Evangelizing Korean Women and Gender in the Early Modern World

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ill and called for Lucena’s presence. However, Ômura recovered before Lucena set sail
and the Jesuit’s opportunity to reach the warzone disappeared. It was indeed Ômura
Yoshiaki upon whose sexual continence Fróis’s narrative elaborated:

Don Sancho [Ômura Yoshiaki] and the elite of Ômura are especially noteworthy in
observing of the word of God and in the example they set, especially in their attention
to purity and chastity. [...] with so many and so frequent occasions as there were in this
respect, with the many women of all kinds whom they captured, all were amazed to see
with what strength and constancy the Christians of Ômura were guided, many of them
taking a vow of chastity while at war away from home.32

Fróis’s positioning of Kirishitan lords as both men of war and men of honour was telling.
He had to insist that they were faced with opportunities for sexual misconduct, in order
for their sexual control to be powerful, demonstrable evidence of their faith.

“Fruit Well Taken from This War”: Evangelizing Koreans in Japan

One of the apparent advantages of the war not only for its Japanese leaders but also for
other traders in the region was the capture of Korean people, many of whom became
enslaved. As Lucena reflected in later years from exile in Macao, the Japanese “ran all
over the kingdom and stole the most precious of it, capturing countless people to bring
to Japan, and most of them became Christian, this fruit, well taken from this war.”33 In his
second Relación, the Franciscan Martín de la Ascensión reprised his reflections on the
potential of the invasions for evangelizing Koreans, and observed

in Japan a large number of Korean Christian slaves, to whom the kampaku [Hideyoshi,
chief advisor to the Emperor] orders to give freedom and send them to their lands and
[they] run the risk of turning back there being no minister in all that kingdom.34

In early 1599, Valignano wrote to Acquaviva his assessment of Hideyoshi’s latest
instructions for the great lords to secure peace in the regions that they held or withdraw to
Japan. Konishi, he argued, unlike his counterparts, had succeeded in doing so in the region
he held with the other Kirishitan lords, and had brought back to Japan “hostages” given to

32 Fróis, Historia de Japam, 5:463: “Dom Sancho e os mais fidalgos de Vomura se assinalarão
particularmente tambem na guarda da ley de Deos e no exemplo que derão, especialmente na
guarda da limpeza e castidade. [...] com tantas e tão frequentes occasziões, como nesta parte houve
come a infinidade de nulheres que cativarão de toda a sorte, ficavão admirados de ver com quanta
Fortaleza e constancia se guiavão os christãos de Vomura, dos quaes muitos, por estarem mais
fortes, se obrigarão com voto de castidade enquantmo andassem na Guerra for a de suas cazas.”
33 Macao, ARSI, JapSin 22, fol, 134e [sic], cited in Sousa, The Portuguese Slave Trade, 102n53: “posto
que correrão todo reyno e roubarão o mais precioso delle e cativarão infinidade de gente que
trouzerão a Japão e os mais delles se fizerão cristãos, que este fruto e bem se tirou desta guerra.”
34 Alvarez-Taladriz, ed. Documentos franciscanos de la cristiandad de Japón (1593–1597), 136: “en
Japón gran número de esclavos coreas cristianos, a los cuales manda el kampaku darles libertad
y enviarlos a sus tierras y corre riesgo de que se vuelvan atrás no habiendo en todo aquel reino
ministro alguno.”
him as part of the compact, “to his great honour.”

