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Honors Thesis

CHRISTIANITY ON HOMEBREW: ALESSANDRO VALIGNANO,  
INDIGENIZATION, AND JAPAN'S HIDDEN CHRISTIANS

by  
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Submitted to Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment of  
graduation requirements for University Honors

History Department  
Brigham Young University  
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## ABSTRACT

### CHRISTIANITY ON HOMEBREW: ALESSANDRO VALIGNANO, INDIGENIZATION, AND JAPAN'S HIDDEN CHRISTIANS

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History Department

Bachelor of Arts

This thesis examines the historiographical connections between Alessandro Valignano and the localized tradition of Christianity that produced the hidden Christian communities of Japan in the seventeenth century. Valignano, as overseer of Jesuit missions in Asia in the late sixteenth century, implemented policy changes designed to bolster the number and quality of laymen clergy assisting the Westerners with missionary duties. Valignano faced criticism for his overestimation of the time needed for training and for his methodology, but his efforts to train and support laymen clergy contributed to a rising trend of Christianity as a unifying tradition for local communities. The laymen clergy (*dōjuku*) produced as a result of Valignano's policies bore most of responsibility and credit for Christianity's success prior to persecution by the Tokugawa government. After many Christian communities were separated from Western influence amidst persecution, the laymen clergy became the primary religious authority for existing Christians in Japan. Their influence laid the traditions and foundation for the hidden Christian communities that continued to practice secretly for the next two centuries.



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## **I. Introduction**

In 1659, after enduring three years of torture and refusing to renounce his teachings, a Christian priest was executed in Nagasaki by decapitation under order by local officials. This man, who had taken the name of Bastian at his baptism, had spent the previous several years leading and teaching his fellow Christians in the villages near Nagasaki. He did this in secrecy, for in those days, professing belief as a Christian had been declared illegal by the Japanese government under penalty of death. In the course of his ministry, he saw many of his brethren meet their deaths for their beliefs, yet he continued to lead until his time too had come to be killed. Shortly before his execution, he gave to those Christians under his guidance four prophecies, preaching that of a future day when “Confessors would come in great black ships...[and] they would be able to walk about openly and sing Christian hymns.” He also declared that “after seven generations...[their children] would have their souls saved from distress” for their beliefs. Bastian had been an important leader to these communities of secret Christians, and his last prophecies and teachings would become firmly entrenched in the hearts of many of those he had taught, even until Western missionaries again came to Japan “after seven generations” in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

In the times after Westerners had been forced out of Japan in the seventeenth century, Bastian and other preachers had become important anchors for the local communities of Christian believers. As some of the last men to receive instruction from Western brethren, the fragile life and future of Christianity in Japan laid with them and

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan: A Study of Their Development, Beliefs, and Rituals to the Present Day* (Richmond, Surrey: Japan Library, 1998), 117, 120.

their leadership. These *dōjuku*, men like Bastian<sup>2</sup> who had received instruction and authority from Western missionaries,<sup>3</sup> and other laymen had long contributed to the spread of Christianity in Japan. Now, they had become the ones who would create the foundation upon which Christianity would survive communally after their imminent deaths. The instruction they had received from their Western brethren played an important role in their administrations in the absence of European influence, instruction which had been purposefully designed to empower and strengthen worship at a local and communal level. This instruction and other changes, which proved vital to the lifeblood of Japanese Christianity, had been implemented long before Bastian by an Italian missionary named Alessandro Valignano. During his lifetime Valignano had taken a keen interest in Japan and implemented several policy changes aimed at bolstering the strength of local priests and leaders like Bastian. Valignano's support of the indigenization of Christianity through native clergy contributed to the local strength of Christianity. This localization of faith and worship allowed Christianity to survive locally through men like Bastian when government suppression had erased the western ecclesiastical structure. The legacy of Valignano's reforms greatly altered the course of the "Christian Century" and, as this paper will argue, beyond as well.

Much of the prevailing literature involved with the so-called "Christian Century" in Japan (1549-ca. 1650) describes Christianity's rise, fall, and subsequent expulsion from Japan as a failure, as seen through titles like George Elison's *Deus Destroyed* and Andrew Ross' *A Vision Betrayed*. It is commonly agreed that missionaries and

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<sup>2</sup> Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan*, 117.

<sup>3</sup> George Elison, *Deus Destroyed: The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 16.

Christianity left little lasting impact on early modern Japan as a whole, and any progress to establish a permanent, influential Christian (and therefore Western) presence in the archipelago officially ended with the Shimabara rebellion in 1638.<sup>4</sup> The conversion and subsequent execution or apostasy of more than 300,000 Christians without a doubt was seen as a failure to the Society of Jesus and many Christians of the time.<sup>5</sup> What many in the West did not realize was that small communities of believers continued to practice Christianity in secret from the end of the Shimabara rebellion to the days of the Meiji Restoration, the so-called *kakure kirishitan* or “hidden Christians.”<sup>6</sup> While the Christianity that survived in these communities came to focus almost exclusively on ritual, Christianity continued to exist within Japan, though much differently from its parent churches in the West.<sup>7</sup>

The literature concerning Alessandro Valignano has been heavily based in Valignano’s rivalry with fellow Jesuits, his efforts to accommodate Christianity to Japan, and expansion of Japanese clergy. Foremost among the literature on Valignano and the Christian century is C.R. Boxer’s *The Christian Century in Japan* (1951), a dense text chronicling the introduction, growth, and fall of Christianity in Japan, with some information concerning the *kakure kirishitan*. While Boxer’s work is an invaluable text in the field, it does display its age in relation to more modern works. *The Christian Century in Japan* tended to focus on telling a complete narrative history of the West in Japan during this time rather than taking a stance or argument about the West in Japan.

