the Japanese diet in his *Sumario*, save that it took a lot of getting used to (Alessandro Valignano, *Sumario de las cosas de Japón (1583)*, ed. José Luis Álvarez-Taladriz, Tokyo, 1954, pp. 42–43). See also Michael's comments on food in *Japanese Travellers* (p. 144).

⁷ Idem, 'Tenshō Shōnen Shisetsu: The Italian Tour of Four Japanese Youths in 1585' available online at https://www.academia.edu/31632270/Tenshō_Shōnen_Shisetsu_The_Italian_Tour_of_Four_Japanese_Youths_in_1585, accessed 5 March 2020.

⁸ Luis Fróis, *La première ambassade du Japon en Europe, 1582–1592*, Tokyo, 1942, pp. 215–16

⁹ Marco Musillo, 'Travelers from Afar through Civic Spaces: The Tenshō Embassy in Renaissance Italy' in Christina H. Lee, ed., *Western Visions of the Far East in a Transpacific Age, 1522–1657*, Farnham, 2012, pp. 174–79.

sound scholarship. The Japanese note the boys left in Imola has already been published (see *Japanese Travellers*, p. 330 n. 2) and his references are occasionally misleading or inaccurate. Lorenzo Priuli, the Venetian ambassador in Rome did not report that some people thought the boys were European Jesuits dressed up as Japanese. The source Dr Musillo cites does not say this.¹⁰ The reference to Cesare Clementini's *Raccolto istorico della fondazione di Rimini, e dell' origine, e vite de' Malatesti* (Rimini, 1617) is in fact an attribution to a separately paginated appendix to that work entitled, *Trattato de' Lvoghi Pii e de' Magistrati di Rimini*, not to the *Raccolto istorico* itself.¹¹

Tiziana Ianello's contributions to the history of the embassy reproduces source material already published in the *Dai Nihon Shiryō*. The only merit of her enterprise is the inclusion of facsimiles of some of the documents.¹²

The most interesting publication concerning the embassy is a modern edition of two letters in the Archivio di Stato di Massa. The first (a copy from the prince's 'out box'), was written by Alberico I Cibo (or Cybo) Malaspina, prince of Massa and marquis of Carrara, an independent polity closely allied with Genoa, then at the zenith of its power and influence. The second, a letter from Japan to Alberico written by the Jesuit martyr, Carlo Spinola, who had arrived there in 1602. Both letters have already been published by Giovanni Sforza. Filippo Comisi provides a modified transcription, but, neglects to acknowledge properly Sforza's publications thereby undercutting his claim to be publishing "nuovi documenti".¹³ Alberico is not mentioned in *Japanese Travellers* or other contemporary sources but he did meet the boys during their stay in Genoa (6–8 August), and was especially impressed by Mancio Itō. In his letter, dated 28 April 1594, addressed to "S.^r D. Mantio al Chiapone" (Signor Don Mancio in Japan), Alberico, a cultivated, pious, well-connected individual, seriously interested in the world beyond his domain, recalls their brief meeting and remembers Mancio as a person of "rare quality and most gentle disposition". He mentions that three years previously he had written another letter to Mancio which was entrusted to a Portuguese, born in Macao, who, conveniently, had been in Massa and stayed some months with the prince before returning to Macao. Not having heard from Mancio, Alberico doubts that the letter ever reached him. He hopes for better luck this time, the bearer, Padre Rinaldo,

¹⁰ Fabio Mutinelli, *Storia arcana ed aneddotica d'Italia raccontata dai veneti ambasciatori*, vol. 1, Venice, 1858, p. 156 n. 2. The note refers to an anonymous allegation mentioned by Giambattista Gallicciolli in *Delle memorie venete antiche profane ed ecclesiastiche*, vol. 2, Venice, 1795, p. 258.

¹¹ Musillo, 'Travelers from Afar', p. 174 n. 48. The *Trattato* mentions the boys' return voyage to Japan as well as the second Japanese mission to Europe, the *Keichō ken'ō shisetsu*, 1613–20 (Clementini, *Trattato*, pp. 133–35).

