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The Role of the Franciscans in the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Philippines and Japan in the 16th–17th Centuries: Transpacific Geopolitics?

HÉLÈNE VU THANH*

This article proposes to study the role of Franciscan missionaries in the establishment of economic and diplomatic relations between the Spanish Philippines and Japan. More specifically, it argues that the missionaries played an active part in the construction of a trans-pacific commercial and religious network connecting the Spanish Americas with Asia. In so doing, the article aims at correcting the commonplace historiographical assumption that the Franciscan presence in Japan was negligible and of little interest compared to the Jesuits'. Indeed, the diplomatic relations between Japan and the Philippines were set against a general context of Iberian expansion in Asia. The Spanish conquered Manila in 1571 for chiefly commercial reasons. However, the spreading of the faith provided a justification for Spanish territorial ambitions in Asia. In this process, the Franciscans played a prominent role, as they were picked as ambassadors to Japan by the governor of Manila. The Franciscans did not have mere regional ambitions for Japan: they intended the country to become a hub for the whole Pacific region.

Keywords: Japan, Philippines, Franciscans.

Asia had stirred the European imagination since the Middle Ages and the time of Marco Polo's voyages. By the time Europeans set their sights on Japan in the early sixteenth century, however, trade was very much on their minds. "Cipango" was sought for its famed riches before any religious considerations. The first Europeans to reach Japan in 1543 were Portuguese merchants.[1] However, they only visited the country periodically to trade. It was the Jesuits, under Portuguese patronage, who began maintaining a permanent presence a few years after the arrival of Francis Xavier in 1549. Until the 1580s, the Portuguese enjoyed a monopoly on

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Japan in both trade and Christianity, a situation that was backed by Spanish-Portuguese agreement.[2] But after the Spanish began colonising the Philippines in 1565, this situation was bound to change. The Spanish indeed soon turned their attention to Japan, seeing it at the same time as a power to reckon with and as a potential gateway to the Far East and to Chinese wealth. By opening diplomatic relations, they hoped at first to make the Philippines safe from Japanese invasion, and later on to beckon the island country into a transpacific zone that would help link their American possessions with Asia. The question remains, though: As they infringed on the Portuguese monopoly, were the Spanish seeking to foster trade with Japan, or to plant a Franciscan mission to rival that of the Jesuits? One of this article's immediate objectives is to weigh the relative importance of economic and religious considerations in the Spanish move to initiate diplomatic relations with Japan. While recent historiography has paid more attention to the Spanish presence in Asia, especially in the Philippines, most of the research has focused on the economic aspects, notably through the study of the Manila galleons.[3] Diplomatic relations between Spain and the region's main powers, Japan included, have not received much scrutiny.[4] Manila is generally studied as a mere dependency of New Spain rather than as an actor in its own right, capable of engaging in diplomatic initiatives and of pursuing its own agenda. This article should help reassess this dimension of Philippine history through the study of relations with Japan. Franciscan missionaries played a key role in this intra-Asian relationship, as it was as ambassadors that they were first sent to Japan.

This article also seeks to depart from a common bias in the traditional historiography of Catholic missions, namely the tendency to overlook the missionaries' extrareligious activities. The mendicant orders' writings precisely reveal how imbricated religious and diplomatic objectives were in their Japanese project. Far from being concerned solely with winning over Japanese souls, the Franciscans clearly intended to contribute to the defence of Spanish interests in Asia, from both Japan and European powers. Understanding the actions of the mendicant orders thus calls for a comprehensive approach, mindful of the global framework of the Catholic monarchy, as suggested by Serge Gruzinski and Sanjay Subrahmanyam.[5] The "Catholic monarchy" refers to the personal union of the two Iberian kingdoms from 1580 to 1640. Although legally speaking the two empires continued to exist as separate entities, the union placed Portuguese and Spanish possessions under a single authority. An unprecedented "global agglomeration" thus appeared featuring closely intertwined administrative, economic, and religious networks spanning several continents.

The mendicant orders were not just hoping to Christianise Japan. Their goal was to make it an integral part of an emerging Spanish-controlled transpacific zone that reflected the "consciousness of the globalism" of the Spanish empire in the early seventeenth century.[6] This article thus also means to demonstrate the missionaries' ability to develop local strategies while contributing to the global development of the Catholic monarchy.

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Last, but not least, this study reassesses the relative importance of the mendicant orders in the evangelisation of Japan. The mainstream historiography of the Catholic missions, especially where Japan is concerned, focuses disproportionately on the Jesuits and their worldwide vision.[7] The Franciscans, together with the other Mendicant orders, tend to be perceived at best as secondary actors in the Far East, due to their later arrival and the smaller number of personnel involved. Yet, the Franciscan mission to Japan has its own story to tell, and it is worthy of a proper investigation. In exploring its role in the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Philippines, the significance of Franciscan endeavours in Asia becomes clearer.

Tying Diplomatic Relations with Japan: Between Commercial Objectives and Evangelical Ambitions

Forming a Global Space: for Trade and Religion

During the first part of the sixteenth century, European engagement with Asia was a Portuguese monopoly. The situation began to change as the Spanish made headways in the Far East. In 1571, Miguel López de Legazpi founded Manila. The Philippines represented the final link in Spain's worldwide expansion, initiated in the fifteenth century: the colony allowed for the continuous circulations of goods and men across the world's three major oceans.[8] Historians have duly underlined the economic implications of this event: for Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, the settling of the Philippines marked the beginning of globalised trade.[9] But in marking this, they have portrayed the initiation of diplomatic relations with Japan essentially as an attempt at opening trade with the region's main powers. As shall be demonstrated here, religious considerations should not be seen as accessory: Spanish commercial ambitions in the region were prefigured and justified by religious discourse produced and circulated by the missionaries.

