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Hitomi Omata Rappo*

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Resumo

Inaugurados em 1962, o Museu e o Monumento dos Vinte e Seis Mártires são dedicados à memória dos primeiros santos nascidos da missão no Japão: os vinte e seis mártires de 1597 (beatificados em 1627, canonizados em 1862).

Analisando a arquitetura e a natureza das coleções do museu, este artigo demonstra como toda a estrutura foi criada no contexto do pós-guerra Nagasaki, como algo entre um museu e um local de culto, e também como um "lieu de mémoire", seguindo os modelos da espiritualidade jesuíta, como "*La peinture spirituelle*" de Louis Richeome ou os "*Exercícios Espirituais*".

Palavra-chave: Mártires, Museu, Relíquias, Japão, Jesuítas, Nagasaki

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Abstract

Inaugurated in 1962, the Museum of the Twenty-Six Martyrs of Nagasaki and its accompanying monument are dedicated to the memory of the first saints born from the mission in Japan: the Twenty-six martyrs of 1597 (beatified in 1627, canonized in 1862).

Analyzing both the architecture and the nature of the collections of the museum, this article demonstrates how the entire structure was created, in the context of post-War Nagasaki, as something between a museum and a place of worship, and also as a "lieu de mémoire," following the models of Jesuit spirituality, such as Louis Richeome's "*La peinture spirituelle*," or the "*Spiritual Exercises*."

Keywords: Martyrs, Museum, Relics, Japan, Jesuits, Nagasaki

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"La relique donne lieu à son lieu."
P.-A. Fabre

Introduction

The history of Christendom in Japan has hardly entered the mainstream of Japanese history. Lack of historical documents on this topic after the long period of repression is one reason for this omission, and the actual position of Christendom in Japanese society. In 1962, a museum dedicated to the twenty-six Christian martyrs who died in Japan in 1597 was founded in Nagasaki, the place of their execution.[1] The foundation of this museum can be understood as an attempt at reconstructing their history in Japanese society. Many elements of the museum – the selection of the type of monument for the martyrs, the process of locating the place of their death, the exhibition method… – suggest that this incident has been the subject of a complex rhetoric which gave it a new meaning as a "lieu de mémoire."

This article provides an analysis of the process of the construction of the museum and considers reasons behind the choice of objects exhibited in the museum, especially relics. Different from other historical artifacts, particular relics had functioned not only as objects of religious veneration but also have absorbed a series of social and religious significations. The museum thus fulfills a unique role as both the site of a contemporary scientific display and as a religious reliquary. This leads us to rethink traditional theories about the place of religious objects in museums and to reconsider the nature of such institutions in contemporary Japan. Through this study, I will show how this museum, through its historicization of past events in a contemporary context, acts as a kind of nexus, which links distinct narratives – of Japanese Christians, of the Catholic Church, and even of the Atom bomb – and thus contributes to painting Nagasaki as the martyr city "per excellence."

[1] A description, in English, of the museum can be found in Kawazoe 1963.

Shaping the History of the Twenty-six Martyrs

Twenty-six local Christians and foreign missionaries were executed, on February 5, 1597, in Nagasaki.[2] The incident itself was nothing exceptional, because the then Japanese sovereign, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (豊臣秀吉1537-1598), had already demonstrated unfriendliness, even hostility, toward Catholic missionaries. (He officially banished the Christianity already in 1587.)[3] The twenty-six that were executed were not historically the first Christian victims killed by the local authorities.[4] However, in the context of the history of the Catholic Church in Japan, they are remembered as the first Martyrs of the Japanese Christians and the incident is regarded as a particularly important historical event. Indeed, as early as 1627, the twenty-six had been beatified as the first the official "colored" martyrs[5], and in 1862, they were canonized.[6] Thus, the death of these twenty-six martyrs is now fully integrated into the history of the Catholic Church. In spite of this, they have not always been a part of Japanese history that is recorded, studied, and read mostly in Japanese. Several reasons can be identified for the gulf between Western and Japanese perception of the same event. First, Christians remain an extremely small minority, statistically less than one percent of the whole population, even today.[7] Second, the events themselves can be confirmed indirectly through Japanese sources, but the details, like most reports on persecutions in modern Japan, are only known through documents written in European languages.[8] Through official interdiction and social segregation, many physical sources regarding the twenty-six were destroyed and lost. Although hidden

2 For a presentation on the events in an European language, see Jacquelard 2011; Vu Thanh 2017; Omata Rappo 2016; 2018 (forthcoming).

3 Paramore 2009, 56-57. The whole edict was translated in French in Kouamé 2011, 166-168.

4 Gonoi 2012, 24-25.

5 On their iconography and its implications, see Omata Rappo 2017c.

6 Beatification constitutes the first step to the process of canonization. With beatification, a person who died in the Catholic faith is permitted under Papal authority to become an object of public veneration. However, such a cult will be restricted in relation to canonization, through which the person is ranked among the saints. The process of both beatification and canonization involves several steps of preparing official documents to prove the sanctity of the person, his or her local reputation, his or her miracles, etc. See "Beatification and Canonization," in Catholic Encyclopedia. The process itself is therefore understood as an integration of individuals into the larger, global context of Catholic Church's history.

7 Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan 2017.

8 For more detail on the sources, see Omata Rappo 2016, 91-95; 2017b; 2018. Also see Fernandes Pinto 2014.

Christian communities barely survived, the story of the twenty-six did not become part of the Japanese collective memory until fairly recently.

However, on the Western side, there are a large number of unedited manuscripts and printed sources based on the twenty-six martyrs. This is mainly because their way of dying – on wooden crucifixes, as ordered by the local merciless "tyrant" – fulfilled wholly the ideal conditions as a perfect "martyr" from the point of view of contemporary Christians.[9] As a result, they became almost immediately objects of veneration for both local and the remote European societies, and a beatification process was quickly started. This is why from their death to their canonization, the story of the twenty-six martyrs was essentially produced and reproduced in Europe,[10] but in contemporary Japan, it had little impact. To a greater degree than the event itself, the reception of the death of the twenty-six martyrs, elevated it to a level a crucial importance in the historical perception of the Japanese Christianity in European context. They were, however, mostly forgotten in the country itself. Both Westerns and local converts would try to mend this broken historical narrative in the nineteenth century, setting what can be understood as precedents to the foundation of the museum.