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<sup>4</sup> Elison, *Deus Destroyed*, 248.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew C. Ross, *A Vision Betrayed: The Jesuits in Japan and China, 1542-1742* (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 87.

<sup>6</sup> Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan*, ix.

<sup>7</sup> Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan*, 8-9.

Engaging with both Western and Japanese sources, Boxer was one of the first major writers about Japanese Christianity in early modernity for a Western audience.<sup>8</sup> Upon the framework of Boxer, others would come to write and make critiques about the “Christian century,” like George Alison’s *Deus Destroyed* (1973). Written a generation of historians separated from Boxer, Alison took a more critical approach to the West and Christianity in Japan, writing to critique on previous scholarship’s “tendency...to attribute a positive value and a superior rationality to the European input of this interchange” between Europe and Japan.<sup>9</sup> Further he argued that little remained of Christianity and the West’s influence in Japan “after the ‘Christian century’ had run its course,” describing the *kakure kirishitan* as holding to a faith that gradually faded into local tradition.<sup>10</sup>

Though Boxer and Alison had written much about Valignano’s impact on the Christian century, the foremost writings on Valignano’s role in Japanese Christian history were fleshed out by Josef Franz Schütte, a Jesuit scholar who wrote an extensive commentary on Valignano’s letters and reports back to Europe. His commentary *Alessandro Valignano’s Mission Principles for Japan* (1985) laid out Valignano’s administration first through the perspective of the problems that Valignano saw in the mission, then through the solutions he implemented. Providing a detailed commentary and including several translations of Valignano’s writings, later historians would build off Schütte’s work. J.F. Moran wrote a monograph dedicated to Valignano exclusively and the many changes that he made to the mission and accommodation efforts of Europeans. Similarly, Andrew Ross wrote *A Vision Betrayed*, an analysis of the successes and

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<sup>8</sup> Charles R. Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), vii-viii.

<sup>9</sup> Alison, *Deus Destroyed*, 248-249.

<sup>10</sup> Alison, *Deus Destroyed*, 253.

failures of Christianity in Japan in comparison to China, with a heavy emphasis on Valignano's administration. Contrary to Elison, both argued favorably on Valignano and the Christian century as a whole. Despite the title, *A Vision Betrayed* argued that "the Jesuit mission was not a failure, and the Japanese people did not reject Christianity." To Ross, the Shimabara Rebellion was the culmination and reaffirmation of the Jesuit success in bringing Christianity to Japan, not the final act of desperation before the full-fledged rejection by the Japanese.<sup>11</sup> The leading literature of Valignano and the Christian century together give a mostly complete picture of Valignano's aspirations and administration of Japan. These arguments, however, mostly end with his death or western expulsion from Japan in 1639.

The continuation of this narrative to Japan's *kakure kirishitan* was hampered by the availability of direct sources on the isolated communities as few relics were preserved, little was recorded in the shadow of persecution in the Edo period, and the number of practicing *kakure* diminishing over time. This combination of factors led historians to have to make inferences about the development of the *kakure* faith between western expulsion in 1639 and reintroduction in the late nineteenth-century. Western literature on the hidden Christians was well-encompassed by Stephen Turnbull's *The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan*. Though well-known as a Japanese and military historian, Turnbull has a significant amount of literature and research on the hidden Christians, one culmination of which was this monograph which focused heavily on the beliefs and rituals of the communities on the isolated island of Ikitsuki. Turnbull took a neutral approach to his investigation and writing on the hidden Christians, being careful not to

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<sup>11</sup> Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, 115-116.

attribute labels or religious bias to these communities. Most notably, Turnbull argued that the *kakure kirishitan* did not consciously reject Christianity or attempt to become a syncretic faith. Instead, he simply argued that they represented “the inherent worth of human religious expression and the utter evil, folly and ultimate futility of religious persecution.”<sup>12</sup> Ann Harrington’s *Japan’s Hidden Christians* written slightly earlier than Turnbull’s work was a digestible monograph on the history, ritual, and practices of the *kakure kirishitan*, which drew heavily from both Western and Japanese secondary and primary sources. Together, both of their writings presented an accessible exploration of the *kakure kirishitan* for Western audiences. Harrington and Turnbull’s monographs included some discussion of Valignano and his administration, however, there was little exploration of a possible connection between him and the *kakure*. Here was where the idea for this paper was developed.

By way of introduction, Alessandro Valignano, an Italian noble with a background in law, joined the Society of Jesus, the major evangelizing arm of the Catholic Church, in 1566; Valignano quickly rose through the ranks of the brotherhood over the next seven years.<sup>13</sup> Valignano “had written to the General Superior [of the order] manifesting a desire to be sent to the ‘Indies’ as a missionary.” Instead, “the new General Superior of the order, Everard Mercurian, would take one of the most important decisions of his time in office and appoint [Valignano] *Visitador* (personal delegate)” in 1573,<sup>14</sup> giving him “authority over all Jesuit missions and all Jesuits from the Cape of Good

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<sup>12</sup> Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan*, 227.

<sup>13</sup> M. Antoni J. Üçerler, “Alessandro Valignano: man, missionary, and writer,” *Renaissance Studies* 7, no. 3 (September 2003): 337-338.

<sup>14</sup> Üçerler, “Man, missionary, and writer,” 339.

Hope to Japan”.<sup>15</sup> In an office of great responsibility and authority spanning such a large area east of Africa, Valignano was put into a unique position to oversee great changes to the eastern missions and took a particular interest in the work in Japan, which had started three decades earlier.