¹² Tiziana Ianello, "'L'Indiani gionsero qui sabato". Riflessi ferraresi della prima missione giapponese alla Santa Sede (1585), *Annali Online di Ferrara-Lettere*, 1, 2012, pp. 339–56; idem 'Una legazione giapponese alla corte di Alfonso II d'Este (22–25 giugno 1585: documenti e testimonianze', *Il Giappone*, 51, [2011], 2013, pp. 29–49; *Dai Nihon Shiryō*, ed. The Historiographical Institute, The University of Tokyo, 11:2, Tokyo, 1974.

¹³ Giovanni Sforza, 'Le relazioni di Alberico I Cibo Malaspina principe di Massa con l'Algeria, il Fez, la Persia, l'Inghilterra, la Cina e il Giappone', *Giornale storico e letterario della Liguria*, 4, 1903, pp. 151–52; idem, 'Lettera inedita del beato Carlo Spinola ad Alberico I Cybo-Malaspina, principe di Massa', *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, 23, 1891, pp. 701–14; Filippo Comisi, 'Il viaggio della prima ambasciata giapponese presso la Santa Sede (1582–1590. Percorsi e nuovi documenti dall' Archivio di Stato di Massa', *Studia Ligustica*, 10, 2019, pp. 2–33.

a native of Perugia, having promised to make every effort to deliver it. On the bright side, Rinaldo had informed Alberico that Mancio had set aside worldly ambition to devote himself entirely to the service of God (he was received into the Society of Jesus along with his three companions on 25 July 1591). Alberico, moved and greatly impressed by this news, congratulates Mancio and feels sure that his decision will impress other Christian princes and the pope himself who, he informs Mancio to keep him up-to-date, is now Clement VIII.¹⁴

This was not Alberico's only attempt to contact Mancio. Spinola's letter to Alberico from Nagasaki (12 November 1618) records that a letter from the prince, dated 26 December 1615, addressed to Mancio, had arrived that year. Spinola was struck by the indelible memory the prince had retained of his brief meeting in Genoa with the young stranger. Alas, he regretted to inform Alberico that this much loved, model Jesuit, who had been ordained a priest along with his companions, Julian and Martin, in September 1608 (Michael Chijiwa had already apostatised) was dead. (He died on 13 November 1611.) Spinola then proceeded to inform Alberico of the sad condition of the church in Japan and the persecution of Christianity, underway since the teaching was proscribed in 1614. Within a few short years, he wrote, this fledgling church had produced many outstanding martyrs, but, despite the bloody persecution, Spinola could still speak of progress. Even with diminished resources, in one year alone (he does not specify which) more than 2,000 individuals had been baptised. He concluded by informing Alberico that he is the son of Ottavio Spinola and had left Genoa on 5 January 1596 for Japan and that he had no regrets about now finding himself an outlaw, at least in the eyes of the Japanese authorities. The letter is logged in Alberico's own hand as being received on 12 November 1620.¹⁵ The name Spinola would, of course, have been quite familiar to Alberico. The Spinola were one of the leading patrician families in Genoa.

None of these sources causes me to reconsider or revise what I wrote about the embassy in my Introduction to *Japanese Travellers*. Indeed, they furnish additional evidence to support the argument that the embassy was taken seriously, was not seen as a fraud, orchestrated by the Jesuits to advance their agenda and that it contributed immensely to

¹⁴ Comisi, 'Il viaggio della prima ambasciata giapponese', pp. 27–28; Sforza, 'Le relazioni di Alberico I', pp. 151–52. On Mancio's entry into the Society of Jesus see Schütte, *Monumenta Historica Japoniae I*, Rome, 1975, p. 339; Michael Cooper, *The Japanese Mission to Europe, 1582–1590: The Journey of Four Samurai Boys Through Portugal, Spain and Italy*, Folkestone, 2005, pp. 184–86. On Alberico, see *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, 25, 1981, 'Cibo Malaspina, Alberico'. Alberico, like Mancio, had himself met Gregory XIII and had been among the first to congratulate the new pope after his election in 1572, which may be among the reasons for his special empathy towards Mancio. On Alberico's other contacts with the non-European world, see Sforza, 'Le relazioni di Alberico I', *passim*; Comisi, 'Il viaggio della prima ambasciata giapponese', p. 23. Unfortunately, nothing is known about Padre Rinaldo and Alberico's letter does not appear to have been received by its intended recipient and Alberico endorsed the letter "no reply received" (Sforza, 'Le relazioni di Alberico I', p. 152; Comisi, 'Il viaggio della prima ambasciata giapponese', p. 28) but it does provide valuable evidence about the flow of information between Europe and Japan.

