Evangelizing Korean Women and Gender in the Early Modern World

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Clara determined both the nature and meaning of her spiritual experience, made from her perceptions and concerned with her own future behaviours.

Clara’s vision provides an important, rare perspective of a Korean convert’s spiritual world. She understood its meaning for her faith and its practices as a perceptive experience of the senses and emotions, experienced not in the corporeal gendered form of the earthly world, but of her soul, an entity not limited by gendered expectations and assumptions. In this mode, Clara engaged with souls that she encountered through emotional, compassionate, responses to their suffering that identified her as part of the contemporary Christian community. In another way, though, Clara’s earthly gender identity informed the nature of her visionary experience and those who formed the guides on her spiritual journey. It is significant that Clara’s vision affirmed her faith through connections to, and interpretation by, deceased people whom she recognized as part of her local community. Neither figure was an adult male faith leader nor God, Jesus, or Mary. Clara’s faith guides, a parturient woman, and a young child, were among the most marginal within the Christian community in Japan.

**Contributing to the Christian Community**

Clara’s vision suggested one way in which an evangelized Korean woman understood her faith and the Christian community of which she was part. Christian literature also provided multiple accounts of how evangelized Korean women and men could participate in the wider Christian community, primarily but not exclusively in Japan, by their practical contributions. These accounts highlighted different ways in which their authors perceived Christian action and engagement of women and men with their faith.

Apart from embracing a life of poverty for themselves, both women and men were praised by authors for their work among the less fortunate in the Christian community. Spinola described, for example, the contribution of Miguel:

Miguel had great charity for the poor, although he was also poor himself. And because he could not give them alms, when he was hired to work on Fridays and Saturdays, on which days he always fasted, the food they gave him in the afternoon he took and gave to the poor. And he often called lepers to his home without any repugnance, having them sit with him by the fire, offering them hot water, which was all he could do. And if they were ashamed to come, he said to them: “Do not be ashamed, for we are all brothers, and if I had your illness, I would be like one of you.”

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79 Nagasaki, March 18, 1615, ARSI, JapSin 58, fol. 76v: “Teve Miguel muita charidade com os pobres sendo o elle em grande maneira, e porque não podia dar lhes esmola, quando era alugado para trabalhar sesta feira e sabado, nos quaes dias sempre jeiuaua, o comer que lhe davão depois do meo dia o tomava e dava aos pobres: E os leprosos chamaaua muitas vezes a sua casa sem nemhum asco, e os fazia assenter a par de si ao fogo, conuidando os com agoa quente pois com outra cousa não podia, e tendo elles pejo de se chegarem, lhes dizia, não tenhais pejo, pois todos somos irmãos, e se eu tiuera esta doença, seria como hum de vos outros.”
Similarly, Manoel worked to assist Christians in Suruga, reported Giram,

finding them so badly treated in the huts of poor lepers who lived on the outskirts of the city, he shed many tears of compassion, serving them there, cleaning their wounds and caring for them with great devotion and diligence, sharing with them and other needy Christians what he had earned by his work.\textsuperscript{80}

Jesuits, who did not engage in medical labour themselves, could nonetheless praise the viscerally corporeal contact that such men were engaged in. By contrast, Couros praised Julia in broader, vaguer terms, as “very generous towards the poor […] trying her best not only in observing the commandments, but also in other works of devotion.”\textsuperscript{81} The Franciscan Alfonso Muñoz reported that she was “a Christian of great dedication and charity, not only to us, giving us generous alms, but to other poor Christians, visiting them and supporting many with her alms.”\textsuperscript{82} Descriptions of women’s charitable activities did not document a similar kind of bodily labour and direct contact with the bodies of others to that of evangelized Korean men undertaken among the poor and outcast.