The main inspiration in the Spanish conquest of the Philippines had been the hope of wrestling the "spice islands," the Moluccas, from the Portuguese, to capitalize on Europe's apparently insatiable demand for spices. Faced with stiff resistance, they soon shifted their focus to the export of Asian-made luxuries, including Chinese silk, lacquerware, and windscreens, which they shipped via the transpacific Manila galleons.[10] The Spanish welcomed Japanese and Chinese merchants in their Philippine ports, which allowed them to acquire various goods in exchange for silver extracted from American mines. The colony's life soon revolved around the galleons' visits, which were vital in making the colony sustainable and profitable despite its remoteness from both Europe and the Americas.[11]

But religious objectives were equally important. First, they helped justify the Spanish presence in the Philippines and in Asia itself against the stipulations of the treaty of Zaragoza: in 1529, Charles I had agreed to renounce any claim to the Moluccas in exchange for 350,000 ducats, recognising the Portuguese on over Asia. Philip II's decision to conquer the Philippines and start expanding his European and American empire into Asia was a glaring breach of the agreement.[12] But he could

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count on the support of missionaries, including Motolinia, a Franciscan, who identified the worldwide Hapsburg empire as a "Fifth Monarchy" (*el quinto reino de Jesucristo*). Collaboration was indeed close between the Church and the crown, religious orders, and government officials, in what has been described as "evangelical imperialism."[13] It materialised in the funding of missionary efforts by the crown through the patronage system. The monarchy provided financial support, and selected and dispatched religious men to the new lands, in return for the right to name bishops and collect tithes.[14] And, indeed, the king regularly wrote to his administrators in the Philippines to inform them of the sending of missionary personnel. But an even more important benefit for the crown was that the success of the conversions helped legitimise Spanish expansion in Asia, as it had in the Americas. The governor for the Philippines, officially subordinated to the viceroy for New Spain, was thus in charge of protecting the community of Spaniards and native converts. The continued expansion of the Spanish in the Philippine archipelago can hardly be explained by economic motivations, as its meagre productive potential was always dwarfed by the income derived from the Manila-based Chinese trade. Religious achievements in the Philippines helped legitimise expansion elsewhere.

In this context, the interest of developing diplomatic relations with Japan was twofold.[15] First, it could provide useful additional ports to supply the Manila galleons, and although Japan was a rather unattractive trade partner compared to China, trade routes would be easy to establish, as a sizeable community of Japanese merchants had settled in Manila's district of Dilao.[16] The Franciscans took care of the converts among them and encouraged the Philippine authorities to maintain contacts with Japan with the backing of the bishop of Manila.[17] Second, Japan could be a stepping stone for the evangelisation of the Far East and in particular Ming China.[18] The diplomatic opening with Japan should hence be understood in a regional context of engaging East Asian powers and a global context of transpacific commercial expansion. The interests of merchants and administrators easily matched those of the missionaries.

However, the first direct diplomatic contacts happened by accident. The Franciscan Juan Pobre landed at Hirado in 1582 after his ship sank. Back in the Philippines, he returned to Japan two years later. The first (ephemeral) mission was established in Hirado and in 1585, Matsuura Takanobu, Hirado's daimyo, wrote to governor Santiago de Vera, requesting that missionaries be sent to him and expressing his will to convert.[19] These initial contacts, however, were informal and, more importantly, only involved a minor local lord. Diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Japan began in earnest when the Spanish authorities were contacted by Japan's emerging central power.

Franciscan Ambassadors? The Weight of Iberian Rivalries in Asia

The first engagement was rather inauspicious. In 1592, a certain Harada Magoshichirô visited the Philippines, carrying a letter written by Hideyoshi for the governor of

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Manila. The letter demanded no less than the subjugation of the Philippines. Harada acted on behalf of his relative, Harada Kyemon, a merchant who knew the Philippines well and had converted to Christianity in 1591.[20] A rather shady figure, Harada Kyemon had suggested to Hideyoshi that, in light of the feeble Spanish military presence, the colony was ripe for subjugation or conquest.[21] Doubting the authenticity of the diplomatic threat, but wary of Japanese might, governor Gómez Pérez Damariñas dispatched an embassy, led by the Dominican Juan Cobo. They were received by Hideyoshi but did not make it back to the Philippines because their ship sank.[22] Harada Magoshichirô brought the news to the colony around the middle of April 1593 and renewed Hideyoshi's demand for tribute. Unsure about the actual result of the embassy, Gómez Pérez Damariñas decided to commission a second embassy. This time Franciscans were picked, under the leadership of Pedro Bautista.[23] The reasons for this reliance on missionaries as well as the instructions they were given demand scrutiny.