The Process of Construction of the Museum – Locating the Historical Site

This process was first undertaken by a French missionary, Bernard-Thadée Petitjean (1829-1884), a priest sent by the MEP, Mission Étrangères de Paris.[11] Petitjean is largely known as a leading figure in the reconstruction of Japanese Christendom from the late Edo to the early Meiji period, especially with his "discovery" of the hidden Christians in 1865. More than anything, it seems that Petitjean was focused on finding vestiges of the Japanese Christianity, and especially of the martyrs who were canonized in

[9] Indeed, their deaths on the cross were the main reason of their exceptional beatification. See Papa 2001, 90.

[10] The most well-known manuscripts were written by the Franciscans: Jerónimo de Jesús, Juan Pobre de Zamora, and even one of the martyrs, San Martín de la Ascensión. Three Jesuits – Pedro Gomez, Pedro Martins, and Luís Froís – also made reports. The one by Luís Froís is now the most famous, because it was published – with the help of Alessandro Valignano – not only as the Annual Report for the Year 1597, but also as a panegyric text translated into Latin, Italian, and German. Regarding secular records, Avila Girón, a local merchant in Nagasaki, left a manuscript. Further, the report of Francisco de Tello de Guzmán – the Spanish governor of Manilla – was printed in Spanish, French, Italian, and German almost immediately after the incident. See Omata Rappo 2016, 90-91; 2018.

[11] Beillevaire 2007, 79-105.

the same year as his arrival in Japan, 1862. This is certainly why, after his arrival in Yokohama, he moved to Nagasaki during the next year, and did not go to the capital of Edo. In Nagasaki, Petitjean actively sought traces of the Japanese Christians from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, he soon discovered that all the monuments related to Christians had been already destroyed, a fact he attributes to the almost 150 years of repression by the government during the Edo period.[12]

However, Petitjean did not give up. He set out to find the "the exact place" where the twenty-six martyrs were executed. In the absence of actual Japanese names in the contemporary descriptions, he had to compare, like all those after him, descriptions of the execution with the actual landscape of Nagasaki. Relying on the descriptions present in what he called "historical studies" such as "The History of the Twenty-six Japanese Martyrs" written by Leon Pagès[13] or Charlevoix's "History of Japan"[14] (both are in fact late and derivative sources), he proclaimed that he finally had succeeded. The location he chose was the top of a hill known as "Tate-yama" (立山, also called by the locals "Cha'usu yama" 茶臼山), and it stood where traditional execution grounds (called "head tomb," Kubitsuka 首塚) used to be.

Despite Petitjean's affirmation, there was no source indicating that "Tate-yama" was the place of the execution. There were two main grounds to his claim. The first the three trees he found on the hill, which he identified as the remains of the trees planted by the Portuguese at the end of the sixteenth century, in honor of the twenty-six.[15] The second was because it had a good view on the sea.[16]

Having located what he thought was the place of the execution, Petitjean constructed a temporary chapel commemorating the twenty-six martyrs on the hill (L'Église des Vingt-Six martyrs).[17] This chapel would later be rebuilt and become the first Church of Nagasaki, now called the Ōura Tenshu-dō. This is precisely where his "miraculous" encounter with the hidden Christians happened a few years later.[18]

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[12] See the letter from Petitjean to an anonymous priest of the Society of Saint-Sulpice, October 28th, 1863, transcribed in Marnas 1897, 469-474.

[13] Pagès 1862.

[14] Charlevoix 1754.

[15] Marnas 1897, 472. This is also found in Pagès 1862, 98.

[16] Charlevoix 1754, 88.

[17] Ibid., 473.

[18] Doak 2011, 10.

From Ōura to Nishizaka

The historical documents recording the execution, available today, are all Western sources. None of them mentions the exact name of the place. They simply call it the "Saint's mountain," which could basically mean anywhere. None of the available sources provides a Japanese place name, and there is no direct geographical evidence, such as a map.[19] This is why, in the 1910s, a local Japanese priest named Wasaburō Urakawa protested against Petitjean's proposition.[20] His main argument was that if Petitjean chose "Cha'usu yama" (or Tate-yama), it was because he was foreign and lacked basic understanding of the local geography.

Urakawa, who could read French, also tried to locate the place, and he too relied on Pagès. Using exactly the same reasoning as the French missionary, he says that the site was closer to another hill, called "Nishizaka" (西坂, literally the Western slope).[21] Just like Tateyama, Nishizaka was also visible from the sea; he also affirms that it was closer to the actual execution grounds. His reasoning also includes extremely precise arguments, such as the impossibility of reaching the top of Tateyama on horse.

His opinion was, contrary to Petitjean's, widely accepted by the local population. One of the first touristic guide books for Nagasaki written in Japanese already describes Nishizaka as the historic site of the execution.[22] However, a bureau of the national television (NHK) was already present at Nishizaka, so a piece of land nearby, called Bōzu-iwa (坊主岩), was bought in 1939, with the objective of building a commemorative stele. This new monument was destined to become the new memorial of the twenty-six. After this, even the children of the region perceived the site at Bōzu-iwa, and not Tateyama, as the place where the martyrdom occurred.[23]

After the war, ceremonies dedicated to the martyrs were again conducted on Nishizaka.[24] The reconstruction of the town provided the opportunity to follow Urakawa's recommendation and establish a new monument there, and not on Bōzu-iwa. In 1947, Nishizaka was officially

[19] This is the opinion of the local historian, Watanabe Kurasuke (渡辺庫輔 1901-1963). From his unpublished study, "Nijūroku seijunkyō no basho ha doko ni gaitō suru ka (Where is the execution place of the Twenty-six Saint Martyrs?) 廿六聖殉教の場所は何処に該當するか", cited in Muranaka 1997, 45.