¹⁵ Comisi, 'Il viaggio della prima ambasciata giapponese', pp. 28–29; Sforza, 'Lettera inedita', pp. 711–13. The figure of 2,000 baptisms for the years after 1614 is accurate. From 1610–14, the number had been around 8,000 annually. These figures include individuals baptised by the mendicants who had arrived in Japan after the 1580s, much to the chagrin of the Jesuits, especially the architect of the embassy, Alessandro Valignano, who had hoped that the boys' presence in Europe would make the case that the Japan mission should remain under the exclusive control of the Jesuits cast iron. See Johannes Laures, 'Die Zahl der Christen und Martyrer in alten Japan', *Monumenta Nipponica*, 7/1–2, 1951, pp. 91, 94; *Japanese Travellers*, pp. 5–6.

establishing Japan firmly in the European consciousness. While Alberico's letter suggests that one individual at least, and certainly not the only one, was deeply touched by the embassy and believed it to be the harbinger of a glorious future for the mission in Japan, Spinola's, despite the wishful thinking about progress, strikes a very different, discordant note. Trying to put a brave face on the mission's prospects, yet welcoming the possibility of its apotheosis in martyrdom, a measure of failure not success surely, the letter is a sad admission that the expectations of a propitious future for Christianity in Japan aroused by the embassy had been dashed. The sentiment is well expressed by Spinola's amazement ("mi sono stupito") that in the second decade of the seventeenth century Alberico living in a place far from Japan, the furthest part of the Indies, retained such a vivid memory of a foreign youth from a country so distinctive with quite different customs whom he had met only briefly.¹⁶ Japan was no longer the exciting, auspicious missionary field it had seemed to be in the 1580s, the more than adequate compensation for the sad loss of England to the faith, as Gaspar Gonçalves had put it in his oration during the highpoint of the embassy, the audience with Gregory XIII on 23 March 1585.¹⁷

Given the newly established Tokugawa regime's determination to extirpate Christianity, Japan's value to the church now appeared to be as a source of martyrs whose exemplary lives would provide edification, inspiration and moral uplift to the Catholic faithful in Europe who were living in a world in which the Christian religion had not united but, on the contrary, bitterly and violently divided people and failed to make mankind one and the same (*pace* Livio Pagello). It was a world in which the faithful found themselves threatened and surrounded by dangerous enemies, most notably Protestants and infidels. Spinola himself would soon contribute to the supply of martyrs. A month, after writing his letter to Alberico, he was arrested, imprisoned and tortured, experiences he welcomed as signs of God's love, and finally rewarded, as he saw it, with death, along with fifty-one others, in what became known as the Great Martyrdom of Nagasaki on 10 September 1622,¹⁸ an event that would help define Christianity in Japan for many Europeans, and not just those in the Catholic world, well into the nineteenth century.

¹⁶ Comisi, 'Il viaggio della prima ambasciata giapponese', p. 28.

¹⁷ Fróis, *La première ambassade*, p. 165; *Japanese Travellers*, p. 277

¹⁸ Juan Ruiz-de-Medina, *El martirologico del Japon 1558-1873*, Rome, 1999, pp. 443-64. Spinola was beatified in 1867. Not long after his death the first hagiography appeared and there has been a steady flow since. See, for example, Fabio Ambrosio Spinola, *Vita del P. Carlo Spinola della Compagnia di Giesu morto per la Santa Fede nel Giappone*, Rome, 1628 and Joseph Broeckhaert, *Life of the Blessed Charles Spinola of the Society of Jesus*, New York, 1869.