While missionaries were often asked to fill diplomatic roles, the choice in this particular case might indeed seem risky, as relations between Hideyoshi and the Jesuits were notoriously tense: six years earlier, Japan's strongman had ordered persecutions against the Society of Jesus.[24] Historian Charles Boxer thus doubts the sincerity of the Philippine governor's move, calling it a "pseudo-diplomatic" embassy, in line with a historiography of the Japanese missions that tends to belittle Franciscan activities.[25] In fact, Damariñas had few alternatives to staff the embassy. Trained administrators were an extremely rare commodity in a colony that was perceived as a land of exile and a "third world" far away from Europe and America.[26] Although the governor lamented the influence religious men could as a consequence exert on temporal matters,[27] they were seen as the only qualified and reliable personnel at hand for this kind of assignment.[28] As the governor explained to Hideyoshi: "I am sending vicar Fray Juan Cobo, a man of much virtue and goodness, amongst those held in the highest esteem on these islands, and with whom I customarily deliberate on the most important matters."[29] Missionaries must have made up a significant proportion of the educated Spanish elite of the Philippines, which can account for the picking of Dominicans or Franciscans for diplomatic missions. But there is more.

The choice should also be seen in light of political, commercial, and religious rivalries between the two Iberian powers in the Far East. The 1529 treaty of Zaragoza had put Japan just inside Portugal's sphere (the demarcating meridian running through Edo, now Tôkyô). Japan was thus meant to be Portugal's exclusive preserve, for both trade and religion. At the *Cortès* of Tomar of 1580, Philip II recognised the treaty as still valid despite the union of the crowns. Sending administrators as ambassadors would only make it more obvious that the king's word and the treaties were being breached. The picking of missionaries thus seems to have been a choice by default. For the governor, who was halfhearted about the whole endeavour,[30] it could be claimed that the Franciscan envoys were only representing the interests of the Church, and not those of the Spanish crown. The missionaries were put in an

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ambiguous position: their religious identity was to shield them from Portuguese hostility, yet their purpose was eminently diplomatic. Moreover, there is no indication that the Franciscans were instructed to establish themselves in Japan and it is likely that the Philippine governor was expecting that they would act as emissaries, going back and forth between Japan and the colony.

Unfortunately, to my knowledge there is no trace of detailed instructions listing the points the missionaries were to negotiate. It is thus not possible to tell whether they were only expected to seek a treaty of friendship or if religious concessions were also on the agenda. How much latitude the missionaries were given and the extent to which they exceeded their mandate are both open questions. But the chronology of events may suggest an answer. The sending of Pedro Bautista to Japan in 1593 came just after Harada Magoshichirô delivered Hideyoshi's threats. In a letter dated January 7, 1594, Pedro Bautista reported to governor Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas on his audience with Hideyoshi,[31] who maintained his demand that the Spanish colony submit willingly or, like Korea, face a Japanese invasion. The Franciscans' response was to claim their main purpose was to offer the King of Spain's friendship. That and suggestions of a trade agreement with the Philippines seem to have appeased Hideyoshi.[32] The missionary's mandate hence seems to have been clearly diplomatic, as there is no suggestion that the prospect of a Franciscan mission was discussed. This hypothesis is consistent with a letter written by the governor and by the minutes of the war council that was held on April 22, 1594, in the wake of Hideyoshi's renewed threats.[33] In his letter to Pedro Bautista, dated April 27, 1594, Luís Pérez Dasmariñas[34] insisted on the importance of keeping good relations between Japan's leader and the Spanish colony, giving Bautista a free hand to achieve that. Did Luís Pérez Dasmariñas consider that establishing a mission could facilitate the negotiations? It is unlikely, as his father and predecessor, Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas, had previously barred the Franciscans from making such a move, probably out of fear of upsetting both the Japanese and the Portuguese.[35] In addition, the minutes of the war council make no mention of granting missionaries the right to set up a mission; it merely stated that the Philippines knew of no authority other than God and Philip II. We are thus led to think that the Franciscans took advantage of their position as emissaries to establish themselves in Japan in spite of the Portuguese monopoly. There was no immediate reaction from Spanish authorities. The Franciscans thus felt their initiative was tacitly accepted. In a later document, the Franciscans defended their move as a mere response to Hideyoshi's expressed wish and made no mention of instructions from the governor of the Philippines about this.[36] Two important points are made clear at this stage. First, the colony's authorities exerted only limited control over the Franciscans, who felt it possible to go quite far in pursuing their own agenda. Second, despite the modest number of personnel involved, the Franciscan mission had geopolitical significance for the region, as it opened prospects of sustained political and commercial relations between Japan and the Philippines. The Franciscan mission should be seen as more than a minor development in the history of catholic missions to Japan: it was at the time an important step in Spain's efforts to obtain

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political recognition from the Far East's powers and to make its position more secure in the region.

The next questions, then, are how, once they settled in Japan, did the Franciscans reconcile their roles as ambassadors and missionaries, especially in their dealings with Japanese authorities, and how did they justified their infringement on the Portuguese monopoly.

For the Empire and for the Faith: The Franciscan Presence in Japan

Legitimising the Mission in the Global Context of the Catholic monarchy

Against historiographical treatment of the Jesuit-Franciscan rivalry in purely religious terms, we should understand it also as a development in Iberian geopolitical competition.[37] The arrival of the Franciscans in Japan went against the stipulations of Papal bulls supporting the Jesuits but also breached Spanish-Portuguese treaties. Instead of a passive border between the two empires, Japan became a contested frontier, the only territory in Asia where the Portuguese and Spanish both maintained a presence while neither had any political control over it. Diplomatic and religious rivalries could only reinforce each other.