The Japanese mission and Christian century started the day that Frances Xavier, the first Jesuit appointed to travel and preach in Asia, arrived in Japan in 1549. Xavier noticed early on the humility, receptiveness, and religious attitudes of the Japanese, believing that the Jesuits would be hard-pressed to find such fertile ground to sow the seed of the gospel elsewhere in Asia.<sup>16</sup> Though he only had a short stay of two years in Japan, when he departed in 1551, Xavier believed in a bright future for Christianity in Japan. His optimism would be continued by his successors, and Christianity flourished in Kyūshū and southern Japan, with the number of converts growing to 130,000 in the 1570s.<sup>17</sup> A significant portion of this growth would occur under a later leader of the Jesuits, Francisco Cabral, through a focus on converting noblemen (many of whose peoples would convert alongside their lord). The mission itself, however, began to struggle because Cabral’s administration was influenced by his skepticism of the Japanese. As such, when Valignano arrived in Japan in 1579, he discovered an incredibly successful mission struggling with negative relations between the missionaries and their laymen converts.

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<sup>15</sup> J. F. Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits: Alessandro Valignano in sixteenth-century Japan* (London: Routledge, 1993), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Boxer, *The Christian Century*, 37-38.

<sup>17</sup> Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, 53.



Among the greatest challenges Valignano faced during his time in Japan was the fight over the accommodation of the missionaries to Japanese culture and the involvement of native Japanese in the mission efforts. Because of the success of Cabral's focus on mass conversion through noblemen, the number of converts had outgrown the clergy available to administer to them. As such, "in many new Christian communities, 'eight or ten months would pass without their seeing a single father.'"<sup>18</sup> Valignano saw this issue and sought to increase the number of missionaries and clergymen to meet the new demands, primarily through the expansion of the native clergy.

Valignano's vision and policies were seen as unorthodox and a return to old, ineffective ways and came under great criticism from within the Society. Nevertheless, Valignano persisted. This paper will demonstrate that Valignano's respect for the Japanese and vision for the future of Japan drove the development of the indigenous clergy and missionaries despite criticism from fellow Europeans. This paper will also demonstrate that Valignano's efforts and reforms reinforced a rising trend towards local and communal worship of Christianity, which was the groundwork for the persistence of the hidden Christians following the expulsion of Westerners from Japan.

The scope and effectiveness of this endeavor, however, is heavily influenced by access to primary and secondary resources. Many of the valuable primary sources relating to Valignano are preserved in Jesuit archives, with publicly available materials limited to what is contained in Jesuit scholarship. Similarly, many primary sources would have been written in pre-modern Japanese, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and possibly

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<sup>18</sup> Jack B. Hoey, "Alessandro Valignano and the Restructuring of the Jesuit Mission in Japan, 1579-1582." *Eleutheria* 1, no. 1 (October 2010): 31. <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/eleu/vol1/iss1/4>.

Latin, limiting appropriate engagement with primary sources. As such, this paper will rely heavily on secondary scholarship and translations, serving, in part, as a form of historiographical analysis. Particularly, scholarship on Valignano draws heavily from J.F. Moran and Andrew Ross' monographs because of their accessibility and translation of related documents. Though Valignano's *Summario* were collected and given commentary by Sophia University, their accessibility to this paper was limited by the work's publication in Spanish. Similarly, information on the *kakure kirishitan* heavily references both Turnbull and Harrington and faced similar roadblocks of access to primary sources. Despite these shortcomings, this paper will attempt to connect the historiography of Valignano and the *kakure kirishitan*, an endeavor that hopefully may be able to be expanded upon in the future with greater access to primary resources.

## **II. Valignano and Cabral**

When Valignano arrived in Japan in 1579, he was somewhat surprised with the state of the mission despite positive reports he had received prior to his coming. Previously, the many years of political fragmentation during the Warring States period (1467-1600) had allowed Christianity to take root early on due to the freedom that *daimyō* (warlords and domain lords) granted the brethren to do as they wished. Around the time of Valignano's arrival, the great Oda Nobunaga had risen to power and started to unify Japan under one banner through military conflict.<sup>19</sup> Though the Jesuits enjoyed protections from their *daimyō* allies, unification presented a new possible issue for the future of Christianity in Japan because a unifier hostile towards Western influence could

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<sup>19</sup> Boxer, *The Christian Century*, 56.

easily hinder Jesuit actions in the archipelago. Nevertheless, “the letters which [Valignano] read in Macao from [several high-ranking missionaries] all expressed optimism. Recent converts included the lords of Arima and of Bungo [in Kyūshū, with] high hopes of further conversions.”<sup>20</sup>

Valignano, however, found a much grimmer scene than he had been led to expect. Though unification was still occurring under Nobunaga, Valignano discovered that key allies in Kyūshū were losing their ability to protect the Jesuits. For example, Ōtomo Yoshishige of Bungo, along with his people, had been among those *daimyō* to convert to Christianity and had provided resources and protection to the brethren through the 1570s. In 1579, Ōtomo lost a decisive battle to a rival *daimyō*, who was not friendly towards Christians. Ōtomo lost a great deal of land and power following this battle, and many areas that had been friendly to Christians were now ruled over by the Satsuma clan, which lead many Christians and brethren to flee to other areas.<sup>21</sup> Valignano found that the power of similar allies was dwindling, “the people were devious and difficult to deal with, and the Japanese mission field [was] by no means as ‘white for the harvest’” as he had been led to expect. Commenting on the ordeal, Valignano stated that “the difference between what [he had] found through experience in Japan and [what he was told]...[was] like the difference between black and white.”<sup>22</sup> While it was true that there had been considerable success in the thirty years before he arrived, “in the late 1570s, the mission

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<sup>20</sup> Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, 34.

<sup>21</sup> Boxer, *The Christian Century*, 143-144.

<sup>22</sup> Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, 34-35.