[20] Urakawa 1915, 142-147. On this also see Arimura 2014.

[21] Urakawa 1927, 215-219.

[22] Nagasaki koseki meguri kankōkai 1928, 3-5.

[23] Muranaka 1997, 30-38.

[24] Ibid., 40-44.

chosen as the construction site by a committee, under the supervision of the public works section of the Nagasaki prefecture.[25]

The Importance of Nishizaka as a "lieu de mémoire"

As Petitjean's testimony suggests, such symbolism was at first absent from the local community, as all traces of such were wiped out during the Edo period. So, for the Japanese Christians in Nagasaki, locating the exact place where the martyrs died was an extremely important process. It brought historical authentication to the Japanese context. Thus, it established an event described and written almost exclusively in Western languages as a part of the Japanese history. It also allowed the local community to re-link their own communities to this history of Christianity in Japan.

Until now, no archeological proof of the execution of the twenty-six on the particular site of Nishizaka has been found, and the site was chosen mainly through an analysis of secondary sources. However, this would be an issue only for those with an overly positivist view of history. In fact, the absence of material proof does not necessarily induce the conclusion that Urakawa was wrong, and such investigations would be misleading anyway.

In the process leading to the foundation of the Twenty-six Martyrs Museum, Nishizaka would in fact earn even greater signification. Already in some missionary sources, the execution ground of the twenty-six was perceived as a powerful symbol. Later sources called it the "saint hill" ("monte santo"), and many other martyrs were said to have died there.[26] It was also a place of devotion for local Christians in the early seventeenth century. Jacinto Orfanel says that a cherry blossom tree was planted as a mark of the execution and a stone, and devotional equipment was also placed around it.[27] Pagès mentions a similar story, but he does not give his sources.[28]

[25] Makoto Baba, an employee of the public work sections, and the chief of the Cultural and Public Welfare committee, recalls the events in Baba 1949, pp. 1-8. Moreover, the edition of the 5th May of 2009 of the *Chōshū Shinbun* 長州新聞 journal, says that, before that time, the land belonged to the Higashi Honganji 東本願寺 temple of the Jōdo shinshū school 浄土真宗. After the war, it was later integrated to the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (GHQ), and finally became municipal property after its restitution.

[26] Documents describing the execution of martyrs such as Jordán de San Esteban, which happened in 1634, say it took place at this "monte santo". See for example Congregatio pro Causis Sanctorum 1979, 295.

[27] Orfanel 1633, 106 recto.

[28] Pagès 1862, 98.

This fact was confirmed by the Jesuit priest who would later become the first director of the Twenty-six Martyrs Museum, Diego Pacheco (1922-2008).[29] Pacheco was in fact deeply involved in the elaboration of the museum, and he actively sought for historical clues proving the particular meaning that the place of the execution had for Japanese Christians at the time. This led him to find the sources of Pagès's claim, in a report made in Japan during the enquiries conducted around 1620, as a preparation for the beatification of the twenty-six martyrs.[30]

Pacheco's was clearly trying to provide historical arguments attesting the nature of the execution site as a "lieu de mémoire," as Pierre Nora famously described them.[31] In an important article published in 1961, he also tied the location of the "monte santo" of the martyrs with Nishizaka.[32] While the term "monte santo" might have been a symbolic "topos" linking all the major Japanese Nagasaki martyrs to the same place in the missionaries' discourses, Pacheco actually made the case that several others, including prominent figures such as Carlo Spinola, died on Nishizaka.[33] His interpretation is vastly diffused today, and it became almost official when it was mentioned in the speech Pope John-Paul II gave during his visit to Nagasaki in 1981.[34]

The architect in charge of the construction of the museum of the twenty-six, Kenji Imai (今井兼次 1895-1987), shared this vision. In fact, on a purely practical level, Nishizaka was not an ideal place to build a memorial, and, initially, Imai complained about its lack of space. He said that it was as spacious as the forehead of a cat, but still acknowledged its historical significance.[35] His goal was to turn an ordinary place, previously full of houses and secular buildings, into an exceptional site. As he puts it: "once the complex for the commemoration is achieved and shows its

[29] Also known under the name of Yūki Ryōgo 結城了悟, after he took the Japanese nationality. He is also the author of numerous of articles on the history of Christendom in Japan. The official site of the Museum (http://www.26martyrs.com) shows an Excel File list of his publication (only in Japanese).

[30] Pacheco 1963, 74. He cites a report from Juan Itō, which says the trees, in fact camellias, were later cut by the authorities.

[31] Nora 1997, 23-43.

[32] Pacheco 1960, 361-366.

[33] Pacheco 1967, 30.

[34] He said so in the sermons dedicated to the martyrs he gave at the Matsuyama track and field stadium near the Atomic bomb Museum of Nagasaki, and at the Nishizaka itself. Katorikku kōhō iinnkai 1981, pp. 118-128.

[35] Imai 2009c, 159.

appearance here, … this place will be transformed into the appropriate place to praise martyrs, strengthen the faith, and contemplate."[36]

Right before the actual construction of the museum, in several, mostly well researched, reports, Diego Pacheco stressed the symbolic importance of Nishizaka for the history of martyrs in Japan. According to Imai's testimony, this potential could only be realized through the edification of an extraordinary building. The act of constructing an actual physical landmark was thus crucial in itself, as it underpinned the historical "fact" of the incident, and it gave it flesh (consistence) in the context of post-war Japan. In order to properly perform this function, the building could not be a simple place where diverse objects were displayed. From the outset, it was conceived as an actual "lieu de mémoire," via the reification of the martyrs.

Description of the Museum

To better understand this, I will provide a quick description of the actual appearance of the museum, before returning to its building process. Compared to other national museums, the Twenty-six Martyrs Museum is rather small. It consists of several small rooms, whose construction interestingly blends secular and religious elements. The first big exhibition room is rectangular, with a high ceiling. Its appearance is reminiscent of a small church. Each window is decorated with stained glass honoring the Catholic saints, historically related to the Japanese Christendom. At the far end of the room a sculpture of the crucifixion of Paul Miki is hung on the center of the wall,[37] where the crucifixion of Jesus Christ would normally be located in ordinary churches. (Photo 1) The presence of display cases on each side, and not wooden benches, reminds visitors of the true nature of the hall, as a museum.