Society men interacted with captive Korean peoples as subjects for evangelizing, and as the possession of Kirishitan lords. Slavery was already part of the social system within the Joseon kingdom and in Japan, but the invasions brought substantial numbers of Korean women and men, adults and children, into the forced circulations occurring in the wider Asian region. The Jesuits were themselves involved in practices of unfree labour. In the East Asian region, the Society had a role in managing aspects of the slave trade, allocating slave certificates to those they determined to be legitimate slaves. Hideyoshi’s earlier conflicts within Japan had already produced Japanese slave populations and caused the Jesuits to reflect upon their theological position regarding slavery. In 1593, from Ōmura, Lucena wrote of Céspedes’s return and current activities working with captured Korean on the lands of the Kirishitan lords, baptizing Koreans “de servicio,” a term that echoed the Jesuits’ favoured euphemism for enslaved individuals. As M. Antoni J. Üçerler has suggested, it was possible that “many had been forcibly converted by overzealous Christian warlords.” In his second Relación, written between the two invasions, Franciscan eyewitness in Japan Ascensión was highly critical of baptisms that were taking place in large numbers, with “little sufficiency to delimit the consciences of those who come to baptism from the impediments they have, to declare the obligations that the law of God brings with it, so they baptize them without examining them,” including, he suggested, without looking into the circumstances of “unjust slaves.” Geography played a determining role in conversions for more than those Koreans who were taken to the lands of Kirishitan lords. Nagasaki was a town with strong

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36 Peterson, “Slaves and Owners; or Servants and Masters?”; both Turnbull and Boxer emphasize the role of Wako raids in enslaving people that preceded the invasions sanctioned by Hideyoshi. Boxer, The Christian Century in Japan, chap. 6; Turnbull, Pirates of the Far East.
37 Indeed, by the time of the Society’s suppression in 1773, as Nathaniel Millett and Charles H. Parker observe, it had become the largest corporate slave holder in the Americas. Millett and Parker, “Introduction: Jesuits and Race from the Sixteenth to the Twenty-First Centuries,” in Jesuits and Race, eds. Millett and Parker, 6. See also Rothman, “The Jesuits and Slavery.”
39 López Gay, “Un document inédito,” 137 and 143; for Japanese Christian community perspectives, see Kataoka, A vida e a acção pastoral, 208n204. Similar assessments and accommodation of, as well as opposition to, slavery were taking place in other cultural contexts in which Jesuit encountered enslavement during these centuries. See, for example, essays by Brockey, Andrew Redden and J. Michelle Molina in Jesuits and Race, eds. Millett and Parker.
40 Ōmura, 1593, ARSI, JapSin 12–I, fol. 1v: “corais de servicio.”
42 Álvarez-Taladriz, ed. Documentos franciscanos de la cristianidad de Japón (1593–1597), 78: “tengan poca sufiencia para deslindar las concincencias de los que vienen al bautismo de los impedimentos que tienen, para declararles las obligaciones que trae la ley de Dios consigo, así a bulto los bautizan sin examinarlos;” “de escavlos injustos.”
connections to the Jesuits, who had been able to expand the urban precinct with lands given to them by Ōmura Sumitada. The strength of the Korean and Christian communities almost certainly offered newcomers with few resources much needed forms of support in the city. A register of inhabitants of the Hirado-machi, one of the old town wards in Nagasaki, which was made in Kan’ei 19 (1642–43) listed a series of people who had been born in the Joseon kingdom. Where it was documented, the years of arrival of almost all coincided with the period of the invasions. All but one had converted to Christianity in Japan. More specifically, the register suggests that a number of the Koreans had long been living in Japan before their conversion to Christianity, which occurred when they arrived in Nagasaki. For example, the ninety-five-year-old servant woman identified as Uba, had arrived in Chikugo in 1598 and then, in 1621, had come to Nagasaki where she became a Christian. Nagasaki was noted as the place of conversion of most of the Koreans who were recorded or referenced in the register.


44 As Nakamura Tadashi notes for Christianity; see Nakamura Tadashi 中村質, “Jinshin teiyū yamato ran no hiryonin no kiseki: Nagasaki zaijū-sha no baai.” 壬辰丁酉倭亂の被虜人の軌跡-長崎在住者の場合 [The trajectory of Korean captives in the Imjin War: Focusing on Nagasaki settlers], 180.

