The Good Death of Paula of Miyako (c.1552-1570). The Religious and Emotional Practices of Dying in Christian Japan[1]

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Abstract
Questo contributo esamina le pratiche della buona morte nella missione Cattolica giapponese del sedicesimo e diciassettesimo secolo, usando come caso di studio la morte di una giovane donna di Miyako (Kyoto), Paula. In competizione per i proseliti con le scuole buddhiste giapponesi, soprattutto con quelle della Terra Pura, i missionari gesuiti fecero del loro meglio per rendere i rituali per la morte dei convertiti il più attraenti ed efficienti possibile. Questo articolo si concentra sulle pratiche emotive e religiose che caratterizzarono la morte di Paula, con l'obiettivo di analizzare come le tradizioni europee vennero adattate al contesto giapponese, l'influenza su di esse del Buddhismo, e come i missionari si adoperarono per creare nuovi modelli di martiri prima dell'inizio delle persecuzioni del regime Tokugawa.

Parole chiave
pratiche della buona morte, relazioni buddhismo-cattolicesimo, cristianesimo in giappone, pratiche emotive

Founded in 1549 by Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier in a country divided by civil war, the Japanese Catholic mission started growing in the decade of the 1570s, thanks to the conversion of southern warlords (*sengoku daimyō* 戦国大名) who then imposed Christianity on their fiefdoms. As the unification of the country proceeded under Toyotomi Hideyoshi (豊臣秀吉, 1537-1598) the missionaries were identified as a peril to the new emerging government and were hit by a decree that banned evangelisation in 1587. New restrictions and major persecutions

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followed in the seventeenth century, leading to numerous martyrdoms among the missionaries and the Japanese Christians, until only some hidden communities remained in the country (Üçerler, 2017).

Differently from other Asian missions, where European colonising powers were more influent, in Japan the Jesuit missionaries were keen to adapt aspects of local culture to gain more converts, although they still depicted Buddhism as a devilish creation to lead Japanese people astray. Indeed, the Jesuits identified Buddhist religious specialists as their main competitors (Zampol D'Ortia, Dolce, & Pinto, 2022). This was especially the case when it came to interpretations and depictions of the afterlife, which Japanese Buddhism traditionally controlled. If the Zen school attracted the missionaries' attention for refuting the afterlife, heated debates on the nature of the latter and how to obtain it characterised the Jesuits' relation with those schools that believed in being reborn in a Buddha or Bodhisattva's pure land (Baskind 2018; Amstutz & Blum 2006). As a result, considerable effort was made by the Christian communities to carry out rituals that surrounded the passing of one of its members: funerals, for instance, were both public ceremonies that represented the new religion to the wider Japanese society and key rituals to reconfirm Christian tenets against those of Buddhism. At the same time, the Christian communities adopted some specific local traditions and practices, too; examples included celebrating in correspondence of Obon, the Japanese festival of the dead; observing the third day after death, just like Buddhism did; or simply shaving one's head in sign of sadness and grief (Lopez-Gay 1970, 232-234).

This article adopts as a case study the death narrative of Paula of Miyako (c.1552-1570), to analyse the art of dying well in sixteenth-century Japanese Christianity. Paula was the daughter of one of the Christians of highest status of the city of Miyako (都, modern-day Kyoto), Antão, and of his wife Madalena. Baptised as a child by the founder of the mission of Japanese capital, Jesuit Father Gaspar Vilela (1526-1572), she led a virtuous life until, at the age of eighteenth, she suddenly died after a short illness. These are the most salient points of the narrative found in a letter written by Father Luís Fróis (1532-1597), famous interpreter and historian of the Japanese Jesuit mission, who had taken care of the community of Miyako after his confrere Vilela had been recalled to India. While Fróis filled his short missive of edifying details (1571), many

aspects of what it meant to die female, young, and Christian in sixteenth-century Japan went unmentioned. Some were implicitly understood, others instead piously hidden, by the cultural vocabulary shared by the writer and his European readership. This article sets out to make both these categories of elements explicit. Thanks to a comparison of her death to Christian and Buddhist *ars moriendi* traditions (Robbe, 2021; Ferois Ruys, 2014), it becomes possible to approach Fróis' narrative through the lens of history of emotions (McNamara & MacIlvenna, 2014), to consider the (mostly undeclared) expectations of European missionaries and Japanese Christians alike that surrounded death, conversion, and community.