The second room is located on the upper level. It is called "special exhibition room" in Japanese (Photo 2-4) or "Eikō no ma" (栄光の間 the Room of Glory). This name, as well as the structure of this dimly lit chamber suggests that it acts more as a devotional space, dedicated to the relics of the martyrs. A relief in the form of the cross can be seen on the back of the wall. It displays words from the Bible, which are inscribed vertically

[36] Imai 1962, 86.

[37] This sculpture is made by Sawada Seikō (澤田政廣1894-1988), a Japanese sculptor famous for his Buddhists deities.

1 View of the first exhibition room. © Arikawa Yoshihiro

in Japanese and horizontally in Latin.[38] The relics here are not meant to be displayed as pure works of art, but it is rather a place of contemplation similar to those found in airports.

The following Japanese phrase can be seen on the wooden placard placed on the floor: "this Room of Glory was made in order to admire the virtues of the martyrs and their relics are put inside this altar. The motif on the altar is in the shape of the Japanese apricot blossom appearing in February in Japan, reminding us of the spiritual purity of the martyrs who died in this season."

Both sides of the room are connected to other smaller rooms, put symmetrically on the left and the right at the entrance of the room. They provide small storage spaces, akin to a closet, where the relics brought relatively recently are displayed. Even though the rooms are clearly assigned to relics, they remain somewhat modest.

[38] The text displays two formulas: "Testes Christi" (witnesses of Christ) is a very common way to describe the martyrs. See for example the sermon 335/J by Saint Augustine of Hippo, "In Die Natali Martyrum." The other is "Kami ha ainari 神は愛なり", the Japanese translation of "God is love" from 1 John, chapter 4:16 and 4:08.

2 View of the Room of Glory. © Arikawa Yoshihiro

3 View of the Room of Glory. © Arikawa Yoshihiro

4 View of the Room of Glory. © Arikawa Yoshihiro

As a whole, the way the objects are exhibited is clearly different from conventional museums. It does not aim to show the objects as cultural, artistic, or historical artifacts, with complete explanations and bright lightning, so that visitors can take an attentive look at them.

The memorandums or the explanations published by the architect himself underline the peculiar character of the museum. He says he paid more attention to the space management as a whole; not only inside the museum but as the ensemble of three monuments (the museum, a church, and a memorial shrine). Furthermore, he was primarily interested in filling the symbolic details all over the monuments, reminding of the martyrs and their meaning: a brunch of grapes, the pillar and bridge representing the act of martyr, the motifs on the mosaics and concrete wall figuring the Madonna, the Holy Spirit, and the torture inflicted upon the twenty-six...[39]

According to Imai, the raison d'être of the "Eikō no ma" was to make "people's faith burn so passionately as almost achieving the joy given by God's grace."[40] If the architecture affects the experience of the museum not only through the physical form of the building, but also as a system

[39] Imai 2009d, 190-197.

[40] Imai 2009b, 184.

of spatial perception, as Kali Tzortzi advocates,[41] the Twenty-six Martyrs Museum does succeed in strategically showing itself as the representation of a certain idea of museums that straddles a place of worship and a memorial. This idea is precisely what Imai planned from the beginning.

In 1957, at the request of the Japanese Provincial of the Society of Jesus, Pedro Arrupe (1907-1991), Imai, a famous architect who was also a professor at Waseda University, was charged with the construction of the new memorial.[42] Imai had a special emotional connection to this endeavor. He was baptized in 1948, as he converted to Catholicism after the death of his Christian wife.

In his conception of the three buildings, which were designed to represent as a whole the process of the martyr of the Twenty-six, Imai was in a way a precursor. Before ICOM gave a definition of museum building, and before the theory and method of space syntax had been developed by Hillier et al., at UCL, from the mid-1970s,[43] he tried to transfer the message of honoring the martyrs by organizing the spatial disposition of the three monuments. In doing so, he also kept a particular attention not only to the inside of the building, but also to the decorations outside.

Seeing the Relics – The Museum as a Reliquary

The construction process in itself also suggests that the structure was first imagined as a means to store a very particular type of memorial artifact, the relics of martyrs. After Imai's nomination, the planning process went through drastic changes more than ten times.[44] When the fourth plan was proposed in 1959, an underground hall was designed. With the next plan, in the same year, this space was expected to act as something similar to the Roman catacombs, one of the main sources of relics in the history of Catholicism. The idea was scrapped in the seventh plan, and it was decided that a chapel dedicated to the Roman martyrs would take the place of the catacombs.

[41] Tzortzi 2015, 2. On the links between architecture and the "sacred" in the context of museums, see Buggeln 2017.

[42] Imai 2009c, 159. On the process, and also the fund-raising conducted in Mexico for the Church and Museum, see Arimura 2014.

[43] Tzortzi 2015, 3-4.

[44] Imai 2009c, 162.

However, by the end of the year, the idea of an underground part was wholly abandoned,[45] due to a lack of funds.[46] Here is what Imai said on the original plan and the meaning of the subterranean part:

> (A catacomb) was supposed to be installed right beneath the room housing the relics of the Japanese twenty-six martyrs. It was meant to be a spiritual intersection of the martyrs between the East and the West. A ray of light was planned to illuminate the space commemorating the Roman martyrs through the floor of the Japanese martyrs' room.[47]

This symbolic structure was important to Imai. Even after it became clear that the underground part would not be built, he still hoped to decorate the ceiling with meticulously drawn motifs of the Roman martyrs. He was also forced to give this idea up for financial reasons.[48]

The idea of the Roman catacombs was probably proposed by Diego Pacheco. Kenji Imai was very close to Pacheco, who really seemed to appreciate his work and enthusiasm. Pacheco even said jokingly that the architect was the twenty-seventh martyr.[49]

Despite the fact that no actual catacombs were built, Pacheco still considered that the space inside the museum could be likened to the catacombs as a whole. This can be deduced from the fact that he later wrote that the decorations were made to recall the atmosphere of the catacombs, in order to encourage prayer.[50]

Pacheco was also responsible for gathering the actual content of the museum. He traveled in Europe and South America in order to conduct research related to the twenty-six and obtained the first objects which were exhibited inside.[51] Most of them were in fact relics. Indeed several of such holy remains are exhibited in the museum. They can be seen not only in the special exhibition room but also in the biggest exhibition room on the ground floor with other historical materials. Most of them have been brought from overseas (Europe and South America) and must have

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45 Imai 2009c, 162.