45 The exception was a sixty-two-year-old Korean woman, whose brief declaration indicated her arrival in Hirado as a seven-year-old, where she became a member of the Jōdo sect, before the Japanese invasions. See Yanai Kenji 箭内健次, ed., "Nagasaki Hiradomachi nihonetsuchō." 長崎平戸町人別帳 [The Kan’ei 19 Register of Hirado-machi, Nagasaki], 124: 生國高麗之者, (天正十五年)七歳のとし平戸ニ参、淨土宗ニ罷成、寛永十三年ニ男同前ニ参、同宗同寺を頼申候。右之女房高麗之者ニ而御座候間、町中吟味仕之上造成請人立させ、請狀取組中ニ召置申候。See also Hesselink, "An Anti-Christian Register from Nagasaki," 58; Nakamura Tadashi 中村質, "Jinshin teiyū yamato ran no hiryonin no kiseki: Nagasaki zaijū-sha no baai." 壬辰丁酉倭亂の被虜人の軌跡-長崎在住者の場合 [The trajectory of Korean captives in the Imjin War: Focusing on Nagasaki settlers], 182. On the early modern Nagasaki registers, see Nakamura Tadashi 中村質, “Nihonetsuchō yori mita kinko no Nagasaki Hiradomachi.” 朝鮮被擄人の日本定住: 朝鮮人キリシタンを中心に [The settlement of Korean captives of the Imjin War in Japan with a focus on Christian Koreans].

Jesuit sources continued to report the success of their mission among these new communities. Emphasizing the commitment of the Fathers to such efforts, in March 1594, Gómez reported to Acquaviva that the previous Christmas some one hundred individuals had been baptized in Nagasaki, “most of them captives from Korea” after “the Fathers went off to various houses.”

In 1596, Fróis could celebrate the arrival and conversion in Japan of this wave of captive Koreans as “these first fruits of that kingdom of Korea brought now by this war, for the greater good of their souls.”

A letter to the General of the Order from Fróis in 1596 described how a group of evangelized Koreans in Nagasaki had independently practised self-mortification to share in the Passion.

The Fathers, hearing a noise outside the church,

opened a window, asking who was there. They responded on their knees, with great humility: “We are only Koreans, and because we are captives, we could not participate in yesterday’s procession. Now we are all here together to ask God’s mercy and forgiveness of our sins.” They shed so much blood that those who saw and heard them were moved to tears.

The Spanish Jesuit Pedro Morejón was responsible for a series of hagiographic publications that documented the lives of martyrs, many of whom he had known personally, in the years after his exile from Japan. Here, he reinforced the positive view of the invasions that was widely circulating in the Jesuit archive, that one of their results was that “innumerable were those taken captive, and almost all, or most of them, became Christians.”

Morejón’s equation of cause and effect obscured explicit consideration of the challenging contexts in which these conversions took place, given the acute vulnerability of a Korean population wrenched from its usual support networks.

Despite the celebration of successful evangelizing among the captured Koreans in Japan, the ambiguous practices of the Society with regard to slavery were under

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47 March 15, 1594; transcribed in Ruiz-de-Medina, *Orígenes de la Iglesia Católica Coreana*, 52n148: “a mor parte erão dos cativos do Corai,” “se repartirão os padres por diversas casas.”
48 December 3, 1596, ARSI, JapSin 52, fol. 203v: “primicias de aquel reino de Coray con la captividad desta guerra para major bien desus almas.”
49 In using the term “evangelized Koreans” in this work, I encompass a range of common terminologies found in the contemporary sources, such as baptized, convert, or Christian, with recognition that the precise contours of what they implied to individual Korean people and to the Catholic authors who wrote about them may have varied.
50 December 3, 1596, ARSI, JapSin 52, fol. 203v: “abriendo una ventana y preguntando quiceram responderam detrodillas con grande humildad somos Corays solamente y porque somos cautivos y no teniamos a paresse para ayer yr enaprocession agora uenimos aqui todos juntos apedir a dios misericordia y perdon de nostros peccados losquales derramavan tanta sangre que mouieron a lagrímosa los que los oyeron y vieron.” As Sousa observes, flagellation was a sign of fervour common to the Passion practice of Japanese Christians. Sousa, *The Portuguese Slave Trade*, 118.
51 Macao, March 31, 1627, BRAH, MS Jesuitas 9/2666, fol. 462r: “fueron innumerables los que truxeron captiuos y quasi todos, o la mayor parte se hizeron cristianos.” On Morejón, see Alonso Romo, “Pedro Morejón” and, relatedly, Kawamura, “El viaje de Pedro Morejón a Japón.”
increasing pressure.\textsuperscript{52} In 1598, the newly arrived Bishop of Japan, Luís Cerqueira, drew up a clear statement of the Society’s position of excommunication, reiterating that issued under his predecessor Pedro Martins, which had encompassed both women and men, Korean and Japanese. Cerqueira’s document elaborated that “Koreans, of whom a large number have been going in the ship to China for six years now, since the Japanese began their conquest, are not legitimately captives, for the war that the Lord of Japan is waging is unjust.”\textsuperscript{53} This work, copies of which were sent to the King of Portugal, the Viceroy of India and the Archbishop of Goa, was signed by fourteen Jesuits in Japan. The Jesuit archive recorded accounts of this period produced by captured Koreans themselves of their hardships. Thus, a Korean man known as Jinkurō Pedro narrated how he had been taken as a thirteen-year-old, “serving pagans for seventeen years and suffering many toils” before he came to Kuchinotsu where he was baptized a Christian.\textsuperscript{54} Yet, despite knowledge of the realities of slavery, the Society continued to rely upon an enslaved labour force for its operations in Japan.\textsuperscript{55}