The diplomatic mandate issued by the Philippine governor presented a unique opportunity for the Franciscans to gain a foothold in Japan. This would indeed breach the dispositions of Gregory XIII's 1585 bull, *Ex pastoralis officio,* which granted the Jesuits a monopoly on the evangelisation of Japan. But the Franciscans could rely on a loophole in his successor Sixtus V's 1586 *Dum ad uberes*, which defined the Franciscans' operational zone as going from the Philippines to China, making no mention of Japan and no reference either to *Ex pastoralis officio*, which it appeared to contradict. The 1586 bull did not stipulate the abrogation of the 1585 one, nor did it explicitly state that Japan could be evangelised from the Philippines. But, in the absence of clarifications from Rome, the Franciscans interpreted the change as consent for their Japanese ambitions.[38]

The order of St. Francis's procurator Francisco de Montilla also used the union of the crown as a legitimising factor.[39] Since the Jesuits and the Franciscans now found themselves under the patronage of the same monarch, the point was made that the royal coffers would benefit from sharing the means used for missionary activities, notably by relying on ships transiting through the Americas. By stressing the global framework of the Catholic monarchy, the Franciscans downplayed the separation of the empires and the objections to their presence in Japan.

They could also count on the governor of the Philippines, who, faced with a fait accompli, gave official support to their undertakings. The governor backed the claims pressed by the Franciscan provincial minister, Juan de Garovillas as well as those of other orders (mainly the Dominicans and the Augustinians) who demanded free access to Japan. This united front of religious and political authorities in the Philippines against the Portuguese and Jesuit monopoly again reflects the fact that the issue was not merely a religious matter. Two documents illustrate this well. One is a

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1594 report on Japanese affairs ordered by the governor of the Philippines at the request of the Franciscan provincial.[40] The report was based on the interrogation of various people returning from Japan. The questions asked were clearly aimed at justifying the Franciscan presence in the country in spite of an officially still valid Papal interdict. All the witnesses testified that the Franciscans visited Japan at the invitation of the Japanese, that they were being well-treated and that their presence was necessary considering the lack of Jesuit personnel.[41] But the interrogation opened and closed on questions pertaining to diplomatic relations between Japan and the Philippines. First, all the witnesses reported the visit of ambassador Harada to Manila, which supports the idea that the Franciscan embassy was merely a response to a Japanese initiative. Second, they were unanimous in concluding that the Franciscan presence helped foster good relations between the Philippines and Japan. The report was complemented by a *Relation on the Things of Japan,* drafted by the Franciscan provincial and by the Manila *cabildo* (municipal council) and backed by letters by the governor and by the Dominican and Augustan provincials. The *Relation* stressed the opposition of the Jesuits and referred to Sixtus V's brief to defend the arrival of the order of the St Francis. It added that despite the warm relations between Japan and the Philippines, Hideyoshi remained an undependable ally. To conclude, the governor and the *cabildo* called for the king's backing on this issue. In short, the religious and administrative authorities in the Philippines conjointly asked that the king ignore the treaties with Portugal and make Japan a territory open to Portuguese and Spanish alike—at least as far as religious men were concerned. Naturally, this would only facilitate the eventual establishment of direct trade routes between Japan and the Spanish colony, which would be detrimental to the Portuguese in Macau.

In contesting the Jesuit monopoly on the Japanese missions, the Franciscans added to the economic and political rivalries among Iberians in the Far East. With the backing of Manila, they effectively hinted at a new mode of relations for the two empires in the region, where the hermetic separation would be relaxed (at the benefit of the Spanish), on the grounds that the scarcity in men and resources called for a measure of cooperation. As they established themselves in Japan, the Franciscans intended to fulfil their missionary objectives and their diplomatic mandate together, the durable presence being strictly conditioned by the development of relations between the Philippines and Japan. While their intervention in Japan was justified by global considerations about the empires, its consolidation responded to more immediate regional and local arguments.

Consolidating the Mission in Japan: Regional and Local Factors

The Franciscans needed some justifications for engaging in the evangelisation of Japan in addition to their diplomatic mandate. Their main argument was that, while they indeed initially came as emissaries, they were "forced by Providence, having witnessed the extreme spiritual want known by that Christendom," to carry out

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missionary work.[42] As the Jesuit missionaries were too few to meet the needs of convert communities, the Franciscans claimed it was their duty to stay in Japan and help create new converts—especially among paupers and lepers, whom they accused the Jesuits of neglecting. It is clear that the order of St Francis had no intention of giving missionary work the backseat: the arrival of several religious figures as well as the repeated requests for more personnel clearly suggest an ambitious agenda.[43] Having been granted the right to settle and preach from the Japanese leadership, Pedro Bautista no longer presented himself as a mere middleman in charge of transmitting messages and of facilitating communication between Japan and Manila, as Juan Pobre had back in 1582. He thought of himself as a "permanent" ambassador to Japan, so to speak, and as such took on providing regular intelligence interesting the Philippines' security.[44] The Franciscans probably played on the administrators' fears of an invasion, as Hideyoshi had demanded Manila's submission and his armies had been occupying Korea since 1592.[45] But at the same time, the governor and the missionaries agreed that the Philippines' precarious strategic position had to be strengthened against its powerful neighbours. Indeed, frequently under threat, the colony struggled to engage in diplomatic relations on an equal footing.[46] The Franciscans' role as "ambassadors" thus quickly evolved from mere emissaries to permanent informants, for Manila, and interlocutors for Hideyoshi.