46 Idem, 167.

47 *Ibid.*

48 *Ibid.*

49 Imai 2009a, 201.

50 "The interior of the building is an invitation to prayer – It recreates at places the close atmosphere of the catacombs, while rising and expanding everywhere else, the way a hymn ascends into heaven." Pacheco 1981, 17.

51 The article on March 1st 1962 of the journal "Catholic Kyōho カトリック教報", and on January first of 1963 of the same journal, reproduced in Muranaka 1997, 60-61 and 65.

been collected not only with Pacheco's effort, but also are drawn from the accumulation of the objects collected by the hands of the missionaries who came to this place.

The word "Relic" may be today used as a metaphor of fossilized historical objects exposed in museums, but its original meaning in Christian theological context is the remains of a person who died as a saint. The most common, and important, relics are corporal remains, but sometimes relics can take the form of objects closely related to the saint, such as his clothes.[52] Relics are believed to have a miraculous power brought from the virtue of the saints, as they were sanctified through their contact with them. Therefore, from antiquity, a large cult developed around them, especially in areas under the influence of Christendom.[53] The relics of certain powerful saints were believed to have special powers, such as healing and prosperity, and served as the focus of many pilgrimages. They even became the object of theft and were sold at high prices, especially during medieval times.[54]

After the Reformation, the cult and the devotion of saints' relics became the target of scathing criticism from Protestants, who perceived such objects as mere superstition. However, among the Catholic devotion to the relics was renewed with the appearance of new contemporary martyrs in overseas territories where Catholic evangelization had been conducted.[55] Relics brought from Japan were, hence, extremely popular among the Catholics in Europe, especially after the widely reported execution of the twenty-six in 1597. Even the Bavarian king strongly desired them.[56] While most of the relics in Japan were destroyed, the ones brought overseas remained as objects of passionate devotion throughout the early modern times.[57]

In Asia, the relic of the Japanese martyrs are conserved mainly in Macao and Manilla. In Macao, apparently there were ceremonies devoted to the relics themselves in the seventeenth century.[58] In Manilla, there

[52] George 2013, 33-39.

[53] Herrmann-Mascard 1975, 13-21.

[54] Geary 1990.

[55] Županov 2005.

[56] von Collani 2009, 92-104.

[57] The devotion to the relics of the three Japanese Jesuits among the twenty-six – Paulus Micki (Miki), Jacobus Ghisai (Kisai), and Joannes Goto – was especially obvious among the Jesuits. The ceremonies conducted at the Chiesa del Gesù in Rome are a good example. Omata Rappo 2017a.

[58] Archivio di Propaganda de Fide, Rome, SOCG. vol. 226, f. 161r-162r (copie f. 183r-184r).

was a procession held at Quinquagesima in 1630, which was organized not only by the Jesuits, but also by the Dominicans, the Franciscans, and the Augustinians there to celebrate the beatification of the twenty-six martyrs in 1627. The Jesuits exposed at this occasion the relics of their three Japanese martyrs, brought from Japan, and authenticated by Pedro Morejón.[59]

Many of the relics found in the Twenty-six Martyrs Museum were transferred from those places to Japan. For example, the ones contained in the reliquary, which used to belong to Bernard-Thadée Petitjean, were taken from the above-mentioned collection in Manilla in 1870.[60] The first relics from Macao were sent by the Bishop of the city, Paulo José Tavares (1920-1973) directly to the first director of the museum, Diego Pacheco on June 10, 1963, to celebrate the opening of the museum.[61] They were preserved in the small silver box, which is now placed in the small storage room next to the Room of Glory.

Collecting Relics

Diego Pacheco persistently tried to regain a part of the Japanese relics from Macao. In parallel with such efforts, he continued his research on the relics whose identity was not clear. He especially focused on the rest of the bones that were mixed up after the fire of the Cathedral of São Paulo in 1835.[62] The relics were transferred to the Santo António Church and in 1974 again to the Cathedral of S. Francisco Xavier on the island of Coloane.[63] As Tang Kaijian has remarked, martyr relics constituted a crucial part of the identity of the population in Macao.[64] In a way, they were cultural treasures of the town. In 1995, Diego Pacheco succeeded, despite opposition in Macao, in bringing fifty-nine relics conserved on the island of Coloane. This happened right before the restitution of the Portuguese colony to the Republic of China.[65]

On the occasion of the beatification of 188 martyrs in Japan in 2008, new relics were again offered to the museum. After this event, the collection

[59] Murillo Velarde 1939, 291-292.

[60] Marnas 1897, 200-201, note 2.

[61] Pacheco 1995, 1-2.

[62] On this, see Teixeira 1993, 35-36.

[63] Montalto de Jesus 1902, 50.

[64] Tang 2016. For a list of the relics of Japanese martyrs preserved in Macao, see 127-128.

[65] See the article of January 12th 1995, in the "Nagasaki Shinbun 長崎新聞" (Nagasaki News), and the article of February 5th 1995, in the "Yomiuri Shinbun 読売新聞" (Daily Yomiuri).

continued to grow, with donations from the Ainoura Church, the Shimabara Church, the Order of the Blessed martyrs of Korea in Macao, and the chapel of the Apostolic Nunciature in Japan.

