

# Christian-Muslim Relations A Bibliographical History

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the Americas (1600-1700)

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# The Jesuits in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Japan

## Literature on Muslims and Islam

The Society of Jesus was formed in Paris on 15 August 1534 within the tumultuous political and religious context of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, which was marked not only by the Protestant Reformation, but also by Catholic religious dissent, the Sack of Rome (1527), the emergence of the Iberian nations as world powers, the discovery of and expansion into the New World, and the Turkish incursions into Europe. It was not until 1540, however, that the Society was officially recognised by the Catholic Church, in Pope Paul II's papal bull *Regimini militantis ecclesiae*. The Jesuit mission to Asia was intimately linked to the spread of the Portuguese who, through the 1493 Bulls of Donation, or Alexandrine Bulls (*Eximiae devotionis*, *Inter caetera* and *Dudum siquidem*) promulgated by Pope Alexander VI, and the Treaty of Tordesillas agreed between the Portuguese and Spanish crowns the following year, had gained exclusive rights to the East Indies and to the civil and religious administration of the lands they had discovered or were to discover there.

The Portuguese reached India in 1498, establishing the Estado da Índia in 1505 and the See of Goa in 1534. From their Indian base they spread to Malacca, Indochina, Indonesia and the Maluku Islands, with the Jesuits joining them in 1542. The Portuguese had come into contact with Japanese traders in Malacca after it was conquered in 1511, but it was not until their 'discovery' of Japan in the early 1540s that sustained interest in the country emerged. Thenceforth, the Portuguese maintained commercial relations until the issuing of the bans on foreign trade that ended relations with the Iberian powers during the 1630s, and ecclesiastical relations developed from the inception of a mission by Francis Xavier in 1549 until the early 1640s in spite of successive bans on the religion and/or missionary activities from 1587. Despite the aforementioned Bulls of Donation and the provision of exclusive rights to the missions in both China and Japan by Pope Gregory XIII in the 1585 Bull *Ex pastorali officio*, the joining of the Portuguese and Spanish crowns in 1580 complicated the situation. Franciscans visited Japan from 1590 as ambassadors of the Philippines, and established a permanent presence

alongside other orders from 1600, when the Jesuits' exclusive rights were abolished.

Missionaries to Japan interacted with Muslims en route to East Asia: they met Muslims at sea and in port; they kept Muslim slaves and employees; they facilitated Muslim-Christian trade; they were variously attacked and transported by Muslim pirates; they were participants and bystanders in wars against and between Muslim kingdoms; and most importantly they attempted to convert Muslims to Christianity. In Japan proper, because the country lacked a native Muslim presence, the missionaries had no direct contact with Muslims outside rare interactions with traders and more common interactions with their own slaves and staff, encounters that often go unmentioned in missionary reports, letters and other writings. Nevertheless, the Japanese mission facilitated interaction between Muslims and the Japanese. For instance, Petro Kasui Kibe (1587-1639), a future Catholic priest and martyr, became the first Japanese to visit the Holy Land, travelling overland to Europe between 1618 and 1620. A Japanese novice by the name of Nicolau de Santo Agostinho travelled with the Augustinian priest Nicolau de Melo and the Franciscan Afonso Cordeiro to Persia and Moscow between 1597 and 1599. It has also been suggested that the Portuguese trade in Japanese slaves facilitated the first Japanese conversions to Islam in India. In China, India and throughout South-East Asia, the missionaries came into contact with native Muslim populations.

The authors considered in this entry are the Portuguese explorer Fernão Mendes Pinto (1509-83), who was associated with the Jesuit missionaries, and the French Jesuit François Solier (1558-1638), who became the principal of the Jesuit College at Limoges in 1598.

#### MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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#### WORKS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

### *The Jesuits in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Japan. Literature on Muslims and Islam*

DATE 1614-29

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE French and Portuguese

#### DESCRIPTION

Fernão Mendes Pinto (1509-83) was a Portuguese explorer associated with the Jesuit missionaries. His *Peregrinação* was edited and published posthumously in 1614, after which it was translated into a number of European languages. A series of Pinto's claims have proved controversial, and some are believed to be semi-fictional. They place Pinto at the centre of historical events that he did not actually witness in person, such as the discovery of Japan.

Pinto refers to Muslims on a number of occasions on his journey to and from Japan rather than in Japan itself (Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus posthumus or Purchas his pilgrimes*, vol. 12, pp. 59-141; this is the source cited in the references that follow). For the most part, Muslims are mentioned as unimportant bystanders to the main story, though Islam is also regularly perceived as a cause of apostasy and anti-Christian sentiment (pp. 60, 67-8).

Where Islam and Muslims become central to the narrative, the focus is often on conflict with Muslims, who are portrayed as perpetrators of

thievery, imposters, infidels or tyrants (pp. 67-8, 73-4, 79). These anti-Islamic and polemical passages are interspersed throughout the text anecdotally, when Pinto describes incidents involving Muslims from his own perspective, often coupling these passages with value judgments through which Muḥammad is viewed as a false prophet, Islamic saints are declared wicked, and the religion is seen as a cursed sect. Samuel Purchas uses the terms 'Moor', 'Musleman', and 'Mahomet' in his English translation, but in the original text it seems that the terms *Turco* and *Mafometico* were prominent.