[had] began to falter...[because of] the lack of Jesuit workers and leadership from Francisco Cabral as Superior of the mission.”<sup>23</sup>

Prior to his visit, the mission in Japan had been administered under the direction of Francisco Cabral for about nine years, following the departure of Francis Xavier from Japan and the death of his successor. As described by Ross, Cabral, “a Portuguese fidalgo who had come to the Indies as a soldier and only then joined the society...was devout, disciplined, and full of life” and had “brought a new rigour and vigour to the Society and his years as Superior saw a massive growth in the Church in Japan.”<sup>24</sup> In Kyūshū and throughout southern Japan, Cabral had encouraged missionaries to prioritize conversion of the *daimyō*, who would also have many of their subjects convert upon the *daimyō*’s decision to become Christian.<sup>25</sup>

Early on in his administration, Cabral wanted to align the mission with his preference for more traditional and orthodox approaches to missionary work.<sup>26</sup> As such, he sought to redefine the attitudes and aims of the mission that he took issue with. Cabral openly criticized lax attitudes of missionaries towards dress and methodology that had developed under Xavier's direction, essentially rejecting “any forms of cultural accommodation whatsoever and [ignoring] those Jesuits who urged him to do otherwise.”<sup>27</sup> In all, Cabral had run a mission that had seen great success but had begun to flatline prior to Valignano’s arrival.

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<sup>23</sup> Hoey, “Restructuring of the Jesuit Mission in Japan,” 23.

<sup>24</sup> Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, 50-51.

<sup>25</sup> Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, 53.

<sup>26</sup> Hoey, “Restructuring of the Jesuit Mission in Japan,” 23.

<sup>27</sup> Hoey, “Restructuring of the Jesuit Mission in Japan,” 24.

Valignano had a great deal of criticism towards Cabral and his management of the mission: something rooted in their different attitudes towards the Japanese. Cabral seemed to hold skepticism towards the Japanese, writing that he had “never seen a people so haughty, avaricious, unreliable, and insincere as the Japanese.”<sup>28</sup> Although Cabral had been given little direction during the time of his administration, Valignano felt that Cabral directed the mission according to his own discretion instead of following principles set forth in the Society of Jesus’ constitution.<sup>29</sup> Valignano likely took issue with Cabral’s strict understanding of the Constitutions of the Society’s statement that all kinds of people were welcome into the society and that people may be admitted if they have natural gifts given by God and know how to use them.<sup>30</sup> While Valignano interpreted this statement as any capable individual was eligible for entry, Cabral’s skeptical view of the Japanese may have meant that capable Japanese converts were being overlooked. Division between the Europeans and Japanese had crept in, and while it was not clear if this division was Cabral’s intention, “it is quite clear that he held such a poor opinion himself and did nothing to hide it.”<sup>31</sup> This mismanagement put Valignano in a precarious position with regard to Cabral and how he was going to reform the mission. Ross notes:

In his letters to the General in 1579 and in 1580 we can see Valignano struggling to recognize the fact that while Cabral had been Mission Superior the Christian Church in Japan had grown, and to give credit for this, and yet to explain why he believed that under Cabral's leadership the future of the Society and of the Church was gloomy indeed because of the style of Cabral's government.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, 101.

<sup>29</sup> Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, 57.

<sup>30</sup> St. Ignatius of Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, trans. George E. Ganss (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), 127-128, 131.

<sup>31</sup> Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, 57.

<sup>32</sup> Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, 57.

Cabral was too useful an asset to be dismissed because of his administrative experience and would remain an important part of Valignano's administration of the Indies mission. Valignano, though, had Cabral transferred to serve as the Superior of India on account of his antagonism towards Valignano's vision for Japan. With how prevalent Cabral's attitudes had become within the mission, Valignano understood that changes to the missionaries' attitudes were necessary.

Compared with Cabral's skepticism, Valignano held respect for the Japanese and optimism for the future of the mission. Valignano wrote that the Japanese were "a people all of whom are very subject to reason... And when they become Christians and begin to go to confession they live very well, taking great care of their souls, and to keep our holy law, and with the great desire for salvation, correcting their vices which they had when they were pagans."<sup>33</sup> Valignano appeared to hold a positive view of the Japanese and saw potential in their role to help move the mission's work forward. It is from Valignano's differences with Cabral, the lessons learned from Cabral's administration, and his opinions of the Japanese that Valignano found ways to alter the mission's attitudes and trajectory going forward.

### **III. Valignano and the Japanese Clergy**

One of the most influential changes that Valignano worked to implement was to expand the introduction of native clergy to the missionary work. Even from the time of Xavier, native Japanese converts had served in a supporting role to the missionaries,

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<sup>33</sup> Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, 192.

assisting the missionaries to teach doctrine and translate religious material.<sup>34</sup> Converts had even started to be introduced into the Society of Jesus in 1557 without official permission due to constriction with the Constitutions of the Society that said that the superior general alone held the authority to choose who was able to admit people into the Society.<sup>35</sup> With no one officially appointed by the general superior of the Society to do so after Francis Xavier's departure, converts were admitted without formal recognition, though this presented little issue.<sup>36</sup> Moran notes that Valignano thought that the Japanese had been shouldering the greatest burden of the missionary work. Despite this burden, they had been given no official training or recognition within the Society of Jesus, had been given no tracts to use in teaching, and had been left to their own devices with little support. To Moran, this was a measure used to maintain European superiority within the Society's hierarchy.<sup>37</sup> It was clear to Valignano that "under Cabral's leadership...deep divisions had developed between the Jesuits and the *dōjuku*" on account of his policies.<sup>38</sup> The *Constitutions* warned against such divisions, saying that charity was a necessary component of unity in the society, as the individual was strengthened "by their getting information and news from one another and by having much intercommunication."<sup>39</sup> Valignano had recognized the inherent differences of the temperaments of the Japanese and European missionaries (the Japanese were slow and calculating in conversation while the Europeans were fast and driven). Alongside emphasizing equal treatment and charity

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<sup>34</sup> João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, "The Brotherhoods (Confrarias) and Lay Support for the Early Christian Church in Japan." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 34, no. 1 (2007): 71, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30234175>.