While most of the relics in the museum came from Asia, some of them are of European origin. This is the case of a tissue which absorbed the blood of the twenty-six martyrs.[66] The Japanese caption introduces the analysis of scientists, saying it is human blood dating surely back to four hundred years ago. The English text indicates the existence of historical records, according to which many people collected blood of the martyrs at their death.[67] This item was first conserved in the old Marchena Jesuit College in Spain.[68] A reliquary with the bones of one the first canonized Japanese Jesuit, Jacob Kisai, is also said to be of Spanish origin.[69]

This policy of the museum can be explained as follows. By collecting relics from all over Asia, and especially places linked to the Catholic mission, the museum acts as a nexus linking all their histories together under the sign of the martyrs. In some cases, this was even extended to Europe. This process of collecting and recollecting relics related to the Japanese Christendom is also reminiscent of the practices of the missionaries in the modern period. Before the total interdiction of Christendom in Japan, the relics of "martyrs" were collected in the Church of "Todos os Santos" in Nagasaki.[70] Such a gathering of contemporary relics in the same place was a common strategy in Portuguese colonial cities such as Goa and Macao. Ines Županov has analyzed such efforts, establishing that they created new "topoi" for these places, as "reliquary cities ("ville reliquaire") through powerful relics.[71]

In the first half of the 17th century, relics operated, in Nagasaki, as a sacred capital, or in other words, as objects which distribute a physically represented virtue. As Pierre-Antoine Fabre has described it, the particularity of the relics as sanctified objects resides in their capacity of

[66] This tissue is also introduced in the official catalog of the museum. Pacheco 2004, 27.

[67] The captions for the objects in the museum have often different explanations in English and in Japanese. The records mentioned in the caption are mostly based on Froís and Ribadeneira.

[68] Marchena was one of the centers of the Inner Mission in Spain. Copete and Bernard 2007, 261-285.

[69] There is also a photo in the official website: http://www.26martyrs.com (the page named "our treasures").

[70] Omata Rappo 2017c.

[71] Županov 2009, 705-729.

proliferation without losing their spiritual and symbolic value.[72] They still have a comparable function today, as seen thought the Twenty-six Martyrs Museum.

Enshrining/Displaying the Relics

Relics are different from the obviously holy objects with symbolic appearance like crosses for Christians. They lack the evident physical features which would distinguish them from normal objects, at least on the purely visual level. As Cynthia Hahn has indicated, *relics are defined through the recognition by some audience of the presence of power that leads to a certain desirability.*[73] Other than the labels, which identify the saint to whom the relics belong,[74] this most potent way to obtain this kind of recognition lies first and foremost in the reliquary. Such items take most of the time the form of elaborated works of arts, using precious materials (and some can be seen in the museum).[75] However, here, the museum as a whole also functions as a huge reliquary. It not only provides the labels and the precious boxes containing the relics, but it also gives form to the historical context which authenticates their value. In fact, without such context, the relics would remain nothing but a ordinary human remains.[76]

The way to exhibit the relics as "historical objects" in this museum can be understood as an ambitious attempt to create a new museological discourse. The relics are not placed on altars, as they would have been in a church. Instead, they are displayed together with a series of other items, which are generally considered to be more normal historical evidences, such as hand-written/printed old documents and archeologically unearthed objects through local fieldwork. This scientific mise-en-scene becomes a new altar; at once, this placement authenticates the displayed relics, while keeping their devotional nature.

This can be seen with the display of an archeological discovery realized in 1965, in Koboshiura, a place located in the Kameura village in Nagasaki. It was a box containing a copperplate engraved in the seventeenth century

[72] Fabre 2009, 669-696.

[73] Hahn 2010, 284-316.

[74] See below, 15.

[75] Hahn 2012, 9.

[76] In the above-mentioned, fascinating article, Pierre-Antoine Fabre analyzed the relics of the Sant Ignazio church, whose original providers were quickly forgotten. Fabre 2009.

and the remains of martyrs executed in 1624.[77] The victims, Tomás Shigorō and his son Domingo were servants to a Spanish Franciscan priest, Francisco de Santa María.[78] This archeological research was conducted by Diego Pacheco and he proved the identification with historical documents.[79] The ensemble of the plate and the remains was exhibited as "The only Martyr Relics that remained in Japan."

In the exhibition, this juxtaposition between the artifact and the label identifying the relics and the place where it was found is crucial. It acts as what is called an "étiquette," which is a label attesting of the authenticity of relics.[80] Such issues became prominent in the history of Christianity after the Reformation, when critics against the value of relics forced the Catholics to find new ways to assert their validity.[81] The same care for historical evidence can also be seen in the box containing relics received recently from Macao (Photo 5-6), where the saintly remains are accompanied with an attestation provided by the donor and signed by the recipient.

5 & 6 Relics of the Room of Glory © Arikawa Yoshihiro

77 Here is a translation of the Spanish caption: "Inside this box are the blessed martyrs are Shigorō Zaemon Tomasu, 72 years of age, and his son Yōsuke Domingo, 37. They were decapitated on the 17th day of the seventh month of 1624, in a village belonging to the Ōmura family, because they refused to abandon their religion. Number 12. This box belongs to the Order of San Dominico in Japan."

78 Their name is recorded in a manuscript found in the Pastrana Archives (caj. 32, leg. 3.), a letter from Francisco de Santa María. "Tomás; Fachizo. degollado en Omura en el mes de Junio de 1625, Tomás y Domingo," edited in Pérez 1914, 338.

79 Pacheco and Katō 1966.

80 George 2013, 101.

81 Olds 2012, 135-184.

The double nature of the museum appears here clearly. It is not a simple reliquary designed for displaying the relics to the devotion of the public. The exhibition itself also serves to further attest to the authenticity of its contents. In fact, by putting some relics whose origins can be historically proved next to others, whose provenance can be more vague, the museum succeeds in creating an impression of sanctity that encompasses all of the objects displayed inside it. This process is quite akin to the fact that items displayed behind glass in traditional museums seem to acquire an additional value, either on the artistic or historic level.[82] In the Museum of the Twenty-six Martyrs, all objects – relics from Macao or Europe, archeological items found in Japan, copies of paintings… – are connected in a complex symbolic network where they are not only linked to each as "traces" of the martyrs, but are also integrated to the larger history of Christianity in Japan.