In 1627-9, François Solier (1558-1638) published a two-volume history of the Jesuit mission to Japan entitled *Histoire ecclésiastique des isles et royaumes du Japon*. Here, Solier refers to a servant of Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606), and later retainer of *daimyo* Oda Nobunaga (1534-82), commonly known by the name Yasuke, who had recently come to Japan with his master. Solier describes the servant as a native of Mozambique, a *More Cafre* (*kāfir*) or Moorish infidel (vol. 1, p. 444), which may identify him as a Muslim, though his religious identity is of little importance to the author and is mentioned only in passing, with the narrative quickly moving to focus on the excitement with which Yasuke was met in Japan and on questions regarding the colour of his skin and other matters. The passage merely records the presence of Muslim slaves and employees as part of the Jesuit enterprise in Japan and in East Asia more generally.

#### SIGNIFICANCE

Islam and Muslims feature for the most part as little more than footnotes in Christian histories and reports on Japan from this period, though this is to be expected as there were no Muslims in the country. Although some earlier 16<sup>th</sup>-century documents suggest that Muslims were trading with Japan, and although Muslims were certainly present as slaves, their presence was evidently much less important than other concerns. Whether or not Yasuke was a Muslim is debatable, though if he was, Solier's references to him would provide clues to one instance of direct Muslim-Christian interaction in Japan, such as it was. In short, whatever records exist lack significance for Muslim-Christian relations in Japan precisely because Muslim-Christian interactions were hardly significant. Whilst Pinto's work is important for the understanding of Muslim-Christian interactions outside Japan, on Japan itself it offers little insight.

## PUBLICATIONS

Fernão Mendes Pinto and Belchior Fraria, *Peregrinação de Fernam Mendez Pinto em que da conta de muytas e muyto estranhas cousas que vio & ouvio no reyno da China, no da Tartaria, no de Sornau, que vulgarmente se chama de Sião, no de Calaminhan, no do Pegù, no de Martauão, & em outros muytos reynos & senhorios das partes Orientais, de que nestas nossas do Occidente ha muyto pouca ou nenhuma noticia. E tambem da conta de muytos casos particulares que acontecerão assi a elle como a outras muytas pessoas. E no fim della trata brevemente de alguas cousas, & da morte do Santo Padre Francisco Xavier, unica luz and resplendor daquellas partes do Oriente, & reitor nellas universal da Companhia de Iesus*, Lisbon: Por Pedro Crasbeeck, 1614; res-4409-v (digitalised version available through Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal)

Fernão Mendes Pinto, *Historia oriental de las peregrinaciones de Fernan Mendez Pinto portvgves, adonde se escriven muchas, y muy estrañas cosas que vio, y oyò en los reynos de la China, Tartaria, Sornao, que vulgarmente se llama Siam, Calamiñam, Peguu, Martauan, y otros muchos de aquellas partes orientales, de que en estas nuestras de Occidente ay muy poca, ò ninguna noticia. Casos famosos, acontecimientos admirables, leyes, gouierno, trages, religion, y costumbres de aquellos gentiles de Asia. Tradvzido de portvgves en castellano por el licenciado Francisco de Herrera Maldonado, canonigo de la Santa Yglesia Real de Arbas. A Manvel Severin de Faria, chantre, y canonigo de la Santa Yglesia Metropolitana de Euora*, trans. Francisco de Herrera Malonado, Madrid: Por Tomas lunti, 1620, repr. 1627, 1645, 1664 (Spanish trans.); U/1211, 1664 ed. (digitalised version available through *Biblioteca Digital Hispánica*)

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- Fernão Mendes Pinto, *The voyages and adventures of Fernand Mendez Pinto, a Portugal: during his travels for the space of one and twenty years in the Kingdoms of Ethiopia, China, Tartaria, Cauchinchina, Calaminham, Siam, Pegu, Japan, and a great part of the East-Indi-  
aes. With a relation and description of most of the places thereof; their religion, laws, riches, customs, and government in time of peace and war. Where he five times suffered shipwrack, was sixteen times sold, and thirteen times made a slave. Written originally by himself in the Portugal tongue, and dedicated to the Majesty of Philip King of Spain. Done into English by H.C. Gent*, ed. Henry Cogan, London: J Macock, 1653 (repr. 1663, 1692, 1891, 1969; English trans); Wing M1705 (digitalised version available through *EEBO*)
- Fernão Mendes Pinto, *Wunderliche und merckwürdige Reisen Ferdinandi Mendez Pinto: welche er innerhalb ein und zwanzig Jahren durch Europa, Asia, und Africa, und deren Königreiche und Länder als Abbyssina, China, Japon, Tartarey, Siam, Calaminham. Pegu, Martabane, Bengale, Brama, Ormus, Batas, Queda, Aru, Pan, Ainan, Calempluy, Cauchenchina und andere Oerter verrichtet: darinnen er beschreibet wie ihme zu Wasser und Land zugestossene grosse Noht und Gefahr, wie er nemblich sey dreyzehnmal gefangen genommen und siebenzehnmal verkaufft worden, auch vielfältigen Schiffbruch erlitten habe: dabey zugleich befindlich eine gar genaue Entwerffung der Wunder und Raritäten erwehnter Länder, der Gesetze, Sitten, und Gewonheiten derselben Völcker, und der grosse Macht und Heeres-Krafft der Einwohner*, ed. Dionigi de Carli, Amsterdam: Bey Heinrich und Dietrich Boom, 1671 (German trans.); VD17 3:659617T (digitalised version available through Zentralbibliothek Zürich)
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## STUDIES

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