As noted in \textit{Chapter 1}, Jesuit writers were particularly interested in the potential of Korean men to communicate Christian teachings in their native language. Yet the history produced by Fernão Guerreiro based on the accounts provided by missionaries in the field suggested that women could participate in these activities as well as men, outside of the framework provided by the Society for evangelizing. Guerreiro’s account described the work of a Korean couple, Paulo and Ana, living on the Gotō islands. This married couple, “humble, quiet and devout,” had set aside an oratory in their home. Guerreiro described how Paulo and the local priest worked together. The latter, knowing Paulo’s desire to teach “those of his nation, so that they may be good Christians,” persuaded those of “little devotion and who do not know prayers” to visit Paulo. In Guerreiro’s account, it was the community that had encouraged the priest himself to visit, “because they understood the consolation that the priest would take in seeing his house and the oratory that he had in it, where the other Korean Christians of that village gathered on Sundays and feast days, to pray and to entrust themselves to God.” It was not only the material accoutrements that inspired devotion in the

\textsuperscript{80} Macao, November 1617, ARSI, JapSin 58, fols. 402v–403r: “achandoos tam maltratados em humas palhota de pobres leprosos, \textit{que} nos arrabalde da cidade uuiuam, derramou muitas lagrimas de compaixam servindoos ali, alimpando lhes as feridas, e curando delles com mostras da muiu deuaçam e diligencia, partindo com os mesmos, e com outros christãos necessitados do \textit{que} por seu trabalho tinha ganhado.”

\textsuperscript{81} Nagasaki, January 12, 1613, ARSI, JapSin 57, fol. 244v: “Era \textit{muito} liberal pera com os pobres […] procuraua se esmerar não so na obseruancia, e guarda dos mandamentos, se nam tambem nas de mais cousas de deuaçam.”

\textsuperscript{82} Osaka, February 1607, BL, MS Harley 3570, fol. 390v: “gran christiana de mucha deuucion exemplo y charidad porquela haze nosolo con nostros dando nos buenas limosnas sino con los de mas Christianos Pobres vistiendo los ysus tentando a muchos con sus limosnas.”
community, but also “the two good Koreans, husband and wife [...] who seemed to be inciting the same devotion.”

Christian authors documented valuable homosocial networks sustained by Korean women within the Christian community, with whom they practised their faith. Mateo de Courós’s report of the Korean servant girl, described above, noted that she was then attending a secret gathering with a Christian woman who sustained her faith. A report by the Dominican José de San Jacinto described the activities of a group of Christian women in Nagasaki in 1620, “going about teaching doctrine and singing litanies with girls [...] one of them, called Julia, a Korean.” In that year, his confrère Morales recorded in his correspondence that he knew Julia had received Icoaga’s gift of alms because “I had it from the lady through whom you asked me to send the said alms.” Likewise, in her own letter to Morejón, Julia had asked for the Jesuit father to provide her with items through a certain Okada Maria who was likely another member of the Christian community in Japan. This hints at a support network among women that is difficult to elucidate fully from these works alone. These communities involved both Japanese and Korean women just as did the group known as the nuns of Miyako (Miyako no bikuni), whose companions included the evangelized Korean woman Pak Marina. Their bonds and the affirmation of faith that they produced concerned the local governor sufficiently to break them apart. As Francisco Colín later recounted:

seeing the joy and happiness with which they suffered that shame for Christ, he ordered them to be separated from each other, and tried to persuade each one separately to leave the faith and religion of the Christians.

Significantly, upon her deathbed in Manila in 1655, it was to her inclusion of this community of women beyond the earthly realm that she would soon join to which Marina’s last thoughts turned, as reported by Colín:

83 Guerreiro, Relação anual, 3:157: “humildes, mansos e devotoes,” “aos de sua nação, de modo que sejam bons cristãos,” “alguns de pouca devoção e que não sabem as orações,” “por entenderem a consolação que o padre levaria em ver sua casa e oratório, que nela tinha, onde os outros cristãos Coreas daquela povoação se ajuntavam nos Domingos e dias de festa, a fazarem oração e a se encomendar a Deus,” “os dois bons Coreans, marido e mulher, [...] parece estavam incitando a mesma devoção.”