A Museum between Temple and Public Space

Relics have actually been a litigious subject in studies in Museology in recent years. In the West, under the influence of the Enlightenment, museums were for a long time expected to be secularized and the objects inside used to be considered as being desacralized from the point of view of the devotees, which questioned the conventional methodology of the exhibition.[83] This kind of "secularization" was sometimes interpreted as a deliberate violence to the Church from the government and constituted a symbolic political action.[84]

This does not, however, mean that all museums have denied any religious value to the objects inside them.[85] In fact, studies from the late 20th century onwards have largely shown that the function of museums should not be seen as a simple de-contextualisation of objects. Such institutions create, through their collections and their curating, a meta-narrative "through which society constructs its own idea of knowledge and reality."[86] This has more to do with ritualizing, giving new significance to the objects, and integrating them through social, political, and cultural

[82] Hooper-Greenhill 2000, 103-123.

[83] Gaskell 2003, 148-162.

[84] It was the case of the museums under the communist regime, see for example Wynot 2004.

[85] Some actively promote it. For an example, see Arthur 2000. This also shows that, even in the West, some institutions blur the lines between museums and places of worship in a similar way to the Twenty-six martyrs Museum.

[86] On this see the classic study by Pearce 1992.

mechanisms.[87] Inside this new point of view, museums can even be seen as a new type of "temple" or "shrine," which gives a cultural, political, or social value to the objects inside them.[88]

As a reaction to a perceived over-secularization of museums, opinions have also risen stating that denying the "religiosity" of certain objects is an assault, especially in the case of objects obtained from people or countries who had already suffered in history.[89] However, the exact boundary between "religious" (or "sacred") and "secular" cannot be applied easily, especially when it comes to the "religious" practice outside the contemporary European or American cultures.[90] These categories themselves were given birth in parallel with the separation of the Nation and the Churches, which started in eighteenth century Europe.[91] A good example of this discrepancy today can be seen through the Japanese situation. In the country, the secular and religious domains are not clearly separated, as Crispin Paine has observed.[92] The legal situation of museums in Japan underlines the vagueness of their condition.

In Japan, more than eighty percent of the museums are not granted official status as registered museums based on the Law of Museums (*Hakubutsukan-hō* 博物館法). In fact, even many public museums are juridically considered as "Hakubutsukan sōtō shisetsu (博物館相当施設)," which literally means "institutions equivalent to museums." This status allows them to pursue profit.[93] The Law of Museum also defines museums as institutions which provide the public with historic, artistic, folkloric, industrial, and scientific materials and information on pedagogic purposes, with pursuing at the same time academic research based on their materials. The Law concerns only properly registered museums.

The Twenty-six Martyrs Museum is not strictly speaking a museum. It is classified outside the above-mentioned categories, as it is officially a "Hakubutsukan ruiji shisetu (博物館類似施設)," an "institution similar (and not equivalent) to museums." Therefore it is, like many similar facilities in Japan, not juridically categorized as a museum. In other words, such

87 Duncan 2005, 78-88.

88 Duncan 1995, 8.

89 Paine 2013, 78. On the treatment of non-Western objects in the West, see, for example, Ames 1994.

90 Durrans 2000, 57-70.

91 Borgeaud 2005, 7-12.

92 Crispin Paine 2013, 68-69.

93 The famous Tokyo National Museum, or Tōhaku, and the National Museum of Western Art are also classified in this category. Kanayama 2001, 201.

institutions benefit from a special legal position outside the jurisdiction of the Law. They are therefore independent from governmental guidance or public finances. The Twenty-six Martyrs Museum is therefore not bound to the rigid legislative restrictions that define the practices of official institutions.

In fact, its official name in Japanese, "Nihon nijūroku seijin kinenkan (日本二十六聖人記念館)" literally stands for "Memorial of the Twenty-six Martyrs of Japan." In its essence, the legal position of this institution itself frees it from the ordinary role of museums, which is limited to educational or pedagogic objectives. Being independent from the Japanese government, it does also not reflect its official message on several issues, and is not directly affected by national propaganda or even the general social demand of secularization. It thus allowed it to create its own meta-narrative through its collection, focused not only on history, but also on the martyrdom of the Twenty-six as a religious experience.

When the construction of the museum was planned, right after the war, it was expected to be a "national" institution.[94] This can still be seen in its official Japanese name. However, according to a newspaper article from 1958, the Company of Jesus offered its cooperation for the construction of the monuments commemorating the martyrs. It was the Jesuits who proposed the construction of the museum in addition to the monument, which would also serve as "a simple place of worship for the visitors."[95] They had already planned to gather and exhibit objects related to the martyrs. As a consequence, the Company agreed to share the financial burden with Nagasaki city.[96] Indeed, the architect chosen by the Jesuits, Kenji Imai's understanding of this construction indicates clearly its primal object:

> In the museum, several written documents and objects on the saints will be exhibited and it is supposed to be a place where one understands them or reads about them. In my understanding, the museum is thus the place where the twenty-six saints live.[97]

[94] Article from the "Catholic Kyōhō (Catholic journal)," June 15th, 1948, cited in Muranaka 1997, 51.

[95] Article from the "Nagasaki min'yū shinbun 長崎民友新聞 (Nagasaki popular news)", November 5th, 1958, reproduced in *Ibid*., 57.

[96] Article from the "Katorikku shinbun カトリック新聞 (Catholic news)", March 1st 1959, reproduced in Ibid., 57.

[97] Imai 2009d, 195.