At the same time, by analysing the snapshot offered by Fróis' letter, this article contributes to tracing the origins of the tenets of Christian good death in Japan. Paula's death is indeed an early example, in the history of the Japanese mission, of a practice that had not been yet set in stone, and was being created in dialogue with the different traditions that were relevant in the context. Another set of literary conventions, that Paula's narrative anticipates, is that of the notorious Japanese martyrdoms. Fróis specified: "They told me, after [her death], that she pleaded each day Our Lord to grant her the mercy that, if her parents ever accepted to have her married, He would call her to Him so not to contaminate her purity" (1571, 13r). Her request to die to preserve her virginity made Paula a figure that was adjacent to those of the female martyrs, both of early Christianity and of seventeenth-century Japan, that faced death for similar reasons. Paula, with her virtuous life and ever more virtuous death, offered therefore a model for the young and imperilled Miyako Christian community, especially for girls, at a stage in which they were sorely lacking.

Paula of Miyako, "Virgin and Martyr"

Fróis' narrative of the death of Paula, certainly circulating in the Christian community of the capital, aimed to find a solution to the interpretative anxiety surrounding its main event, the sudden demise of the sole, devout daughter of the rich, pious, elite Christian of the city, in a moment when her family had high hopes for her future and her marriage. Indeed, the

framing of Paula's death as the consequence of her own plea to God to preserve her religious and bodily purity fulfils different functions. It explains the reason of the tragic event in a consoling manner, but it moves the responsibility of it away from divine will, which might be held responsible by the bereaved parents and could cost the mission an important, loyal patron such as Antão. Importantly, it also counters possible antagonist interpretations of it as a punishment by the Buddha for converting. This was a very common Japanese interpretation of any misfortune afflicting the Christians in the country, which could have major consequences on a small, shunned church such as the one of Miyako, as Fróis described it in the first half of his letter (1571, 11r-12v). Finally, the assurances of Paula's salvation offered by the narrative would corroborate the beliefs of the community in the possibility of a happy afterlife, assuaging especially her father who, after all, is depicted as unwittingly responsible for the tragedy when he decided to give her daughter away in marriage against her wishes. Overall, the death event reinforced the community of Japanese Christians, thanks to their correct embodiment of the emotions that were held to be proper for the occasion, especially consolation.[2] At the same time, it confirmed them as faithful Christians to their missionary, Fróis, to the latter's superiors in India, and to the letter's vast readership in Europe, consoling them all in turn.

In a moment when Japan had not become yet a land of martyrs,[3] Fróis presented this young woman as an example ("mirror") for all Japanese Christians. He attached the recounting of Paula's death to the rather gloomy report of the very low numbers of conversions in the area of Miyako, with the stated aim to demonstrate the high potential of the Japanese people to become virtuous Christians still (Fróis, 1571, 11r). This death narrative was then arguably part of the unsuccessful attempts of the missionaries of Japan to gain more support from their brethren in Portuguese India at a stage in which both missions were facing difficulties (Zampol D'Ortia, 2024). But already in 1586, when Fróis had finished the first part of his magnus opus, *Historia de Japam* (Historia, 1:12*,

[2] For considerations on consolation as an emotion, see Weber-Guskar (2014).

[3] See Omata Rappō (2016) on the use of this term in reference to the Japanese context.

24*), the mission probably had more sensational examples than a young woman who died of sickness in her home. Paula's story, indeed, is completely absent from Fróis' famed recounting of the history of the Jesuit mission of Japan. When, in 1598, his letter was printed for the first time in the notorious collection of Asian Jesuit missives of Evora, *Cartas que os padres e irmãos da Companhia de Iesus escreuerão dos Reynos de Iapão & China* (Evora), the writer's most pious comments on the virtuosity of the Japanese and on the divine intervention in the Japanese mission were censored. It follows that now they appear only in the three manuscript copies of the letter that are still extant: one in the *Archivum Romanum Societati Iesu* in Rome (Arsi), one in the archives of the *Torre do Tombo* in Lisbon, and one in the library of the *Real Academia de la Historia* in Madrid.[4]

Fróis frames Paula's death within the Catholic calendar, creating thus a strong connection between her and the figures of other holy virgins: she fell ill on the eve of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the Temple (so on 20 November) and died in the early hours of the feast day of St Catherine of Alexandria, virgin and martyr (25 November). While the officiality of the first feast was in a state of flux in those years, tradition made it an important celebration for the missionaries, if not for the Japanese Christians.[5] The second instead was a major feast of the Roman