84 Nagasaki, October 6, 1603, ARSI, JapSin 54, fol. 210v.
85 [Nagasaki] March 25, 1620, San Jacinto, “Relación breve,” 26: “andavan enseñando la doctrina y cantando letanías con las niñas; [...] La una, llamada Julia, de nación corea.”
87 December 1613, APECESJ, Abt. 43, Nr. 53, fol. 22r. English translation of Morejón’s transcription of the Japanese text in Ruiz-de-Medina, The Catholic Church in Korea, 244. See also translation in Spanish and Japanese reconstruction in Ruiz-de-Medina, “History and Fiction of Ota Julia,” 540, 543.
88 See Ward, Women Religious Leaders, chap. 4 on the Beatas of Manila.
89 Colín, Labor evangélica, 3:501: “Mas viendo la alegria, y gozo con que padecían aquella verguencia por Cristo, las mandó apartar vnas de otras, y por sí, y por otros las procuró persuadir a cada vna en particular, que dexassen la Fé, y Religion de los Christianos.”
At the hour of her death her holy mother and foundress Julia [the Kirishitan Naitō Julia] appeared to her as she said to a servant of hers, a servant of God, Monica. “Don’t you see,” she said to Monica, “that Julia comes to see me, so beautiful and resplendent? Don’t you see these angels who are here in my company?”

Christian authors foregrounded the spiritually sustaining properties of these networks among evangelized women in Japan that appeared to unite women despite their cultural differences.

When it came to taking on roles of leadership within the community, however, the Christian archive distinguished Korean men from Korean women. One Korean known as Arizō Pedro, who had become the “tono’s treasurer and head of other officers” before resigning his office, had been approached by the Edo community, wrote Spinola as relayed by Giram, to serve as steward of their confraternity, and he did it so well that he always went to the meetings of the confraternity, putting himself alongside the labourers and common people as though he was one of them, and he went around giving advice to everyone who persevered in holy faith and devotion.

As did Guerreiro with Paulo, Christian authors tended to identify Korean men rather than women as conducting the vital work of hosting other members of the Christian community. This became particularly evident as those of the faith increasingly attempted to remain hidden from the gaze of the Japanese authorities. Both Christian authors and Japanese officials saw the act of accommodating visitors within the household as work conducted by their male heads. Men were thus more often identified with work of this kind within the Christian community. Giram’s account of a Korean baptized as Cosme, a narrative of the man’s eventual death at the hands of Japanese officials, observed how he was identified by authorities because he had housed religious men in his home, prompting his own imprisonment.

The account of the merchant Girón about Hachikan Joaquin emphasized his bravery, for “it was he who supported the religious most in the troubles and trials that they had, bringing them into his

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90 Colín, Labor evangélica, 3:504: “A la hora de la muerte se le apareció su santa Madre, y Fundadora Iulia, como lo dixo elle a vna criada suya muy sierva de Dios, que se llamaua Monica. No vés, dixo, Monica a Iulia, que viene a verme tan hermosa, y resplandeeiente? No vés estos Angeles, que están aquí en mi compañía?”

91 Alcalá de Henares, Archivo Jesuitas, C–286, fols. 417v–418r: “qual foi ja tesoureiro do tono, e cabeça, de alguns pagens,” “ser mordomo da confraria, que ali ha, e o fazia tambem que sempre hia aos ajuntamentos da Confraria, metendo-se entre os lauradores e gente baixa como hum delles, e andava dando conselhos a todos que perseuerassem na santa fee, e devação.”

92 Rômulo da Silva Ehalt highlights the work of the confraternities in the Christian Church during this phase in Japan in “Theology in the Dark,” 249–84.

93 Alcalá de Henares, Archivo Jesuitas, C–286, fol. 402v.
home without the fear and cowardice that others showed.”94 Only rarely were women investigated by Japanese authorities, as was Marta, the wife of the Korean known as Akashi Jiemon Cayo, who was arrested for hiding Christian missionaries in their home.95 Additionally, the Jesuit archive recorded the work of evangelized Korean men in arranging for others in prison for their faith to be supplied with food as well as their spiritual support. Arizó Pedro worked with a fellow Korean, Shōsaku Tomás, a labourer, to deliver resources to those languishing in gaol.96 So too did Manoel “visit prisoners of Christ many times, bringing them gifts of food, as he could afford.”97 Although Korean men were better placed to have the resources to assist in such ways, we cannot be sure that such actions were exclusively conducted by men. These records of evangelized Korean men’s activities were often documented as part of investigations, torture, and eventual execution for their faith, for which men were more often pursued by Japanese authorities than were women.