Jesuit accounts made oblique reference to the contexts in which Korean women sought out Christian teachings, their texts embedding evidence of some of the particular challenges women faced in the choices that they appeared to make in approaching Christian sources of support. In the Jesuit archives, an anonymous marginal comment, accompanying a letter by an evangelized Korean woman who was known in mission records as Julia, described how

This Julia was born on the island of Korea, and from there she was taken to Japan; to defend her modesty from her tono [master, or lord] she fled to a Christian tono, and there she was baptized by Father Morejón.\textsuperscript{56}

This text reiterated the distinct sexual continence of the Japanese lords as an important part of their performance of Kirishitan masculinity, as had earlier been suggested of their activities as invaders in the Joseon kingdom. It also suggested the vulnerability of captive Korean women and a potential reason for their willingness to approach celibate Society men. Oblique references to women’s experiences pepper the mission archive.

\textsuperscript{52} There is considerable debate about the number of Koreans who were taken from Joseon, see Sousa for a recent analysis, \textit{The Portuguese Slave Trade}, 934.

\textsuperscript{53} Nagasaki, September 4, 1598, BRAH, MS Jesuitas, 9/2666, fol. 273r–v: “moços ou moças,” “coreas, dos quais uai na nao da China grande numero de seis anos a esta parte, que e otempo que ha que os Jappões começaram aquella conquista não são legitimamente catuios pois a guerra que o Señor de Jappão lhe faz he injusta.” On the ambiguous usage of the term \textit{moço}, see Brockey, “Jesuits and Unfree Labour in Early Modern East Asia,” 77–78.

\textsuperscript{54} Carlo Spinola to Claudio Acquaviva, Nagasaki, March 18, 1615, ARSI, JapSin 58, fol. 78v: “E levado pera Japão, servio entre gentios desasete annos padecendo muitos trabalhos.”


\textsuperscript{56} December 1613, Munich, Archiv der Zentralkommission der Jesuiten (APECESJ), Abt. 43, Nr. 53, fol. 22r: “Nata est haec Julia in Insula Corai, captiva in Japonia delata, ad tuenda pudictia a dono suo perfugit ad dono Christianus, ibiq. baptizata est a P. Morejon.”
The annual letter of 1594, for example, highlighted the power of prayer in describing the case of a *Kirishitan* man whose prayers for the recovery of an enslaved Korean girl who had run away from his home were rewarded: “Since she was a foreigner there was no news of her. However, because he had heard that Christians entrust themselves to St Anthony, he asked the saint to return his girl, and a few days later she appeared.”\(^57\) The account, however, did not appear to consider why the girl had “fled” in the first place. It moreover hinted at the lack of other supports available to these women in a country with which they were not familiar. Similarly, in 1615, the Society’s Procurator in Japan, Genoese Jesuit Carlo Spinola, wrote to the General of the Order about the dedication of Miguel to his faith, offering as evidence that,

coming to Nagasaki, he was baptized, and had such a good understanding of Christian teachings that being commissioned to return to his country to work in the war, he did not escape, and, returning to Japan, he served for several years in order to rescue his captive sister.\(^58\)

Although it was not the focus of his account, Spinola’s presentation suggested competing obligations on this Korean convert and recognized the importance of releasing his sister from servitude in Miguel’s decision-making and actions.