[4] I believe that, as it happened to other correspondence written in Japan in the first half of the 1570s, the original of this missive might have never reached Rome. The Arsi copy (titled "De huma do p^{e} Luis frois do miaquo & Japão de 15 de majo de 1571 pera ho padre joão bravo Reytor do colegio de goa na india") was made and sent from Kochi according to the note above its title (Fróis, 1571, 11r). The copies found in Lisbon and Madrid belong to the manuscript volumes of missionary letters read for edification during meals in the colleges (following Jerónimo Nadal's 1561 instructions, in DJ (2:335)). The volumes in question are, respectively, from the college of Coimbra (*Livro em que se escrevem as coisas notáveis que nas cartas da Índia, Japão e China…*, Codex Conimbricensis IV, now in the collection "Armário Jesuítico e Cartório dos Jesuítas," AJ028, National Archive of the Torre do Tombo) and from that of Alcalá de Henares (*Del Collegio de la Compañia de Jesus de Alcalá. Contiene varias cartas de las Indias de Japón, China, y otras partes, y anuas*, Tomus 4^{us}, now in the collection *Cortes*, 9/2663).

[5] Mary's Presentation was considered apocryphal and suppressed in 1568 by Pope Pius V, just to be reinstated by Sixtus V in 1585 (Kishpaugh, 1941, 130-

missal, as St Catherine was arguably the most important female saint of Medieval Europe after the Virgin (Walsh, 2003). She was well-known in Japan, too. She appears in the manuscript tome that collects texts for evangelisation in Japanese, compiled by Jesuit Manuel Barreto (1591):[6] the missal includes her feast day, while her hagiography is present in the section of the lives of saints.[7] These holy connections could only underscore Paula's own sanctity and how she, like Catherine, had died rather than imperil her virginity. This whole composition makes her figure a martyr-adjacent one and, more specifically, a female one. Indeed, elements of the story of Paula's death anticipate some that would later recur in Japanese martyrdom narratives of the seventeenth century. In addition to tropes coming from the broader Christian tradition, such as the use of relics and images as spiritual aides, or the support of the community's prayers, the presence of certain details suggests that these were recurring issues due to the specific Japanese context. An example in this sense, analysed below, are the debates on the propriety of certain religious and emotional practices (Scheer, 2012) in the moments leading up to death.[8] If, on the one hand, this confirms the liberal appropriation and adaptation of the Christian model of the good death by the Japanese communities (Zampol D'Ortia, 2023), on the other, it seems that retellings such as this of Paula anticipated elements of the basic scheme of the Japanese martyrdom narratives that would emerge during the period of the persecutions.

132). Considering the time that it took for information from Europe to reach Japan, it is unlikely that the missionaries there were even aware of the change, when this letter was written.

[6] Barreto was the copyist of this manuscript of 1591, that collects earlier materials composed collectively by the Japanese mission (Schütte, 1940).

[7] Her feast day and its reading from the bible in Japanese are in Barreto (1591, 96v-97r). Her hagiography (Barreto, 1591, 276-288) is also found in other Japanese collections of lives of saints, including the booklet *Maruchiriyo no Kagami* (Mirror of martyrdom), comprised of three hagiographies of female virgin saints and used during the Tokugawa persecutions (see Joliffe and Bianchi, 2021; Nawata Ward, 2010).

[8] Examples of this trope in later Japanese martyrdom narratives can be found in Zampol D'Ortia (2023).

A Good Life for a Good Death

According to the writer, Paula had already showed her virtuous character before her death. The portrayal made of her by Fróis was careful to show, in a nearly systematic manner, how she evaded the seven deadly sins: she never made show of being upset or irate; she was very modest, wearing rich garments only for Christmas and Easter, and rather giving them to orphans and the needy. She could not be as poor as Jesus, but she wished to be and her holy desires, the text seemed to suggest, made up for it. She also was zealous and worked to convert others. Overall, she was honest and meek, and spoke little. More than anything, she wished to preserve her virginity (Fróis, 1571, 13r), a newly introduced concept from Christianity that was presented as being of the utmost importance by the missionaries (Nawata Ward 2009). After establishing her good life, Fróis' letter swiftly led Paula to her good death, not doubting the divine intervention behind it:[9] "her father was dealing with these matters [of her marriage] on the eve of the Presentation of Our Lady, on account of [him] being old, [when] suddenly she contracted mortal pleurisy, not long after doing her confession…" (1571, 13r). The following three days of Paula's life were described as marked by suffering, but also by faith and hope, which she kept by praying continuously.