<sup>35</sup> Costa, "The Brotherhoods," 71.

<sup>36</sup> Ignatius, *Constitutions*, 125.

<sup>37</sup> Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, 161.

<sup>38</sup> Hoey, "Restructuring of the Jesuit Mission in Japan," 31-32.

<sup>39</sup> Ignatius, *Constitutions*, 336-337.

in the Society and the adaptation of the Europeans to Japanese etiquette, he sought to remedy the differences between the two groups by implementing a number of changes to establish the Japanese Jesuits as equals to their European counterparts.<sup>40</sup>

One of Valignano's main points of contention was his insistence on the quality of the missionaries that were coming to Japan from Europe. "Valignano believed strongly that only the most dedicated, bright and gifted Jesuits should come to" Japan and wanted to avoid the financial and logistical strain of bringing a large number of priests all at once. As such, Valignano started a push for more Japanese converts to be trained as clergymen and be inducted into the Society.<sup>41</sup> Valignano pushed for the Japanese to be given the same level of training that Europeans would receive because their ability to speak the language was valuable to the mission. According to Valignano, "God had not... given the missionaries the gift of tongues or miracles, and their best linguists were virtually tongue-tied and halting in comparison to their Japanese lay brothers."<sup>42</sup> Valignano's argument was based primarily on the need for a literate clergy and missionary force. Valignano firmly believed in the efficacy of an indigenous clergy and worked to convince his fellow Jesuits on a logistic and financial level.<sup>43</sup> Though it is logical to assume that, with this change, he had also hoped to rectify the damages done under Cabral's administration. Alessandro "understood that Japanese society itself

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<sup>40</sup> Josef Franz Schütte, *Valignano's Mission Principles for Japan 1573-1582, Part II: 1580-1582*, trans. John J. Coyne (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985), 290-291.

<sup>41</sup> Schütte, *Valignano's Mission Principles*, 292.

<sup>42</sup> Schütte, *Valignano's Mission Principles*, 87.

<sup>43</sup> Hoey, "Restructuring of the Jesuit Mission in Japan," 31.



approved of the gradual improvement of one's status, and he wanted to make sure that the *dōjuku* received the same opportunities as part of the Society."<sup>44</sup>

Valignano faced opposition in his arguments, but he planned and pushed for the creation of "three seminaries with about a hundred students each"<sup>45</sup> and for the "unqualified admission of Japanese to the Society."<sup>46</sup> Valignano pushed ahead and established a school in Arima in 1580 to train *dōjuku*, with twenty-two students attending during the first year.<sup>47</sup> More schools followed, and more Japanese clergy were available to help teach and maintain congregations throughout Japan. With great success "between 1580 and 1603 (Valignano's last year in Japan) the *dōjuku* grew from 100 to 284."<sup>48</sup> Valignano also sought to arm the new brethren with their own texts. With the help of a convert and personal friend named Yohoken Paulo, Valignano managed to produce and print the first religious texts and catechisms made especially for Japanese Christians. This was a champion feat that helped to spur on the proselytizing efforts of the Japanese missionaries.

Behind many of these changes, Valignano seemingly had his own vision for the future of Christianity in Japan. He wanted these new Japanese clergy in training to become preachers to their own brethren and to become the mainstay of the future clergy of Japan.<sup>49</sup> This future that Valignano saw was one that would one day see the Japanese church operate independent of aid from Europe, with "Christian churches run by the

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<sup>44</sup> Hoey, "Restructuring of the Jesuit Mission in Japan," 31.

<sup>45</sup> Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, 12.

<sup>46</sup> Boxer, *The Christian Century*, 88.

<sup>47</sup> Hoey, "Restructuring of the Jesuit Mission in Japan," 32.

<sup>48</sup> Hoey, "Restructuring of the Jesuit Mission in Japan," 32.

<sup>49</sup> Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, 13.

Japanese for the Japanese in a Japanese style—literally a Japanese Catholic Church.”<sup>50</sup>

Valignano appeared to be focusing beyond the present state of the mission, something that many missionaries may or may not have thought about day-to-day. As such, Valignano believed his efforts were necessary for the future he wanted to create.

#### **IV. Criticism of Valignano's Actions**

Valignano's intentions for the indigenization of the clergy faced a considerable amount of opposition within the Jesuit order. Chief among his opponents were two men, Francisco Cabral and João Rodriguez (often referred to as the Interpreter) that had and would continue to work extensively with him throughout his time in the Indies. These two were high-profile members of the Society in Asia, with Cabral as the former superior of the mission in Japan and Rodriguez as one of the brightest linguistic minds in the mission. Rodriguez served as a personal interpreter for the shoguns Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu,<sup>51</sup> enabling him to later help Valignano protect converts and missionaries in Japan from the persecution of the Christians.<sup>52</sup> Cabral was an opponent towards Valignano's movement to make the Japanese more equal with the Europeans in the Society of Jesus in Japan. Cabral's opposition has somewhat confused historians as Cabral “believed that Japanese preachers were central to the work of conversion, repeatedly asked to be allowed to accept more Japanese as Jesuits, and had high praise for some of the Japanese lay brothers” yet “was opposed to the idea of having Japanese study for the priesthood.”<sup>53</sup> In Cabral's view, at that time, the Japanese were not necessarily

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<sup>50</sup> Hoey, “Restructuring of the Jesuit Mission in Japan,” 31.

<sup>51</sup> Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, 112.

<sup>52</sup> Boxer, *The Christian Century*, 180.