Nonetheless, implicit concerns about the fraught context in which Koreans encountered Christianity may have shaped Jesuit authors’ common emphasis upon the voluntary nature of Korean engagement with the Christian faith, and their narration of biographies of key role-model individuals that downplayed violent circumstances as shaping their choice to convert. The Portuguese Jesuit Mateo de Couros, for example, reported the testimony of the Korean woman baptized Julia who celebrated that although “she had been born into paganism in Korea, he [God] had taken her from there, and through Tçunocami dono Augustin [Konishi] she had come to Japan, where he had revealed himself and his most holy law to her.”\(^59\) In his account of the encounter of one evangelized Korean, a former monk Gayo, with the Society written around 1628, Morejón reported that Gayo himself had perceived

\(^{57}\) ARSI, JapSin 12–II, fol. 340r: “*Hum Christão che fugio huma coraijin hauia muito que não lhe aparecia e porque ella estrangeira so não fazer conto della todavia porque tinha ouvido que os christãos se encomend a Santo Antonio pedio muito as sancto que lhe de paresa a sua moça e dali a poucos dias lhe apareces.*

\(^{58}\) Nagasaki, March 18, 1615, ARSI, JapSin 58, fol. 76r: “*vindo a Nagasaqi se bautizou fazendo tam bom entendimento das cousas dos Christãos, que sendo alugado pera ir outravez a sua terra a trabalhar na guerra, não fugio podendo, e tornado a Japão servio alguns annos pera resgatar sua irmã cautiva.*

\(^{59}\) Nagasaki, January 12, 1613, ARSI, JapSin 57, fol. 244r: “*com ser naçida no meyo da infidelidade da Corea, de la a tirara, e por meyo de Tçunocamidono Agostino uiera ter a Japam onde lhe dera notícia de sy, e de sua santissima ley.*
that God had brought him from Korea to make him a Christian [...] Blessed man! The Lord took him, at the time of Taicosama’s [Hideyoshi’s] war, from his land so closed to all foreigners, to receive the Holy Gospel and brought him to Japan so that he might receive with many others the faith.\footnote{Morejón, Relacion de los martyres, fol. 43v: “diziendo que Dios le truxo de la Coria para hazerle Christiano [...] Dichoso varon! Aquien sacò el Señor, en el tiempo de la guerra de Taico-sama, de su tierra tan cerrada para todos los estranferos, y por consiguiente para recibir el sancto Euanglio, y le truxo à lapon para que con otros muchos recibiese la Fee.”}

Similarly, Morejón’s account of the conversion of a young adolescent, written much later in Macao in 1627, identified Kaun (later to be known by his baptismal name Vicente) as the son of a nobleman from the Korean court. In this account, the invasions did not directly put Kaun in danger, for the king “retreated from the court into the mountains, and Vicente’s father and his whole family, were with him; and the Japanese took possession of the palace and the city.”\footnote{Macao, May 31, 1627, BRAH, MS Jesuitas 9/2666, fol. 462v: “retirose de la Corte a las montañas y fue con el e el padre de Vicente con toda su familia y los Japones se apoderaron del Palacio y Corte.”} Morejón emphasized the boy’s independence of action, at least from human influence, in approaching Konishi:

although he was free and safe, seeing the Japanese army from afar, he felt in himself a great impulse from God, who had predestined him for such glory, that he went off with them. And his guardian angel led him to the lands of don Augustin, general of the army, and a relative of his took the boy, who was like an angel.\footnote{BRAH, MS Jesuitas 9/2666, fol. 462v: “y aun que estaua libre en saluo viendo de lexos el exercito de los Japones sentio en si grandes impulsos de Dios que le tenía para tanta gloria suya predestinado, que se fue con ellos y lleuole su Angel custode al Real de Don Agustin General del exercito, y un pariente suyo tomó al niño que era como un Angel.”}