From its beginnings, the museum was more than a reliquary. It was conceived as a spiritual journey, where each room, item, and image remind the visitor of the heroic deeds of Japanese Christians and missionaries. A recent study of the early planning manuscripts of the complex proves that Imai wanted to render the visit to reflect the prayer of the rosary. The circulation between the rooms was also designed to evoke the road of the martyrs.[98]

The process of the visit as it was conceived by Imai is very similar to the description of the Jesuit Noviciate in Rome given by the famous French Jesuit Louis Richeome (1544-1625), in his "*Spiritual Painting.*"[99] This book is constructed as a journey through a Roman building, which was supposed to be the central pedagogic institution for the Jesuits at that time. The author meticulously describes the images present in each room one by one in order to invite readers to embark on a "spiritual journey" through imagination and visualization of the images of martyrs. The building described in the book itself was designed as a concrete application of the "*Spiritual Exercises*" of Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesuits. Imai, himself was influenced by the "*Spiritual Exercises*."[100] In the light of this, the Twenty-six Martyrs Museum can be seen, in its essence, as a contemporary realization of Richeome's spiritual journey. The attempts seen in the last few years to register Nishizaka as a National Sanctuary, or as an official pilgrimage spot, are in harmony with the architect's ultimate vision.[101]

Museum as a "Lieu de Mémoire"

Another important dimension of the museum is that it is also connected to what is certainly the most tragic event in the history of Nagasaki. Pierre Nora has described museums as a one of the possible "lieux de mémoire" (memory sites.)[102] In the Twenty-six Martyrs Museum this role is primarily accomplished through the relics. These artifacts are indeed "objects of memory,"[103] but they also directly embody, through their appearance, the spirit of the act of martyr, the ultimate sacrifice.[104]

98 Hara and Ishikawa 2010, 1247-1254.

99 About this book, see Loach 2013, 153-171.

100 Agematsu 2012, 260.

101 *Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan* 2012, 2.

102 Pierre Nora 1997.

103 Borgeaud 2005.

104 On this, see Fabre 1992.

In the context of Nagasaki, the structure of the museum, the church and the monument can also be seen as a perfect embodiment on Nora's idea. It appropriates and reconnects with the Christian past of the town, repositioning its memories in both a symbolic and devotional sense. It also shares many characteristics with the small scale local museum, as outlined in Amy K. Levin's work. The role of such institutions can be understood as contributing to the formation of the local identities of specific communities.[105]

In fact, the history of the martyrdom of the Christian communities in Nagasaki suffered from three acts of neglect and discrimination through the history. First, it was perceived as a dangerous "heresy" under the Edo shogunate regime, until (including) the beginning of the Meiji period.[106] The glory of the "martyrs" was therefore neither recorded in the mainstream Japanese historical sources, nor was it remembered as a part of the national narrative.[107] Second, the people living in the central Christian community in Urakami village had a tendency to be segregated from the rest of the population. Third, because the atom bomb fell precisely on the Cathedral of Urakami, after World War II, Christians were perceived negatively, as victims of a "divine punishment."[108]

The memorial process conducted through this structure was thus not limited to the Christian past of the town of Nagasaki; rather, it also evoked its status as a martyr city during the Second World War. The dropping of the atom bomb was explicitly linked to the tragedies of the Japanese martyrs by Catholics in Japan.[109] The lack of an obvious monument of the A-bomb, contrary to the situation in Hiroshima, caused new trauma for the bomb victims.[110] Moreover, the Christian aspect of the city was also voluntarily linked to a certain rhetoric of internationalism.[111] The victims of the A-bomb were elevated to the rank of the "precious sacrifices" ("Hansai 燔祭" in Japanese, which was literally the translation of the term "Holocaust") in an extremely influential novel written by Nagai Takashi (永

[105] Levin 2007, 9-26.

[106] The discourses on martyrs remained mainly historical descriptions given from the Western point of view. See Omata Rappo 2016; 2018.

[107] On this see Omata Rappo 2017b.

[108] In fact, only the Urakami area was destroyed by the bomb, and not the rest of the city. On this issue, and the discrimination problem, see Okamoto 2011.

[109] Wetmore 2002, 103-119.

[110] Schoenberger 1989, 1, 8, 9.

[111] Diehl 2014, 497-516.

井隆1908-1951), who was a victim himself.[112] This expression is, in spite of the protestations of many Japanese philosophers and intellectuals, still widely used in relation to the "Martyrs"' History of Nagasaki.[113]

The museum, the monument and the twenty-six martyrs are thus products of an extremely complex process, resulting from the association of several memorial discourses. With its composite nature as both a place of worship and as a museum and a "lieu de mémoire," it aimed at reconnecting the Japanese Christianity with its largely forgotten history. This structure also, and perhaps more crucially, contributes, although indirectly, to the identification of the city of Nagasaki as the ultimate personification of the act of martyr, through both the persecutions of the modern Era and the Atom bomb of 1945. While the museum itself does not clearly state this connection with the A-bomb, Pope John-Paul II did so in his speech when he visited Nagasaki in 1982.[114]

Recently, most Western museums have been challenged by the problem of dealing with "religious (or sacred) objects" disconnected from their original contexts.[115] However, the Twenty-six Martyrs Museum easily breaks through this barrier. It has done this by becoming a religious context in itself, which stands at the crossroads of Japan and the rest of the world.[116] In Japan there has not been a universal application of the typically European, and especially, French concepts of laicity, and the concept of religion itself was an import from the West.[117] While most visitors may not perceive the building as church, the Twenty-six Martyrs Museum acts both as a site of learning and of contemplation. At the same time it is part of a pilgrimage and provides visitors with a place of worship. By creating this kind of hybrid structure, the Jesuits have found the best way not only to have it accepted, but also for it to acquire meaning in the Japanese context, and even beyond.

[112] *Nagasaki no Kane* 長崎の鐘, published in 1949 (English translation, *The Bells of Nagasaki*, by William Johnston, Kodansha International 1994). See also Shijo 2015, 41-57.

[113] Shijo 2012, 19-33, note 1.

[114] On the visit, see Yamauchi 2005.

[115] Grimes 1992, 419-430.

[116] However, the Museum does not abandon its academic function. In a similar way to the recreated sacred altars in Western museums, it thus blurs the boundaries between history, anthropological approach, devotion and museological concerns. On this type of exhibition, see Nooter Roberts 2017.

[117] On this issue, see Josephson 2012.

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