<sup>53</sup> Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, 161.

ready for full priesthood and should be accepted into the Society only if necessary; those that were, to him, should be below the Europeans in the hierarchy of the Society.<sup>54</sup>

Rodrigues had similar reservations and believed that the mission was losing its strength by admitting too many members; in doing so, he believed they were forgetting the points of quality for admittees that St. Ignatius had laid down in the Constitutions for the Society.<sup>55</sup> The detractors in the Society had attempted to write letters to the Vatican that claimed that Valignano was weakening the missions in the Indies and taking too many of the best European Jesuits to Japan.<sup>56</sup> These efforts failed, and Valignano continued to supervise the mission for many years to come. Valignano recognized the value and experience that men like Cabral and Rodrigues held and, though they opposed his policies, he opted to keep them close to him and in positions of authority.

Valignano's insistence to only bring the best and brightest Jesuits to Japan was also controversial as it not only took away experienced missionaries from other areas (as seen with the detraction letters sent to the Vatican), but also because of his insistence of refusing help from and keeping other monastic orders like the Franciscans out of Japan. Ross notes that Valignano was drawing on the past experience of missionaries in dealing with the many different Buddhist sects and the confusion that was brought to people through different doctrines, attitudes, and proselyting styles. Fearing a potential parallel schism within the Japanese Church, Valignano sought to keep other orders out, since their methodologies could have conflicted with his plan for the church in Japan.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, 55.

<sup>55</sup> Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, 112.

<sup>56</sup> Üçerler, "Man, missionary, and writer," 339.

<sup>57</sup> Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, 65.

Valignano did not want to risk or contaminate the purity of his vision for the future. Other orders would eventually come of their own accord, but by that point, Valignano had already been able to help rectify many issues he saw within the Society and had laid the course of the mission for the rest of its time in Japan. Modern scholars criticize Valignano's conviction to keep other orders out as politically driven, serving to alone fit *his* vision of a Catholic Japan, not just simply Christian.<sup>58</sup> Ultimately, Valignano believed that it was possible only through his own methods.

The criticisms levied against Valignano both then and in modern times were both fair and important. His contemporary critics, though in part an element of politics within the Society, were all trying to achieve the same goal of bring Christianity to Japan that Valignano had. The differences of means, however, was not what Valignano desired; in moves indicative of some level of hubris, Valignano removed those who contradicted him from the future of Japan's Christianity. In a modern sense, it may be fair to label Valignano an ideologue as he refused to compromise on his vision and removed those that opposed him. Valignano seemingly blamed everything that was wrong with the mission on Cabral and used him as a scapegoat to push Valignano's own reforms onto the mission. With power essentially unchecked, Valignano had the power to do what he wanted and removed detractors to maintain cohesion. Valignano even broke traditional conduct and elected to rely on tax and trade income from Nagasaki to fund the mission despite wishes from the Vatican.<sup>59</sup> Modern scholarship equally has a responsibility to push back against the tendencies to write idealistically about Valignano and point out

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<sup>58</sup> Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, 190.

<sup>59</sup> Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, 127.

where he attempts to reform the mission to his ideals weakened the mission as a whole. To summarize criticism of Valignano was focused on his own objectives and employed means he approved of to meet them, at the expense of debate and objections from equally qualified and experienced people.

## **V. Role of the Local Clergy**

Though largely an indirect impact of his administration, one of Valignano's lasting legacies was the strengthening of Christianity at a local level, especially the local clergy. Through the training of his seminaries, reports stated that the number of *dōjuku* grew to more than five hundred by 1592.<sup>60</sup> From the beginning, the laymen played an invaluable role in the spreading of Christianity and the strengthening of faith at the local level. Even with his preference to European missionaries, Ross notes that under Cabral "the cutting edge of the work, the effective preaching and teaching that led to conversions, was being done by the Japanese *irmaos* (young scholastics) and *dojuku*."<sup>61</sup> Valignano remarked that the *dōjuku*, the local preachers, played an invaluable role in the daily running of the Church:

In Japan we call these men *dojuku* who, whether young or old, shave their head, renounce the world and promise to devote themselves to the service of the Church. Some are studying to become religious priests, some others in order to render various household services, which cannot be performed in Japan save by men who have shaved their heads, such as the office of sacristan, door-keeper, server of *chanoyu*, messenger, helper at Mass, funerals, Baptisms, and other services of the Church, and in travelling with the Padres. Those among them who are qualified, also help by catechizing, with preaching and with instructing the Christians. These *dojuku* were respected in Japan and are considered clerics.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ann M. Harrington, *Japan's Hidden Christians* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1993), 11.

<sup>61</sup> Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, 51.

<sup>62</sup> Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, 49.

As is evident in Valignano's writings, the laymen had great responsibilities placed on them, so the previously mentioned lack of support and respect they garnered from most of the Europeans is somewhat surprising.

The *dōjuku* themselves were men that garnered respect from locals on account of their birth and training. Many of the early generations of *dōjuku* were sons of local nobility, including many of those that attended Valignano's first seminary.<sup>63</sup> The decision to recruit from the nobility likely served two purposes: 1) as an act of friendly diplomacy between the Jesuits and the convert aristocracy and 2) on account of their education and literacy. As friendly connections with converted nobles was a necessary component of continuing missionary efforts, Valignano looked to the sons of nobleman as the ideal candidates for training to become Japan's future priests and ecclesiastical leaders. Because of their status as noblemen, it was these from *dōjuku* that Valignano chose to bring with him on his return trip to Europe in 1582, having them serve as ambassadors for their fathers and countrymen.<sup>64</sup> In a way, these noblemen *dōjuku* were utilized as used a political pawns by Valignano to inspire friendly relations with the Japanese and garner support from the Vatican. While more outside of the nobleman may have started to be trained in later times (like Bastian), the decision to train future priests from among the nobility was a practical choice.