Morejón’s detailed accounts of the experiences of these converts were evidence that showcased the fruit of his pastoral work in Japan and linguistic proficiency in Japanese. He knew many of these individuals about whom he wrote personally, including Kaun, whom he had encountered when Kaun was taken to Japan and offered to the church on the island of Shiki, where Morejón baptized him in 1592. A letter written later by Kaun, now known to Jesuits as Vicente, provided a slightly different narrative of his first encounter with Augustin and Christianity, as

a native of Korea, born in the metropolis of that kingdom. At the age of thirteen, I came to Japan with an assistant of Tçunocami Agostinho, called Konishi Heiemon. That same year, on the island of Shiki, he made me a Christian, and entering the Church I served in many places.\footnote{Recorded in João Rodrigues Giram’s account to the General, Muzio Vitelleschi, Macao, March 24, 1627, ARSI, JapSin 61, fol. 107r: “Sou natural da Corea, nascido na metropoli daquelle Reino. De 13 annos vim a japão com hum criado de Tçuncami Agostinho chamado Conixi Feiyemon. No mesmo anno na Ilha do Xiqi me fez christão, e entrando na Igrja serví em muitas partes.”}
Vicente’s more passive account of his introduction to Christianity may have been a strategic response to interrogation by Japanese authorities, although in the same text Vicente did not shy away from his later activities and commitment to the Christian faith.

Jesuit opportunities for contact with the Korean people in Japan came almost exclusively through events mired in violence, but we cannot rule out that for some individuals, perhaps especially women, Christian evangelization also offered protection from violence. These were encounters made through long-held practices of enslavement of Korean peoples operating in the region, through the invasions of the Joseon kingdom, and by the forced removal to Japan of captive Korean people. If there were reasons why some Korean people, who were isolated from the local population and their own networks in Japan, might have been attracted to the network of practical and emotional support that the Christian missions may have offered, missionary authors did not foreground them, although they were embedded in their descriptions of evangelized experiences. Instead, as noted above, Fróis wrote to Acquaviva in 1596 celebrating the opportunity that presented this population to Christian influence. He looked forward to the role of Korean people in furthering the mission through East Asia, assuring his reader that “the common talk” was that if “the law of the Gospel is preached in Korea (which does not seem difficult by the way of Japan), they will receive the faith readily and it will spread greatly in those kingdoms.”

**Gender and Mission Strategy**

The different experiences and activities of Korean women and men, as well as people of different status, shaped how they could encounter Christian teachings. Fróis’s account of the Church in Nagasaki in 1593 documented that women’s access to hearing the mass was limited, because the local authorities “still do not allow them to come to the church.” Thus, at Christmas the missionaries had “divided into different houses where the women gathered” to provide services, at which time they “also baptized one hundred gentiles who were already catechized, of whom the majority were Korean captives, because a large number of them came to Japan; and by which all those women were very consoled.”

Jesuit authors recounted how, during the invasion, Korean men had been integrated (willingly or otherwise) into the military personnel of *Kirishitan* lords, as

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64 December 3, 1596, ARSI, JapSin 52, fol. 203v: “la comun platica,” “la predicación de la ley Evangélica en Coray (lo que parece no sera dificultoso por via de Japón) que recibira la fe con facilidad y se podra mucho dilatar em aquelles Reinos.”

65 Fróis, *Historia de Japam*, 5: 457: “poes ainda não lhes permitem os ministros de Terazava que possão vir à igreja, se repartirão os Padres por diversas cazas onde as mulheres se ajuntavão; [...] e bautizarão-se tambem 100 gentios que estavão já cathequizados, dos quaes a maior parte erão dos cativos de Corai, dos quaes vierão grande soma a Japão: com que ficurão todas aquellas mulheres muy consoladas.”