In a common pre-modern understanding, then, life and death were treated as porous, the first blending its good attributes in the latter, and then into the afterlife (Classen, 2016, 23). On the one hand, the Jesuits strove to introduce in the mission this interpretation of the life-death cycle in Catholic terms, as show some Japanese prints by the mission. Luís de Granada's *Guia de Pecadores*, for example, preserves this concept from its Spanish original to its Japanese translation: "good life is followed by good death, and bad life by a bad death" (Orii, 2006, 124-5). Handbooks composed for the specific use of the Christians include such recommendations as well: "Whether one will be saved or not lies in the preparation [for death] at this time… The death of a good kirishitan

[9] "It seems without a doubt that her prayer was heard and accepted…" (Fróis, 1571, 13r).

[Christian] is not to be called death, but simply the beginning of life."[10] On the other hand, though, far from being a Christian exclusive, this perception of life and death as irremediably connected was one of the many interpretative tools provided by Buddhism of this period as well (Stone, 2016, 12-13).[11] In Japanese Buddhism, good death could be achieved through thoughts and acts that were believed to allow rebirth in a pure land, the most popular and influent of which was that of the Buddha Amida (Amitābha) (Amstutz and Blum, 2006, 219). Good death was a preoccupation that had marked Japanese followers across various Buddhist schools; by the end of the Heian period (平安時代, 794-1185), it had been codified in various texts mostly inspired by the treatise *Ōjō yōshū* (往生要集, 985), written by Tendai monk Genshin (源信, 942-1017). The specificities of its practices could vary greatly, but they aimed at purifying the mind and focusing it on the Buddha's salvific power. They generally included visualisations of the descending Buddha that welcomed the dying in their pure land; visualisations of Amida and chanting of the *nenbutsu* 念仏 (invocation of the Buddha's name); recitations of *sūtra*; worship of sacred images (Stone, 2016). The conceptualisation of death that surrounded these practices certainly favoured the understanding and adoption of the imported model of good death by the Japanese Christians. Significantly, instead of using a Portuguese or Latin expression, as they did with other concepts that heavily depended on the Christian worldview (Triplett, 2024), Jesuit literature used the Buddhist term *rinjū shōnen* (臨終正念, "correct thoughts at the last moment") to refer to the mental practices that allowed a good death. This suggests that the missionaries were aware that Buddhist practices of death included holding in similar importance

[10] This passage is from the anonymous text *Bauchizumo no sazukeyō to byōja ni penitenshiya wo susumuru kyōke no koto*, printed in 1593 in Amakusa (Laures Kirishitan Bunko database, "On Baptism and Preparation for Death," https://digital-archives.sophia.ac.jp/laures-kirishitan-bunko/view/kirishitan_bunko/JL-1593-KB12-12-8); translation by Tronu Montané (2021, 39).

[11] Here, I am following Jacqueline Stone in her approach to premodern Japanese Buddhism as a set of tools and resources that people drew upon when useful in practice (at the moment of death, in this instance), rather than trying to trace their orthodoxy (Stone, 2016, 5-6; 12-13).

the last moments of life to obtain a good afterlife; still, the emotional practices they strove to embody in this time were not necessarily the same, as will be considered below (Hazama, 2015; Tsutsui, 2009).

The descriptions of the life of Paula made extensive use of Christian topoi to present a virtuous young woman who was not well known by the writer, as the latter implied with the intent to prove divine guidance as the reason of her pious behaviour.[12] On the contrary, the emotional and religious practices of Paula's death emerge as individualised, if still not particularly unique, in the description of her last four days. This might be simply because Fróis had the opportunity to follow closely the latter events, while he had to rely on witnesses of Paula's character when she was alive. He listed these other characters carefully (her father, her mother, her Christian female friends), embedding them in the narrative as if they were the witnesses of a martyrdom. At the same time, though, the aim of the author is to detail Paula's death, rather than her life, and the emotional reaction of the Christian community of Miyako to it, which is what demonstrates that she was a real "mirror" for them.

Fear and Dying Well

Some elements recounted by Fróis are particularly worthy of analysis in light of the texts on the good death, printed by the mission years later, especially to unveil what were implicit references to emotions, but the difference in contexts is to be acknowledged. Formal texts containing instructions for priests, such as the *Manuale ad Sacramenta Ecclesiae Ministranda* composed in 1605 by the third bishop of Japan, Luís

[12] "In these two years that I resided in Miyako, she came to church only to hear Mass with her mother, and on Sundays and on the days of the Saints, to hear Mass and preaching. She did not receive any more exhortations to grow in virtue than the preachings she heard and the counsel she received during confession, which she did on the feasts of Our Lady… so that her only teacher was the Holy Spirit" (Fróis, 1571, 13). The reference to the Holy Spirit is unsurprisingly excised in Evora (I, 307v), but it was a common understanding of the workings of conversion in Japan, especially in those initial years (Zampol D'Ortia, 2024).