Pedro Bautista was also instructed to negotiate trade agreements with Japan and so helped establish economic links with the Philippines. This was in part to placate Hideyoshi, who wished to develop such a trade. Manila itself was more reluctant, notably because of the numerous raids by Japanese pirates in the archipelago. The governorate also worried that the Japanese might spy on the Philippines and in particular steal gun-manufacturing technology.[47] As a consequence, the Franciscans were ordered to decide which ships should be granted a permit to dock in Manila. The mission's commissary seems to have been quite cautious, since only three such permits were delivered before 1595. Thanks to their understanding of the region's geopolitics, the Franciscans managed to make themselves indispensable to both Philippine and Japanese authorities, responding to one party's concerns and to the other's desires. While their own objective was clearly the evangelisation of Japan, the missionaries successfully played on the regions' political and economic interests in order to muster support for their presence and the development of their religious activities.

However, the missionaries' dual role on one occasion proved severely detrimental to relations between Japan and the Philippines. In 1596, the galleon *San Felipe* sank near the shores of Japan. The Franciscans' intervention to demand the restitution of the goods that were salvaged by the Japanese was interpreted by Hideyoshi as a sign that the Spanish were attempting an invasion, with the missionaries acting as a bridgehead.[48] A new period of persecution was decreed in 1597, which culminated in the martyrdom of Nagasaki.[49] Relations between Manila and Japan were severed, and only resumed at the turn of the century, albeit in a different geopolitical framework. The Franciscans themselves paid a heavy price for their ambiguous role as agents of both the Church and Spain, as six of them were crucified at Nagasaki.

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Transpacific Religious Geopolitics? (Early Seventeenth Century)

Initially, Spain had considered Japan mainly as a potent threat to its Philippine colony. At the beginning of the seventeenth century however, the Spanish now sought to create a Pacific-wide zone for themselves. It was hoped that Japan could play a role of strategic importance by helping link the Far East with the Americas, for both religion and trade. As we shall see, the Franciscans played a key role in conceiving and initiating the policy.

Pacific-wide Diplomacy

After the martyrdom of 1597, the relations between Manila and Japan normalised when Ieyasu Tokugawa succeeded Hideyoshi. Ieyasu dispatched emissaries to the Philippines in 1599 in the hope of resuming trade with the Spanish and, from 1602 onwards, trade was conducted regularly, with an estimated volume of 15,000 pesos per annum.[50] Japan's new strongman also looked to New Spain,[51] under the influence of fray Jerónimo de Jesús, a survivor of 1597. De Jesús indeed convinced Ieyasu that much wealth could be gained from trading with the Spanish Americas, while Ieyasu himself had hoped to attract European merchants to his domain in the Kanto region, instead of Nagasaki.[52] Meanwhile, the Spanish saw Japan as a very attractive port of call for the Manila galleons en route to the Americas. As de Jesús reported, there was a community of interest begging to be exploited.[53] Despite lacking the authority of an ambassador, the Franciscan suggested a significant geopolitical move, in addition to offering to act as negotiator for the governor and the *audiencia* of the Philippines.[54] But the policy also meant trespassing further on the Portuguese monopoly, this time in the area of trade. Until now, Spanish merchants had not been allowed to visit Japan: all of the trade between Japan and the Philippines was carried out through Japanese merchants in Manila, in (formal) respect to the diplomatic treaties. De Jesús effectively proposed open competition between Iberians merchants in Japan. Another notable aspect is the entirely novel suggestion of direct contacts between Japan and New Spain or Peru, and not just the Philippines, which reflects a shift away from strictly regional considerations. Mexico, often considered as part of an imperial periphery, emerged as a centre of a transpacific zone in which the distant Spanish metropole was to play but an indirect role. And indeed, Ieyasu himself was much more interested in the Philippines and New Spain than in the king of Spain. Manila however was less than happy with the plan for two reasons. It meant losing revenues from the trade with Japan, and the Japanese asked that Spanish sailors share their navigating skills and techniques, which, it was feared, could facilitate an invasion of the Philippines.[55] But it is also likely that the colony was wary of being further marginalised in the Spanish empire, as Japan's strategic position, closer to the Americas and to China, clearly outshone its own.[56] The missionary thus acted as a self-styled negotiator, with strictly no mandate from the Philippine authorities and making proposals running against their interests to boot. In so doing, the Franciscans contributed to stirring up competition among Spanish colonies, to the benefit of Mexico.[57]

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Jerónimo de Jésús' projects were resuscitated by Rodrigo de Vivero's embassy. Born in Mexico in 1564, Vivero was appointed interim governor of the Philippines in 1608.[58] On November 30, 1609, while he was on his way back to New Spain, a shipwreck forced him to land in Japan. He improvised himself as ambassador, negotiating a trade agreement with Ieyasu before returning to America, which he reached on October 25, 1610.[59] Although Vivero did not favour direct links between Japan and New Spain, he did suggest opening ports of call for the Manila Galleon along the coasts of Japan. Trade was clearly the main topic discussed, but religion was also a significant concern to the de facto ambassador. The first item in the negotiation indeed consisted of an attempt by de Vivero to pressure the Japanese leadership into a more benevolent position towards the missionaries:

> At first, I asked him to grant honour and protection to all the different religious orders that were present in Japan, and to order that they shall enjoy freedom in their homes and places of worship, without anyone allowed to assault them, for to King Philip, my lord, religious men and God's ministers are the apple of his eye. It was what attracted His Majesty's constant attention and that is why I presented it first as being the most important.[60]