Valignano was optimistic for how these *dōjuku* would serve as the future priests of Japan, but he overestimated the time and effort needed to train such a clergy. Though he had left Japan in the early 1580s with optimism about the seminaries' output, in a

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<sup>63</sup> Hoey, "Restructuring of the Jesuit Mission in Japan," 32; Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, 12-13.

<sup>64</sup> Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, 12.

1593 letter, he remarked that the *dōjuku* had struggled with their studies and that it would be some time before a native ecclesiastical structure would be able to be organized.<sup>65</sup> Even though many of these *dōjuku* lived and studied with Jesuit brethren, it was clear why many, later including Valignano, believed that they weren't ready for full admittance as priests into the Society.<sup>66</sup> Valignano had been too optimistic in his vision for these laymen, a defeat that hailed back to warnings from Cabral's administration. Despite the slow progress many of these *dōjuku* had, the seminaries ultimately trained many laymen who were relied upon to keep the church structure afloat.

Consider the reality that the church in Japan had quickly outgrown the number of missionaries able to administer important sacraments. According to Professor João Paulo Oliveira e Costa of the New University of Lisbon, the westerners ordinarily had control over how ecclesiastical hierarchy was organized. This trend however originated from the influence that the West had in the area (militarily, economically, etc.). In Japan, where Europeans had little effective influence outside of trade, the rapid conversion rate and low influx of trained missionaries necessitated the incorporation of laymen into church duties.<sup>67</sup> Harrington remarked that "in 1579 the ratio of priests to Christians was approximately 1:5,652; in 1588, 1:5,128; and in 1614, 1: 3,061," a disparity that clearly demonstrated how much the Jesuits needed the support of local laymen.<sup>68</sup> Costa, similar to Valignano, attributed Christianity's success to this "native face" of the Church.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, 162-163, 168-169.

<sup>66</sup> Schütte, *Valignano's Mission Principles*, 39.

<sup>67</sup> Costa, "The Brotherhoods," 70-71.

<sup>68</sup> Harrington, *Japan's Hidden Christians*, 20.

<sup>69</sup> Costa, "The Brotherhoods," 71.

Foremost and most important of the responsibilities placed on these laymen was the administration of baptism. Because baptism marked the beginning of one's journey in the gospel, the Jesuits placed great emphasis on this sacrament in their teachings and saw to the availability of baptism to meet the demands of Christianity's incredible growth. Though baptism was the one sacrament that *dōjuku* were allowed to administer, the Jesuits in Japan granted this authority without consultation or permission from Rome.<sup>70</sup> The rules under which these laymen baptized were laid out very early on in the mission, and the reliance on them to conduct these affairs persisted long into the twilight hours of the Christian century.

Laymen also played an important role as the religious leaders of the local units of the church, the confrarias or brotherhoods. Because traditional congregations and organizational structures like parishes and dioceses could not be immediately organized due to the lack of properly ordained clergy and rising numbers of converts, brotherhoods were organized by local laymen in order to unite and teach the believers.<sup>71</sup> In the absence of the priests, *dōjuku* lead these local congregations in regular prayer, hymn, and reinforcement of catechism teachings, assisted by lower-rank laymen. Meeting together often in private homes, these local organizations cemented Christianity as a local unifying tradition.<sup>72</sup> Costa argued that these confrarias and the strength of local tradition were able to resist the encroachment of the Tokugawa government when persecution began to climax in 1614.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Costa, "The Brotherhoods," 73.

<sup>71</sup> Costa, "The Brotherhoods," 75.

<sup>72</sup> Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan*, 143; Harrington, *Japan's Hidden Christians*, 20.

<sup>73</sup> Costa, "The Brotherhoods," 77.



Overall, the laymen of the Church played an invaluable role facilitating the growth of Christianity in Japan. Without them conversions likely would not have seen the rapid growth in numbers because of the familiarity of native converts leading the local congregations. The growth of the number of *dōjuku* facilitated by Valignano's seminaries were one of the great steps towards his mission of a self-sufficient Japanese church. Though they were relegated to leading local congregations and were barred from administering sacraments other than baptism, this system reinforced the strength of communal Christianity that was able to resist and persist through terrible persecution by the Tokugawa government.

## **VI. Laymen and the Hidden Christians**

Through the expansion and solidification of local native Christianity, Valignano unknowingly laid the foundation upon which small communities of Christianity would persist through the persecution which vehemently worsened after his death. As greatly detailed by Turnbull in his monograph on the hidden Christians of Ikitsuki, the local organizational structure of the confrarias (brotherhoods) under the oversight of *dōjuku* and other laymen would evolve into the communal Christian tradition of the *kakure kirishitan* lead by community leaders.<sup>74</sup> The traditions of communal prayer and worship reinforced over multiple generations of Christians from the beginning of the mission continued largely unchanged long after westerners were forced out, only now being conducted in secret. Prayers were passed orally from generation to generation of community leaders, surprisingly with little corruption over the course of nearly three

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<sup>74</sup> Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan*, 70-71.

centuries. Turnbull carefully noted, however, that the meaning of the words of these prayers had been lost over time and simply became part of local ritual.<sup>75</sup>

Similarly, the focus of Valignano's catechism teachings were evident in the continued and forgotten traditions of worship. Turnbull states that "the sacrament of the Eucharist was one of the first casualties at the persecution of Christians in Japan," and, "with no priests available to say mass, its performance would almost certainly have ceased."<sup>76</sup> Baptism continued to be practiced in waters deemed sacred and capable of miraculous healing.<sup>77</sup> Community worship and festivals were regularly celebrated that hailed back to several Catholic holidays.<sup>78</sup> In the perpetuation of these practices, "the continuation of a personal expression of faith performed within a mutually supportive lay organization compensated for the [long] absence of priests" these communities faced.<sup>79</sup>

The continuation and preservation of these traditions and communities would not have been possible without the influence of the *dōjuku* trained as a result of Valignano's seminaries. While they had been in a supporting role to the Western brethren before 1614, the *dōjuku* eventually took on an administrative role when it became increasingly dangerous for Westerners to be moving within Japan. Ultimately, it would to them that the fate of the Church would fall. As previously mentioned, these were men like Bastian, a *dōjuku* who played an important role in the communities south of Nagasaki in the 1650s. Though an extraordinary character, Bastian can be seen as an archetype of these *dōjuku* and laymen who were left to lead the church.