Cerqueira, are hardly applicable to the small, understaffed mission of Miyako of the 1570s. The *Manuale* stated, for instance, that the oils for the sacrament of the extreme unction were to be blessed by the bishop (Manuale, 170), but this had been difficult in previous years due to the lack of this figure in Japan, so that this sacrament had been basically unknown among ordinary Christians until the end of the sixteenth century (López-Gay, 1970, 145-146). Still, the readings contained in the *Manuale* might have been similar to those recited by Fróis as Paula was dying: the Psalms in particular focused on obtaining God's mercy and protection, and avoiding divine ire for past transgressions.[13] Similar themes characterise the examples of prayers and exhortations that follow the litanies, together with repentance of sins; this section is translated into Japanese in an appendix (Manuale, 192-235).[14] As for those practices that could be carried out without a priest present, a booklet describing them was circulating in Japan already in 1561; the text might be the same as the 1593 printed volume discussing baptism and funerary rituals already cited above (López-Gay, 1970, 222-223). The emotional beats of the latter text, "On Baptism and Preparation for Death," are similar to those of the *Manuale*:

> Konchirisan [i.e. contrition] is to feel great sadness about having disobeyed Deus through the [sins] you have committed, and to determine that from now on you will not commit any more sins. […] Therefore, it is essential that all people who have committed sins understand that His judgment and punishment are severe, that they fear it profoundly, beg humbly, and repent. (Tronu Montané, 2021, 40-41)

As can be seen in this passage, the text foregrounds the anxiety surrounding the possibility of having offended God, the importance

[13] The *Manuale* presents the texts of Psalms 6, 31, 37, 50, 129, and 142 of the Vulgate (183-189). Still, had they been read out loud in Latin, they would not have made any sense to the Christians of Miyako.

[14] The Japanese translations are in reality "extremely free adaptations" (Laures Kirishitan Bunko database, "Manuale ad sacramenta ecclesiae ministranda," https://digital-archives.sophia.ac.jp/laures-kirishitan-bunko/view/kirishitan_bunko/JL-1605-KB30-29-24). See also Laures (1941).

of feeling "a great sadness" for sinning and to be afraid of divine judgement, as correct emotional reactions.[15]

Fear was not an emotion commonly attributed to saintly people: Paula's virtuous lack of sinning would be somewhat incoherent with it. At the same time, as illustrated by the Japanese *ars moriendi* handbook, fear was believed to be the correct emotion to embody before the might of God, and lack of it suggested over-confidence, which was "an obstacle for contrition" (Tronu Montané, 2021, 42). Fear at the moment of death could be, however, paralysing rather than consolatory (Feros Ruys, 2014), for both the dying person and the readership of their saintly *vitae*. In the narratives from Japan, the solution to this conundrum, to maintain a consolatory aim, was to focus on the scruples arising from a (generally physical) impossibility to carry out correct religious practices. These often materialised as debates, between the dying person(s) and the Christians around them, on the propriety of certain acts before death. They could discuss, for instance, the extent to which a martyr-to-be had to embody the Passion of Christ and whether it would be offensive to God for them to receive a better treatment. Generally, the spiritual advisor then consoled them in ways appropriate to the context. This type of discussions appeared very frequently in Japanese martyrdom retellings. For example, Takeda Agnese, who was crucified on 9 December 1608 near Kumamoto, wondered how appropriated it was for her to ride a litter to her execution, when Jesus had gone barefoot to his. She was reassured by a member of the Brotherhood of Mercy, who acted as her spiritual advisor during her martyrdom.[16] Fróis' description of Paula's death presents a scene that closely anticipated this trope:

> As long as she was fully conscious, which was just for three days because she was much tormented by a high fever, she said part of her prayers. She spent most of the time invoking the name[s] of Jesus [and] Mary, asking her mother and her Christian female friends if God would forgive her this fault

[15] Fear has received extensive attention from scholars well before Jean Delumeau's seminal texts *La peur en Occident. XIVe-XVIIIe siècle* (1978) and *Le péché et la peur. XIIIe-XVIIIe siècles* (1983); for an overview of Christian fear in this period see, for instance, Rosenwein (2016, 248-287).

[16] For this and similar examples see Zampol D'Ortia (2023).