However, when Korean women did display leadership behaviours, Christian writers were mixed in their opinions about this form of contribution to the Christian community. The presence of Julia in Ieyasu’s household gave Christians a highly valuable conduit to Japan’s leadership. Giram reported how “often she gives very useful advice as to what she sees is needed for our good and that of Christendom, because as she is in the palace, she knows everything that goes on there.”98 The Franciscan Muñoz also reported on Julia’s knowledge of Japan’s political elite, in describing how,

of everything that went on in the palace, she wrote so diligently to the church of Yendo [present-day Tokyo], saying to them, now is the right time to do this, or to stop doing this or that, also to visit or talk to this or that lord, because it would be very important.99

Yet, in his same letter, Giram expressed some concern about the intensity of Julia’s engagement: she “behaves with so much devotion and fervour that sometimes she needs to be restrained.”100 Copies of Julia’s letters that remain within the Jesuit archive

94 Nagasaki, 1613, ARSI, JapSin 58, fol. 199r: “y fue el elquen los trabajos y destierros que los religiosos tuvieron mas los emparo recogiendoelos en sa casa sinel temor y cobardia que otros lo haziàn.”
95 Macao, March 24, 1627, ARSI, JapSin 61, fol. 112r.
96 Alcalá de Henares, Archivo Jesuitas, C~286, fol. 418r.
97 Macao, November 1617, ARSI, JapSin 58, fol. 402v: “visitar muitas vezes os presos de Christo leuando lhes presentes de cousas de comer, conforme sua possibilidade sofría.”
98 March 10, 1606, ARSI, JapSin 55, fol. 283v: “da muytas vezes mui proueitosos auisos de que ve sor necessario pera nossa cousas e bem da Christandade porque como esta no paço sabe tudo o que la passa meudamente.”
99 Osaka, February 1607, BL, MS Harley 3570, fol. 390v: “tenia tanto cuyda do enesta ocasion quetodo quanto pasaua en palacio lo escreuia ala Yglesia de Yendo diziendo juntamente ahora conuienie que se haga esta diligencia o que se deje de hazer esto olo otro que se visitase o hablase aeste o a lotro Señor, porque seria de mucha yportancia.”
100 Nagasaki, March 10, 1606, ARSI, JapSin 55, fol. 283v: “procede com tanta deuacao e feruor que ha mister as vezes freo.”
appear to reflect her intense interest in the activities of the Christian Church and her desire to maintain communication with the missionaries, particularly when she was sent into exile, as will be explored in subsequent chapters. She demonstrated her awareness of the wider contexts and conditions under which Christians operated in Japan: “All day long I am anxious thinking that the conditions might have worsened for you [...] I am especially fearful for the situation of the Fathers.” 101 Couros similarly noted that in her letters Julia was “asking too of the state of the Church and the Society.” 102 These accounts recorded her keen sense of engagement with Christian politics of conversion in Japan and indeed, her willingness to offer advice about it. Julia’s own, apparently forthright, voice through letter extracts in Christian narratives suggested her expectation of active participation in the institution of the Church.

Finally, although it did not feature in Christian accounts of Korean evangelizing, embedded in these descriptions was evidence of the way joining the Christian community could entail the breaking of other ties for Koreans in Japan. Such appeared the case for a young man, Manoel, living in Suruga, whose experiences were recounted by Giram to the General, Vitelleschi, from Macao in 1617. Several years earlier, Manoel had converted to Christianity, having noticed “the difference between the lives of good Christians and of pagans.” He had been born in Japan to Korean parents, who, Giram suggested, did their very best to dissuade him, until they finally cast him out of their house. Yet Manoel was able “to find support from Christians, whom he knew very well, and never left them.” 103 Becoming Christian did not simply expand the communities for Koreans in Japan, it could also close the door to others. Moreover, over time, it would increasingly become an identity of considerable risk to those living in Japan, as Chapters 3 and 4 explore further.