The ambassador was backed by the Franciscans he met in Japan, and in particular Luís Sotelo, who acted as interpreter and negotiated the conditions for Vivero's return to New Spain with the Japanese authorities.[61] Moreover, the latter appointed the Franciscans as emissaries to negotiate on their behalf trade agreements with the viceroy of New Spain. For that purpose, Father Alfonso Muñoz sailed to Mexico in 1610.[62] The missionaries were key actors in the diplomatic engagement between New Spain and Japan. What made them indispensable was of course their knowledge of the country and its language, but also they were the only Spanish presence in Japan. Over less than two decades, their position shifted from guardians of Philippine security, to (self-styled) representatives of the interests of New Spain to emissaries appointed and dispatched by the Japanese leadership. Far from passive errand boys and interpreters, let alone mere spectators, the Franciscans came to construct and propose their vision of a Spanish-dominated space spanning the Pacific Ocean and linking New Spain, the Philippines and Japan through trade. In so doing, they reveal their growing understanding of the Catholic Monarchy as a global, universalist system. The transpacific project was taken one step further with Luís Sotelo's plans for an even more ambitious embassy.[63]

Capitalising on his good relations with Sendai's daimyo, Date Masamune, Sotelo sought to open negotiation between him and New Spain. Concomitantly, he was appointed by the shogun as ambassador and instructed to open similar negotiations on behalf of Japan.[64] Fray Luís left Japan on October 3, 1612, but his ship ran aground. With the support of Date Masamune, Sotelo organised a second effort, with the goal of signing a treaty of friendship between the daimyo and Spain, but also to promote Japanese Christianity in Europe at a time when persecutions resumed. On October 28, 1613, Sotelo, bringing with him several Japanese converts including Hasekura Tsunenaga, sailed for Mexico and then to Europe.[65] As usual, negotiations

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revolved around a mixture of commercial and religious objectives. Sotelo hoped that the city of Sendai could become not only a port of call for the Manila galleons, but also a new centre of Christianity. He must have hoped to make of Sendai a rival to Portuguese Nagasaki, since he asked the Pope to create a distinct bishopric for the north of Japan.[66] Sotelo's plans were looked upon favourably by Spanish authorities at first, in the face of the growing contacts between Japan and the Dutch and the English.[67] The Franciscans were a driving force in the aspiration to create a transpacific space for the Spanish, sufficiently autonomous to be willing to act on behalf of Japanese authorities and not afraid of to go against Manila's interests. Unsurprisingly, they also had geopolitical designs for the Pacific in the field of religion.

Aborted Missionary Geopolitical Designs

Officially, the Franciscan mission in Japan depended directly on the San Gregorio province in the Philippines. It was thus the San Gregorio provincial who decided who would be sent to Japan, and a commissar reported to him frequently via letters and reports. The Franciscan authorities in the Philippines tried to keep firm control of the Japanese mission, and were backed in this by their New Spain colleagues, against decisions made in Europe. That policy remained unabated when the persecutions of 1614 were decreed, and it was particularly made evident when Sotelo's embassy returned in 1617. The religious authorities in Manila feared two things. First, that lured by the prospect of martyrdom, too many missionaries would want to go to Japan, leaving the Philippines understaffed. Second, Sotelo received several apostolic letters and graces from the Pope, including a nomination as bishop of Mutsu, although the Spanish king blocked his consecration because of the persecutions. Sotelo was clearly attempting at making the Japanese mission independent from the Philippines. As a consequence, the commissar for San Gregorio province, Friar Laruel, forced him to sign a list of capitulations (dated July 30, 1618), in which Sotelo recognised the subordination of the Japanese mission to the Philippine one and the necessity of maintaining close links between the two.[68] The subordination was financial, material, and in men: the Franciscans in the Philippines vowed to provide any goods required for the evangelisation of Japan (sacramental wine, medicine), while a college in Manila was devoted to the training of personnel for Japan. But any missionary seeking to join the Japanese mission needed to get prior agreement from the provincial for the Philippines.[69] In exchange, Laruel named Sotelo apostolic commissar for Japan. The capitulations were then transmitted to Friar Otalora, the provincial for Mexico, to whom the Philippines were subordinate.[70] On February 10, 1619, Otalora drafted a patent confirmed Sotelo's appointment while placing him under the jurisdiction of the Franciscan authorities in the Philippines.[71] But in the following year, Otalora dispatched Friar Francisco Jimenez with instructions to take the head of the Japanese mission: Sotelo was removed from his position and barred from returning to Japan. The decision was met with somewhat mixed feelings in the Philippines. While the San Gregorio province was confirmed in its control of the

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Japanese mission, an outsider (Jimenez) was picked to head it. Sotelo accepted that the convent in Manila which he headed on behalf of the Japanese mission be placed under direct Philippine control, but asked to keep his quality of apostolic preacher and of royal and papal ambassador in order to finish carrying out his embassy started in 1613. These jurisdictional disputes reveal that the Philippines and New Spain were determined not to lose their grasp on the Japanese mission, even against the Pope's will. The Franciscans in the two colonies exploited the fact that, since Sotelo had not received the *pase regio* (royal permission), his ordination was null and void.[72] In the process, they contributed (whether they intended it or not) to the defence of royal patronage against Rome, which was trying to reassert its authority over extra-European church affairs. First, while New Spain and the Philippines had diverging views (and interests) about how a transpacific space should be constructed as far as trade was concerned, that was not the case about religion. Second, it is interesting to see that the jurisdictional disputes over the Japanese mission led the Franciscans to work in favour of either the king or the pope's supremacy, depending on which mission they belonged to.

