

Example of portugal, jesuits, and japan research paper

[Economics](#), [Trade](#)



The exhibition provides an examination of cultural exchanges that occurred from the mid sixteenth century to the mid of the following century through the movement of goods on Portuguese ships. Created to accompany an exhibit of the same name at the McMullen Museum of Art, this catalogue is richly illustrated with full-page images of Japanese art and artifacts of the period, from and porcelain objects to furniture and weaponry (Weston, 2013). During that time, Portuguese freighters travelled from Portugal to Japan in a four-year round trip with several stopovers in India and China. Seven outstanding folding screens depict Japanese encounters with the Southern Barbarians (nanban-jin). The latter were mainly comprised of Portuguese sailor and Jesuit missionaries. The Portuguese and Jesuits were the first to enter the Japanese land despite constrains and rejections from the local society followed by the Christian missionaries, who faced less of the Japanese hostility. In the screens, there are elaborated Japanese furniture, military equipment and lacquer ware, Chinese and Indian ceramics, as well as paintings by the Japanese artists who were trained by the Jesuit. The interaction between these societies led to intermarriages and integration of cultural practices, religious beliefs and economic diversification.

In the years between 1549 and 1638, Jesuits moved among the Japanese commoners and later other Catholic missionaries, thereby proving momentous years for Japan. The evangelization of these visiting groups brought exceptional degree of contact between the Western people and the Japanese community, and equal potential synthesis of religious, cultural and economic aspects of both communities. Nevertheless, the Jesuit policies beyond the religious sphere (in the political and economic realm)

endangered an unstable compliance of the Christians in Japan for more than 200 years (Weston, 2013).

The early years of the encounter was faced with hostility and rejection by the Japanese people. This was because of the insensitive and primitive nature through which the Portuguese and Jesuit entered the former's territory, however, when the later Christians entered the area; they faced limited hostility because they had learned from the ways that the Portuguese and Jesuit were treated for their insensitiveness. The main intension of the Jesuit and Christians entering Japanese territory was to conduct religious and missionary work. The priest Francis Xavier first arrived on the Japanese island in 1549 with his translator, the Catholic convert Pedro (Yajiro). Just as the prevailing attitude of the Jesuit missionaries in Japan, Xavier decided to commence his operations without necessarily conducting an examination of the Japanese society, which led to the rejection by the local society.

The nature of both parties in the encounter raises concerns: the Portuguese were considered as majorly unapologetically racists, and they only considered the Chinese worthy of respect in the non-white peoples.

Nevertheless, it is indicated that the Japanese also later gained the same prestige as the Portuguese and the Chinese; the Japanese were also more sophisticated than the contemporary Europeans and Portuguese. For instance, they considered the foreigners especially during the Nanban trade to be backward as the latter ate with their fingers while the Japanese used chopsticks, and the foreigners also showed their feelings in reaction to the Japanese society without self-control, which was uncommon in the Japanese community. Some of the major reasons that also led to the rejection of the

Portuguese and the Christian missionaries are the fact that they had poor pronunciation of the local dialect and languages, the dressing codes among these societies were different and the criticism of the Buddhist religion was also a controversial issue.

Later in the encounter, the religious interactions were later translated into economic relations. The missionaries operated using the top-down method, where they first convinced and converted influential figures in the community and used their influence to convert their subjects. However, this conversion was generally aimed at the hope of establishing proper trade relations with Portugal and not gaining personal salvation. During that time, Nagasaki provided the singular opportunity for concurrently facilitating trade with the daimyo and therefore securing sufficient funds to support the mission in all its various aspects. Between 1580 and 87, Nagasaki was the only port through which foreign goods were channeled into and out of Japan and the Jesuit taxed these goods according to their choice and discretion. In this trade, the Jesuit brokered gold, silk fabrics and musk. Even though the foreigners gained from the trade, the Japanese and Eastern community developed along the trading ports and post, which later became their cities. The missionaries and the Jesuit stayed in strategic places where they brokered their products. Additionally, this trade strengthened the ties between the trading partnership between the East and the West. Majorly, this was the first international trade that opened the Eastern economy with the East exchanging their products with the products and technology of the West. However, the relations were later compromised for battle for supremacy.

On the religious front, before the arrival of the Portuguese, Jesuit and Christian missionaries in Japan in the 1500s, the Easterners practiced Buddhism as the only religion. However, the introduction of Christianity in Japan brought about religious changes as several people started converting to the new religious belief, as they were convinced with the missionaries and convert leaders. Nevertheless, convincing the Easterners otherwise was an uphill task because of the differences in the religious beliefs of the Christians and Buddhists. According to the Japanese and their neighbors, the introduction of Christianity into their territory undermined their religious beliefs and the proclamations of the Christians that their religion was wrong elicited diverse feelings and rejection. Nevertheless, the missionaries insisted with their conversions and employed several strategies to ensure that they converted a sufficient population to secure their continued presence in the area. Religious forums were created to discuss and re-evaluate the religious beliefs of the respective societies.

The Japanese considered their culture to be superior over those of the foreigners. There were vast cultural differences between these two communities from their dressing styles to their eating methods. They also differed in cultural beliefs and ethics, which were very difficult to integer. Even so, the Portuguese, Jesuit and the Christian missionaries had much to gain from and admire in the austerity, precision, and skill of the ideal samurai while the Japanese undoubtedly benefited from the superior Western naval and arms technologies (Weston, 2013). Art was a means of spreading images of radically different and strange cultures. In the later stages of these interactions, the Valignano's adaptationist policy ensured

that the Christian and Japanese ethics were blended together. Nevertheless, the military and economic policies of the Portuguese and Jesuits together with the threatening shadow of the Spanish colonial aspirations and military might overpowered and led to their downfall.

Work Cited:

Victoria Weston. Portugal, Jesuits, and Japan: Spiritual Beliefs and Earthly Goods. Boston: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston Colleges, 2013. Print.