> of not being able to say all her prayers and the irreverence of not praying on her knees. When the Christians surrounding her reassured her about God's great mercy, with many tears she offered Him many thanks. (1571, 13)

Once compared with the manuals considered above, it becomes evident that these doubts are one of the few practices that were acceptable for the virtuous deceased to embody their fears of God and for their salvation. The model that Paula is supposed to embody for all her community would not be complete without this essential emotion. Paula's tears then embody, through a common emotional practice, the emotional sequence of consolation, that led her from fear to gratitude towards God. As it befits an efficient model, this emotional practice would be imitated by many in the story later, as will be detailed below.

Good Death Attendants

Another element of the good death, that is implied in the Christian manuals, is that it is easier to achieve if the ailing person is surrounded by people who support them through it. The existence itself of these texts points to how pervasive this idea was, since they were compiled for those who held this role. Indeed, the main task of the Church in Europe was often understood as assisting the dying and praying for the souls in purgatory (Taylor 2016). While some tensions could arise in the missionary fields due to different interpretations of the duties of the missionaries,[17] the Jesuits understood very soon that the Japanese were much preoccupied with death and expected religious specialists to attend to this need with the appropriate solemnities.[18] Funerals, for example, were ceremonies that could attract thousands of curious onlookers, and become great opportunities for evangelisation; rules for Christian death rites and for admonishing dying people were recorded since 1555

[17] Franciscan missionaries for instance were accused of denying the last rites to the Spaniards in American colonies in 1558, because they understood it as being one of the duties of the parish priests instead (Turley, 2014, 96).

[18] Already Francis Xavier was aware of this Japanese interest (López-Gay, 1970, 197-198).

(López-Gay, 1970, 220; 233-234). As mentioned above, often the role of facilitating a good death fell on members of the laity, even if, when they were available, members of the Brotherhoods of Mercy (Irmãos, da Misericórdia, or *jihiyakusha* 慈悲役者) volunteered for it (Costa, 2002). As other elements of Japanese good death, facilitators were present during Buddhist passings too. Generally indicated with the term of "good friends" (*zenchishiki* 善知識),[19] these helpers took care of much more than their Christian counterparts, making extensive arrangements for the death room, nursing the dying, exorcising spirits that could be harmful to them, interpreting their visions, etc. (Stone, 2016, 266-267). However, there was a significant Buddhist reticence around the presence of close relatives during these rituals, as they were believed to distract the dying, reminding them of earthly attachments (Stone, 2016, 270-271). Still, Tokugawa biographical accounts of people reputed to have attained a pure land depicted their death as accompanied by chanting relatives, indicating that this Buddhist sensibility changed over time (Stone, 2016, 362). Although a similar belief was found in some European medieval manuals as well, such as Jean Gerson's *De arte bene moriendi* (c. 1403) (Robbe, 2021, 220-21), Jesuit handbooks in Japan do not seem to be engaged with this matter. Still, this same attitude was held by some Japanese Christians as well, such as warlord Dom Bartolomeu Ōmura Sumitada (大村純忠, 1533-1587), who requested his wife and children to leave the room before his death (Tsutsui, 2009).

In the case of Paula, this supporting role of "good friends" was carried out by Fróis, her parents, her female friends, and "some eight or ten Christians" who accompanied the priest on her last day. Indeed, Fróis was called to attend the dying woman at eight in the evening of the eve of the day of St Catherine. As she entered "her last agony," Paula was provided with a beloved icon to look at, since she did not have the strength for worshipping it anymore (Fróis, 1571, 13v). In this first phase, her parents took the most active role:

> [they] kept waking her up continuously, so that she would not forget of

[19] The term appears, in the context of good death practices, in the charter of the Twenty-Five Samādhi Society of the Tendai school, founded in 986, to which Genshin was connected (Stone, 2016, 55; 266).

> the most holy names of Jesus [and] Mary, pronouncing them in a very loud voice in her ears, and always throwing holy water in her face. It was certainly [a scene that] moved [everyone] to many tears. (Fróis, 1571, 13v)

As recommended by the text "On Baptism," Paula's parents made great efforts to keep her mind on holy matters, helped by the image put in front of her eyes. Holy water was commonly sprinkled on sick and possessed people, to heal and free them. Such practice was suggested for the dying to keep demons at bay in fifteenth-century Europe (Robbe, 2021, 222-223) and, even if it was not explicitly mentioned, the handbook "On Baptism" too expected the intervention of the Devil to tempt the moribund to despair. Although no manual described the specific act of repeating the names of Jesus and Mary either, this was an emotional and religious practice with the same function of the "exhortation to rekindle hope in the dying" present in the *Manuale* (210-215).[20] It could be said that, at the same time, this kind of practice was meant to rekindle hope in the other Christians present as well; in this case, hope that their beloved fellow believer will be saved, as will be discussed below.