Sotelo was still adamant about concluding the embassy by presenting its results to Date Masamune, especially because he still had hopes that the daimyo's domain could convert.[73] But the Spanish authorities, whether in Spain, New Spain, or the Philippines, wanted to be done with a costly and now pointless embassy, considering the persecutions decreed in Japan. Sotelo had sought to have Japan integrated into a transpacific network, finding its place between the Philippines and the Americas. He also aimed to rival the Portuguese and Jesuit presence in the country. By 1620, it was obvious that these projects had failed.

Conclusion

The study of the sources suggests that the Franciscan presence in Japan should not be treated merely as a minor development in the religious history of Europeans in Asia, as has most often been the case. The small number of personnel involved (relative to the Jesuits) belies the scale of the mendicant order's ambitions and energy as they tried to shape Spain's diplomatic and economic projection across the Pacific, between Manila, Japan, and New Spain. It gives a measure of the Franciscans' autonomous agency, in their capacity to make their own geopolitical plans and to initiate diplomatic moves without mandate on issues far exceeding religious matters. The opening of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Philippines also adds to our understanding of the bitter rivalry of the Portuguese and Spanish in the Far East, and of how the missionaries could be at the forefront of the struggle. While the Franciscans' actions in Japan were inscribed in a general Spanish effort to develop their interests in Asia, especially in the area of trade, they proposed their own political vision, in which Japan would act as the pivot of the empire across the Pacific—a vision that ran counter to the interests of Manila, which was yet their main base in the region. The degree of autonomy claimed by the Franciscans came to irritate Spanish administrative and religious authorities, who moved to rein in the Japanese mission. It also led to a situation of competition with

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the Portuguese and the Jesuits for the Japanese leadership's influence, with damaging results for their political image. The Japanese would ultimately favour the Dutch as trading partners because, unlike the Iberians and their indistinct mixture of religious, commercial and political interests, the Dutch had no interest in proselytising and thus posed much less of a threat to the political and religious order. The missionaries were expelled from Japan in 1614, soon followed by the rest of the Iberians whose presence in Japan was outlawed in 1639.

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Notes

* Hélène Vu Thanh is assistant professor at the University of Bretagne-Sud (France). Her main research interests are the catholic missions to Japan and the European religious and economic presence in Asia in the early modern period.

1 At that time, Japan was still embroiled in the period of chaotic internal warfare that had begun in the fifteenth century. But the country underwent a process of reunification in the middle of the sixteenth century under the impulse of three successive warlords, Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu. See more in Asao, "The Sixteenth-Century Unification."

2 In 1494, the treaty of Tordesillas divided the recently discovered territories between the two signatory powers, Spain (then Castille and Aragon) and Portugal. The Americas were attributed to Spain, except for Brazil. Thirty-five years later, the treaty of Zaragoza extended the divide to the other hemisphere. Under that treaty's terms, Japan found itself at the very limit of Portuguese claiming rights.

3 Tremml, "The Global and the Local," 555–96.

4 Juan Gil dealt with these issues, but in a descriptive manner. See Gil, *Hidalgos y samurai*.

5 See in particular Gruzinski, "Les mondes mêlés de la Monarchie catholique" and *Les Quatre parties du monde*, and Subrahmanyam, "Par-delà l'incommensurabilité" and "Holding the World in Balance."

6 Chartier, "La conscience de la globalité (commentaire)," 122–3.

7 Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization*. The historiography of Jesuit missions to Japan is particularly rich. See Charles Boxer's *The Christian Century in Japan*, and Costa, *O cristianismo no Japão.*

8 See Jacquelard, "Les Philippines, périphérie ou nouveau centre d'un espace mondialisé" and *De Séville à Manille (1520–1609)*.

9 Flynn and Giráldez, "Born with a 'Silver Spoon'," 201.

10 On the Manila galleons, see notably Schurz, *El galeón de Manila*, and Chaunu, "Le galion de Manille" and *Les Philippines et le Pacifique des Ibériques.*

11 Jacquelard, "Manille: un emporium entre deux mondes," 101.

12 Parker, *The World is Not Enough*.

13 The phrase is borrowed from Headley, "Spain's Asian Presence: Structures and Aspirations," 626.

14 Castelnau-L'Estoile, "Une Eglise aux dimensions du monde," 318.

15 Plans for an invasion of Japan and China were devised but never carried out because they were glaringly unrealistic. See de los Arcos, "The Philippine Colonial Elite and the Evangelization of Japan," 76.

16 Morga, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, 321.

17 Letter by Pedro Bautista to the King, written in Manila on June 23 1590, in *AIA* 4, 401. In the letter, Pedro Bautista, who was sent to Japan in the early 1590s, refers to the events of the previous decade.

18 Headley, "Spain's Asian Presence," 638.

19 Letter by Pedro Bautista to the King, written in Manila, June 23, 1590, in *AIA* 4, 399.

20 Bernard-Maître, "Le début des relations diplomatiques," 19. See the letter by Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas to the King, dated June 11, 1592 in AGI, *Filipinas*, 18B, R.2, N.12.