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<sup>75</sup> Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan*, 143.

<sup>76</sup> Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan*, 167.

<sup>77</sup> Harrington, *Japan's Hidden Christians*, 49.

<sup>78</sup> Harrington, *Japan's Hidden Christians*, 57-68.

<sup>79</sup> Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan*, 79.

Bastian, who had received training and been serving in his community in Fukabori, became a travelling companion of a western preacher named Juan. Though little is known about Juan's true identity, Juan and Bastian served together among Christian communities near Nagasaki through the 1650s in secret and eventually became martyrs to those they taught.<sup>80</sup> Aside from his prophecies introduced earlier, Bastian was also known for his administrative reform to the calendar for some of these communities. Following the death of Juan, Bastian was left to lead and advise the communities, a task which he struggled with, especially in the administration of holidays and feasts. After fasting for twenty-one days, Bastian reported that he had a vision in which Juan had appeared and taught him when and how to administer the holidays.<sup>81</sup> According to Bastian, Juan instructed him to use the feast of Annunciation, a feast occurring halfway through Lent, as the point to derive the dates of other holidays since the feast always fell on the spring equinox when following the lunar calendar. This calendar system attributed to Bastian remained the basis for festival calendars for a number of communities and one of his lasting legacies.<sup>82</sup>

Through *dōjuku* like Bastian, the church continued and slowly transformed into the communities of worship that would be observed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their status as those that had been instructed and authorized to lead by Western brethren was clearly recognized as the decisions made like Bastian's calendar had lingering effects and acceptance within the local communities. Similarly, many of the *dōjuku* were remembered and celebrated as martyrs by these communities. As such, these

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<sup>80</sup> Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan*, 117.

<sup>81</sup> Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan*, 119; Harrington, *Japan's Hidden Christians*, 36.

<sup>82</sup> Harrington, *Japan's Hidden Christians*, 36-37; Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan*, 138-140.

*dōjuku* and other laymen played leading and lasting roles in the development of these communities. As seen through their prominence in the communities and decisive focus on communal worship, baptism, and catechetical teachings, the evidence seems to demonstrate the residual effects of Valignano's administrative decisions from the 1580s on these communities.

## **VII. Conclusion**

So, what did Valignano manage to accomplish by making decisions to expand the native clergy? While views of cause-and-effect relationships of historical events are something to be cautious of in historian's work, what is not disputed is that the number of Christian converts in Japan grew from 130,000 in the 1570s to around 300,000 by 1614.<sup>83</sup> Additionally, though the admittance of Japanese converts in the Society stemmed back to 1557, in just thirty-three years (1590), seventy Japanese converts had become brothers within the order, accounting for half of Jesuits in Japan and fifteen percent of all Jesuits who were working in Asia."<sup>84</sup> These numbers were quite impressive and indicative of the success that the mission had achieved in the years since Valignano's first four-year visit, as well as the success of Valignano's desire to increase the number of indigenous clergy.

Though, crediting Valignano or any of the Jesuit missionaries as solely responsible for this great success of Christianity in Japan would be disingenuous to the historical record. As beautifully said by Costa, "the reason for this success from a religious perspective was the real conversion of thousands of Japanese to the Gospel and the decision of hundreds of them to take an active role in the support of their religious

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<sup>83</sup> Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, 87.

<sup>84</sup> Costa, "The Brotherhoods," 71.

lives.”<sup>85</sup> When the persecution of the Christians heavily and violently escalated in Japan in 1614, it was individual faith and communal support that allowed Christianity to continue to survive in hiding, even long after the Jesuits and other Christian orders were expelled in Japan. Valignano’s facilitation of the training and expansion of the native clergy gave the people the knowledge and self-empowerment to teach amongst themselves and allow Christianity to take root and become uniquely Japanese. Though, his vision for an independent Christian Japan would not come to fruition. The drive for that vision, however, created a Christianity that was able to endure among the hidden Christians all the way until western missionaries were able to re-enter Japan in the mid-nineteenth century.

While Valignano’s administration was rife with internal conflict and criticism inside and outside the Jesuit order, he was able to fight through anti-Japanese attitudes and establish a long-standing Japanese clergy. In his own way, he was able to achieve the Society’s goal “to preach, hear confessions, and use all the other means it can with the grace of God to help souls” by helping create the environment for the Japanese to testify and convert their fellow brethren.<sup>86</sup> If one were to compare Valignano to a brewer trying to create beer on his own, his training as a Jesuit had taught him a traditional recipe for European Christianity. In Japan, though he had the recipe, he had to improvise with the ingredients and environment available to him. Rather than opting to make the European recipe work on his own, Valignano chose to train those with familiarity to the environment, the *dōjuku*, to be those handling the ingredients. Valignano elected the

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<sup>85</sup> Costa, “The Brotherhoods,” 73.

<sup>86</sup> Ignatius, *Constitutions*, 172.

course for Christianity to brew in Japan, but as the native clergy did the work, Japan had created its own form of Christianity on homebrew, distinctly Japanese but Christian nonetheless. As Moran stated in the closing statements of his book on Valignano, “it was the Father Visitor, more than anyone else, who taught the missionaries that becoming a follower of Christ does not mean becoming a European or ceasing to be Japanese.”<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits*, 192.

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