The role of Fróis in this last scene is very limited, to the point that one wonders exactly what he contributed. Even before this stage, by the time he first visited her, Paula was too far gone to be able to take communion and, the text reassured the reader at the start, she had recently done her confession, so it was not required. He therefore seemed at most to be leading the group prayer on her last night:

> Together with the other Christians who were present, we spent the night in prayer. When they saw her reaching the first stage of death, they took all the reliquaries they wore around their necks and put them above her head; kneeling, with their blessed beads in their hands, they helped her until three hours after the midnight, when she surrendered her soul to the Lord, being of eighteen years of age. (Fróis, 1571, 13v)

The Miyako community was used to carry out funerals by themselves, as already in 1561 one of their members owned a reference booklet on the matter (López-Gay, 1970, 222) and, in this letter too, it appears that

[20] "Alia exhortatio ad excitandam spem in moriente, praesertim cum desperatione tentatur."

the Japanese Christians basically operated autonomously. This might have been the intent of the writer, after all: demonstrate to his readers that the Christian community of Miyako, who in the future would be considered the best in Japan, was guided by the Holy Spirit, so that they independently knew what to do to help their fellow believers reach heaven.

Holy Items for a Holy Death

An element that furthered the community's independence from the missionaries during the ceremony, granting it direct access to the divine, was the sacred paraphernalia that they used to aid the dying. Most of the acts carried out with these items seem to be repurposed from practices for protection, exorcism, and healing the sick (Higashibaba 2001, 31-35). On the third day of her illness, for instance, Fróis and the Christians of Miyako presented Paula with a "monstrance full of relics to worship and put above her head." This did not have the desired result of curing her as, when she saw it, she "wanted to sit up on her bed, but she could not and, since she did not even have the strength to make the sign of the Cross, she beat her breast and, shedding tears, she recited part of the Credo and of the General Confession" (Fróis, 1571, 13v). Putting objects above the head as a show of respect was a Japanese custom,[21] that had been adopted into Christianity to let sick people enjoy the purported benefits of the relics' power, as can be seen in the two passages quoted above. In addition to relics, images, crosses, blessed beads, and rosaries could be used as well. Paula herself owned an icon to which she was "very devout" and that was offered to her to help her thoughts not to stray from sacred matters. As was suggested in the handbook "On Baptism" (Tronu Montané, 2021, 41), this practice aimed at strengthening her faith. To offer the dying an icon that they were particularly fond of seemed to be rather common; see for instance a similar practice in the anonymous fifteenth-century manual *Speculum artis bene moriendi* (Robbe, 2021, 222).

[21] See for instance the reaction of the first Buddhist monks who saw Christian icons: "These [Japanese monks] desire much to know what we worship; they appreciate our images and put them on their heads." Letter from Jorge Álvarez to Francis Xavier, from Malacca, 1546/47 (DJ, 1:21).

In the crucial final hours of her life, the community shared with Paula their own, private relics and blessed beads, too. Differently from those in the monstrance, these relics were placed in small sachets that were worn, as the text stated, around the neck, mostly for thaumaturgical and protective reasons. It is probable that this Christian practice had initially been introduced in the country by Francis Xavier who, in 1550, had gifted the Christians of Ichiku a similar sachet containing litanies on a piece of paper, that was used to heal the sick (Epistolae, 2:598-599).[22] The community therefore pooled their spiritual resources to support her safe passage to heaven, a practice of Christian love that, again, furthered their depiction as converts strong in the faith. Paula's own reported words confirm the intent and correct interpretation of the act of reuniting representatives of the community, when she thanked Fróis for coming to visit her: "May God Our Lord repay you […] of such great charity" (Fróis, 1571, 13v).[23]

Paula's Salvation, Her Community's Salvation

After her death, Paula's body made her salvation visible by expressing the correct emotional state, as it had happened through her sickness:

> Paula was left wearing an expression that was so serene and devout that it certainly provoked many tears in everyone, and so the weeping that the Christians did for her was full of compassion.