21 On Hideyoshi, see Elisseeff, *Hideyoshi*.

22 Jerónimo de Jesús, "Relación del glorioso martirio de seis frayles descalços" [1600], in *AFH* 18, 97.

23 Ibid.

24 "Memorial del P. Francisco de Montilla al rey de España," 1595–96, in *AFH* 13, 210.

25 Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan*, 161.

26 Berthe and de los Arcos, "Les îles Philippines, 'troisième monde'," 145.

27 Jacquelard, *De Séville à Manille*, 220.

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28 Morga describes how governor Dasmariñas chose to send bishop Salazar to Spain—in spite of their difficult relationship—to act as his representative before the court: Morga, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, 87.
29 Letter by governor Dasmariñas to Hideyoshi, dated June 11, 1592, cited in Bernard-Maître, "Le début des relations diplomatiques," 123.
30 Letter by Pedro Bautista to the King, Manila, June 23, 1590, *AIA* 4, 401.
31 Ibid., 407–8.
32 Ibid., 413.
33 *AIA* 6, 207–8.
34 Luís Pérez Dasmariñas succeeded his father as governor of the Philippines in 1594.
35 See for instance the letter by Juan Bautista to the King, written in Manila on June 23, 1590, in *AIA* 4, 401.
36 "Informe sobre la utilidad de la ida de los Franciscanos al Japón, instruido de orden del gobernado de Filipinas, Don Luis Pérez Dasmariñas y a petición del P. Fr. Juan de Garrovillas, ministro provincial, año 1595," *AIA* 9, 178.
37 Correia, *A Concepção de missionação*, 37–51.
38 It was only in 1600 that the Jesuit monopoly was openly abolished, through Clement VIII's brief *Onerosa Pastoralis*, which opened the Japanese mission to the mendicant orders.
39 Francisco de Montilla, "Memorial de las objeciones que hay contra los frayles descalços Franciscanos," January 21, 1597, in *AFH* 15, 481–2.
40 "Informationes y relaciones del P. Juan de Garrovillas," dated 1595, in *AIA* 9, 182.
41 "Memorial del P. Francisco de Montilla al Rey de España," in *AFH* 13, 478. Hideyoshi granted the Franciscans a plot of land in the capital, Miyako (today Kyôto).
42 P. Franciso de Montilla, "Memorial de las objeciones que hay contra los frayles descalços Franciscano," *AFH* 15, 477.
43 Letter by Pedro Bautista to Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas, Miyako, October 12, 1594, *AIA* 6, 212 and letter by Pedro Bautista to Francisco de Montilla, Ôsaka, October 11, 1596, Ibid., 274–75.
44 P. Franciso de Montilla, "Memorial de las objeciones que hay contra los frayles descalços Franciscanos," *AFH* 15, 478.
45 Letter by Pedro Bautista to the governor of the Philippines, Miyako, January 7, 1594, *AIA* 4, 407–9.
46 De los Arcos, "The Philippine Colonial Elite and the Evangelization of Japan," 66.
47 Letter by Jerónimo de Jesús to the Franciscan Provincial for the Philippines, written in Nagasaki on March 10, 1595, in *AIA* 17, 104.
48 Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan*, 164.
49 Jacquelard, "Une catastrophe glorieuse."
50 Gil, *Hidalgos y samurai*, 105.
51 See the letter by Ieyasu to the governor of Manila, September 1602, in Morga, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, 240–1.
52 Ibid., 165–66.
53 Chaunu, "Le galion de Manille," 452–53.
54 Viceroyalties were divided into *audiencias* (*Reales Audiencias*), which also functioned as chancelleries. They were entitled to use the royal seal and thus to make a number of decisions in the name of the king. The *audiencias'* attributions were many and included enforcing the law, drafting local regulations, justice, and taxation.
55 Morga, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, 198.
56 See the Philippine authorities' concerns on this issue in AGI, *Filipinas*, 1 N. 33.
57 Sanchez, "L'échelle des mondes hispaniques," 12.
58 See his letter to the viceroy of New Spain, dated July 8, 1608, in AGI, *Filipinas*, 67-6-7.
59 On Rodrigo de Vivero, see the Monbeig, "introduction" in Vivero, *Du Japon*. See also Gruzinski, "Les élites de la monarchie catholique," 280–86.
60 Vivero, *Du Japon*, 188.
61 Ibid., 195.
62 Ibid., 197.

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63 Fujikawa, "The Borghese Papacy's Reception of a Samurai Delegation," 181–202.
64 AGI, *Filipinas*, 1, N. 151.
65 For more detail on the Japanese embassy in Europe, see the account by Amati, *Historia del regno di Voxu*.
66 In addition, the bishop of Nagasaki was a Jesuit, and as such a hostile figure to the Franciscans.
67 AGI, *Filipinas*, 1, N. 151.
68 "Capitulaciones," in *AIA* 23, 322–23.
69 Ibid, 324.
70 Officially, the Philippine San Gregorio province was independent from that of San Diego, New Spain. In practice, the two provinces still maintained very close links. See Sanchez Fuertes, "Mexico, puente franciscano entre España y Filipinas," 373–401.
71 "Papeles que esta Provincia tiene en su fabor para lo del Japón, año de 1620," in *AIA* 23, 327–32.
72 The *pase regio* required that all papal decisions concerning Spanish colonies must receive the approval of Council of the Indies before coming into force.
73 "Papeles que esta Provincia tiene en su fabor para lo del Japón, año de 1620," in *AIA* 23, 346.

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