On the other hand, there is evidence that Christians’ identity as Koreans also continued to shape their lives in Japan. Christian archives highlighted the challenges for those identified as Korean in Japan, even many years after their arrival. In 1620 Giram enclosed a report from Spinola about a Korean convert, Arizó Pedro, then a married man with three sons. Spinola related how Pedro had risen to a position of some power in Japan, as “the tono’s treasurer, and head of other officers. But as he was a foreigner and it was feared that he might be accused of some intrigue, he resigned his office, thereby losing his income.” 104 No matter how high they rose in Japan, men identified as Korean were always vulnerable. Moreover, some ties across the Korean community appear to have continued across the diverse beliefs that they practised, and the Jesuit archive

101 APECESJ, Abt. 43, Nr. 53, fol. 22r; English translation of Morejón’s transcription of the Japanese text in Ruiz-de-Medina, The Catholic Church in Korea, 244. See also translation in Spanish and Japanese reconstruction in Ruiz-de-Medina, “History and Fiction of Ota Julia,” 540, 543.

102 Mateo de Couros to Claudio Acquaviva, Nagasaki, January 12, 1613, ARSI, JapSin 57, fol. 245v: “rogandolhe juntam en te que a auisasse do estado da Christandade e da Companhia.”

103 Macao, November 1617, ARSI, JapSin 58, fol. 401v: “foi notando a diferencia, que ha entre a vida dos bons christãos e a dos gentios; “se foi valer do emparo dos christãos, os quaes todos muy bem conhecia, e nunca lhes sahia de casa.”

provided occasional evidence of Koreans moving between different identities and roles. In March 1621, Mateo de Couros recorded a tale of apostasy of a Japanese Franciscan tertiary, Tanda Domingo. He narrated how a Korean man “who had been brought up from childhood in our house,” had approached a Korean friend, who was then working as an executioner for the Governor of Nagasaki, Hasegawa Gonroku, to secure him Tanda’s rosary from the pyre. As Tanda apostatized, the Korean executioner concluded that the item could not be considered a relic, and took it to give to his Korean friend. The focus of Couros’s account concerned the fragility of the Japanese tertiary’s faith and the strength of that of the Jesuit-educated Korean, who reputedly later threw the object away in a fire, but his narrative revealed lines of communication and community that continued beyond the faith positions that individuals upheld.

**Belonging and the Christian Orders**

Studies of the mission strategies of the Society of Jesus in the Asian region have identified how Jesuits employed some local social structures and systems that might support Christian practice and community. With regards to Korean women and men, however, Jesuits and other orders did not adapt their approach to their knowledge, limited in any case, of Joseon society. They met Koreans largely as part of a diaspora spread across the region. In Japan, evangelized Koreans operated within structures that had initially been designed for local Japanese cohorts. Over time, however, Koreans began to create structures attendant to their own needs. These included the establishment of their own site of worship, Saint Lawrence, in Nagasaki. The same annual letter by Giram in 1610 that reported its creation also noted the Korean community’s development of its own confraternity and how “even though they are poor, they gather alms among themselves.”

At the same time, the Christian orders, with their different approaches to mission, offered alternative social structures for the evangelized Korean community. While Christian authors may have been concerned with the distinctions between them, there is less evidence that Koreans identified strictly with individual orders and some evidence that they moved between Christian groups that offered the spiritual experiences and support that they desired. Korean women and men, for example, appeared to be members of a range of confraternities. The Dominican San Jacinto described the Korean

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105 March 15, 1621, ARSI, JapSin 37, fol. 185r: “hum Christão de sua naçam, seu amigo, que se crieue desde minino en nossa Casa.”
106 See, for example, on China, Standaert, “Jesuits in China,” 172.
107 Annual Letter, 1610, ARSI, JapSin 57, fols. 5v–6r: “ainda que pobres, aiuntarão suas esmolas entreisi.”
108 See, for example, the oath written by the Japanese Paulo Hitomi on behalf of the community at Takatsuki in 1595 that swore their exclusive allegiance to the Jesuits, Anesaki and Sakurai, “Two Kirishitan Documents,” and Hesselink, “Document of the Rosario Brotherhood of Nagasaki.” On the activities of such confraternities, see Cieslik, “Laienarbeit in der alten Japan-Mission,” 176–83; Oliveira e Costa, “The Misericórdias among Japanese Christian Communities”; Gonoi, “The Jesuit Mission and Jihi no Kumi (Confraria de Misericórdia),” who also mentions the involvement of evangelized Koreans at 133.