Paula's peacefulness was a perceptible, and therefore corroborating, sign of her reaching heaven. This was true to both Christian and Pure Land traditions; in the latter, the moribund was welcomed by a descending

[22] Albeit arguably similar in appearance, composition, and use to modern-day *omamori* (御守, Buddhist or Shintō protective talismans held in a silk sachet that are often kept on, or close to, one's person), this kind of amulets started being popular only much later in Japan (Swanger & Takayama, 1981, 239-40).

[23] Paula however was not able to recognise Fróis and believed to be speaking to Brother Lourenço instead, a Japanese missionary who had been previously working in Miyako.

Buddha Amida, and experienced the joy of the mercy of a certain salvation, which was expressed by their calm countenance (Raveri, 2017, 242-243; Stone, 2016, 1). In Christianity, this discernible peace was one of the foremost "signs of salvation," which the faithful looked for, that confirmed that the sick would attain redemption, or that the deceased was saved. Among the many examples, Ōmura Sumitada was thus described during his last days by his confessor, Afonso de Lucena:

> Until now he has shown many signs of patience and according to what I saw I think he is predestined […] I enjoy very much […] to see this man now, at the end, finishing so well and showing so many signs of salvation. (Lucena, 1587, 242)

Peace and patience in dying were signs of acceptance of the will of God (Robbe, 2021, 224-225) and, as such, encouraging evidence about the salvation of the moribund. When successful, dying could be compared to an emotional practice of peace, as the case of Paula illustrated; just like a martyr, the narrative shows her struggling through pain and fear to emerge victorious over death at the end.

In addition to being a trial for the dying person, the death of a member of the community functioned as an evaluation of the faith of the whole group, too. For the assistants, who were present through the various stages of the end of life, it also represented a way to practice their own, looming death (Filocamo, 2021, 235). The practices of support for the dying therefore were similar to an embodied *memento mori*. At the end of the spiritual test faced by the Christian community of Miyako, the success of all the religious strategies that they enacted to save the virtuous young woman was, once again, confirmed by the emotions they could read on her body. Moreover, the communal weeping, that concluded the narration, signalled their consolation. At the beginning of her sickness, it was Paula who had reached this ideal emotional state, by accepting God's mercy and putting her fears at rest at the encouragement of her friends. Her community too, at the end, was able to embody the same emotion because of Paula's show of fortitude, and was thus able to feel closer to God and be edified. In the words of Ignatius of Loyola,

> It is […] consolation when one sheds tears that move to the love of God, whether it be because of sorrow for sins, or because of the sufferings of Christ our Lord, or for any other reason that is immediately directed to the praise and service of God. Finally, I call consolation every increase of faith, hope, and love, and all interior joy that invites and attracts to what is heavenly and to the salvation of one's soul by filling it with peace and quiet in its Creator and Lord. (Puhl, 1951)

Moreover, thanks to Fróis' retelling, Paula's wider emotional community (Rosenwein, 2006), the imagined community of global Catholic Christendom, could join her in consolation in the same way as her closer, Miyako one. The many, often pitiful, details that the author had added to his story worked to this end, letting the readers imagine and enter the spaces of the scene, identify with the characters, and share their emotions, in true Ignatian fashion. A common vocabulary of emotional practices allowed Fróis' audience to understand (or to believe that they were understanding) the internal, true lives and feelings of the Christians of Miyako. This shared emotional worldview could make stronger the bonds of community that European Christians felt for their Japanese co-religionaries and, if Fróis reached his aim, urge the first to support the mission and its evangelisation project.

Conclusions

Albeit condemned as Devil worshipping since the nearly beginning of the mission, Buddhism had a deep influence in the practices of Japanese Christians. This analysis of Paula of Miyako's good death has shown how, in addition to aesthetically similar elements in funerary rites, the emotional models of the Japanese Christian *ars moriendi* appeared in patterns similar to those expected by Buddhists, especially by those wishing to be reborn in a pure land. At the same time, if the emotions were similar, the respective practices could vary, as the converts adapted the way they embodied emotions to the aims of their new Christians understanding of the world. New, powerful relics and sacred items required new, specific religious formulae to be efficient.

Christian laity needed to originally organise itself to serve as attendants to a good death.

Most importantly, new models were created for this young communities by adapting their actions to concepts and examples from ancient Christianity. The model of the virgin, meaningless before the arrival of the missionaries, was elevated above all other women through the example of the "virgin and martyr" girl. Paula's story as told by Fróis empowered this new concept enough to support a plea for death when in danger of its loss. Her model death was enshrined by Fróis' writing to make it a mirror for all the Christians of Miyako, and her emotions were made compelling instruments for the salvation of her whole community.

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