

Proselytization and Persecution:
Fumi-e in the encounter between Christianity and Japan

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Introduction

Fumi-e

Christianity was first introduced to Japan in 1549 by the Jesuit missionary Francesco Xavier.¹ It coincided with a tumultuous period in Japanese history that saw civil war and efforts for unification, culminating in the establishment of the Tokugawa bakufu in 1603.² Despite the initial success of the mission, in 1614 all Christian missionaries were banished from Japan, and Christianity was outlawed and persecuted.³

This thesis will focus on a set of items that was used in this persecution, called *fumi-e*, ‘trample image’. These items featured images that Christians would perceive as holy, such as images of Jesus Christ, saints or the Virgin Mary. Suspected Christians would be forced to step on these images, because it was believed that secret Christians would reveal themselves by refusing or showing hesitance to trample a holy image.⁴

The case study of this thesis will be an extant *fumi-e*, currently in the collection of the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde (Museum of Ethnology) in Leiden, The Netherlands. Throughout this thesis, it will be referred to as ‘the Volkenkunde *fumi-e*’.

Literature review

The history of Christianity in Japan has been the subject of scholarship for many years. The most authoritative authors on the Christian presence in Japan are Masaharu Anesaki⁵, Charles Boxer⁶ and George Elison⁷, whose detailed historical work is invaluable for anyone studying this topic. The work of the Jesuits and their methods of adaptation has been covered by McCall,⁸ Andrew Ross⁹, J. F. Moran¹⁰, and Michael Cooper¹¹, while the side of the Japanese persecution is covered by Akio Okada¹² (who has done most Japanese-language work on *fumi-e*) and Peter Nosco¹³. The Christians who went ‘underground’ during the persecution, better known as *kakure kirishitan*, have been studied by Stephen Turnbull¹⁴, Ikuo

¹ Boxer, C.R. *The Christian Century in Japan, 1549-1650*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), 45.

² Asao, Naohiro. "The Sixteenth-century Unification." *The Cambridge History of Japan*. (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 94.

³ Boxer, *Christian Century*, 327. Chapter 3 of this thesis provides a more detailed history of Christianity and its persecution in Japan.

⁴ Kaufmann, Thomas DaCosta. „Interpreting Cultural Transfer and the Consequences of Markets and Exchange: Reconsidering Fumi-e,” in *Artistic and Cultural Exchanges Between Europe and Asia, 1400-1900. Rethinking Markets, Workshops and Collections*, ed. Michael North. (Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2010), 141.

⁵ Anesaki, Masaharu. "Prosecution of Kirishitans after the Shimabara Insurrection." *Monumenta Nipponica* 1, no. 2 (1938): 293-300.

⁶ Boxer, C.R. *The Christian Century in Japan*

⁷ Elison, George. *Deus Destroyed : The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).

⁸ McCall, John E. "Early Jesuit Art in the Far East." *Artibus Asiae* 10, no. 3 (1947).

⁹ Ross, Andrew C. *A Vision Betrayed: The Jesuits in Japan and China, 1542-1742*. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994).

¹⁰ Moran, J.F. *The Japanese and the Jesuits: Alessandro Valignano in Sixteenth-century Japan*. (London: Routledge, 1993).

¹¹ Cooper, Michael. *Rodrigues the Interpreter : An Early Jesuit in Japan and China*. (New York: Weatherhill, 1974).

¹² Okada, Akio. *Fumi-e ni tsuite*. (Tokyo: Kirishitan Bunka Kenkyugo, 1944).

¹³ Nosco, Peter. "Keeping the faith: *bakuhan* policy towards religions in seventeenth-century Japan," *Religion in Japan : Arrows to Heaven and Earth*, ed. Peter Kornicki and James McMullen. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹⁴ Turnbull, Stephen. *The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan: A Study of Their Development, Beliefs and Rituals to the Present Day*. (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998).

Higashibaba¹⁵, and Cristal Whelan.¹⁶ Material culture involved in the encounter between Europeans and Japanese has been covered by Alexander Gauvin Bailey¹⁷, Yoshitomo Okamoto,¹⁸ Michael Cooper¹⁹ and John McCall.²⁰

More recent scholarship, that tends to take a more interdisciplinary approach, includes Suharu Ogawa on the art of *kakure kirishitan*²¹, Curvelo on the adaption of *nanban* culture,²² Noriko Kotani on Japanese Jesuit art²³, and James Morris on the persecution as a form of government surveillance.²⁴ In English-language academia, *fumi-e* have not yet been closely studied by anyone other than Thomas Da Costa Kaufmann, so his work will be used extensively in this thesis.²⁵

These authors generally tend to view culture not as a static, unchangeable thing, but instead explore the mutual influences and inner processes that constantly change cultures. Although they do not all use this term, this way of viewing cultural interactions fits with the concept of transculturality.

Transculturality

Transculturality is a concept that rejects the idea of cultures as fixed or static, and inherently bound to a nation or ethnic group. Instead it sees culture as a construct that is constantly renegotiated and subject to both change from within as well as influences from outside. Under this concept, culture is not an unchangeable set of customs, ideas and artefacts, but rather the process of assigning different meanings and identities to them.²⁶

The term 'transculturation' was introduced in the 1940s by Fernando Ortiz who wrote about cultural mixing on Cuba.²⁷ He observed that the process of cultural mixing was more like a transformation than adaptation.²⁸ The German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch took this idea further in the 1990s, claiming that 'transculturality' is a necessary concept to study modern societies, which through globalization have become so mixed that traditional ideas of culture no longer apply.²⁹ The use of this concept in historical research has been described by Monica Juneja. She describes transculturation as "denoting a process of transformation that unfolds

¹⁵ Higashibaba, Ikuo. *Christianity in Early Modern Japan: Kirishitan Belief and Practice*. (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

¹⁶ Whelan, Cristal. *The Beginning of Heaven and Earth - The Sacred Book of Japan's Hidden Christians*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996).

¹⁷ Bailey, Gauvin Alexander. *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542-1773*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

¹⁸ Okamoto, Yoshitomo. *The Namban Art of Japan*. Heibonsha Survey of Japanese Art; 19. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1972).

¹⁹ Cooper, *The Southern Barbarians*.

²⁰ McCall, John E. "Early Jesuit Art in the Far East." *Artibus Asiae* 10, no. 3 (1947).

²¹ Ogawa, Suharu. "Surrender or Subversion? Contextual and Theoretical Analysis of the Paintings by Japan's Hidden Christians, 1640–1873." (Diss., University of Cincinnati, 2010).

²² Curvelo, Alexandra. "The Disruptive Presence of the Namban-jin in Early Modern Japan." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 55, no. 2-3 (2012): 581-602.

²³ Kotani, Noriko. "Studies in Jesuit Art in Japan." (Diss., Princeton University, 2010).

²⁴ Morris, James. "Anti-Kirishitan Surveillance in Early Modern Japan." *Surveillance & Society* 16, no. 4 (2018).

²⁵ Kaufman, "Reconsidering Fumi-e," and Kaufmann, Thomas DaCosta. *Toward a Geography of Art*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

²⁶ Juneja, Monica, Christian Kravagna, "Understanding Transculturalism," in *Transcultural Modernisms*, ed. Fahim Amir, Eva Egermann et al. (Vienna: Sternberg Press, 2013).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁸ Juneja, Monica, Christian Kravagna, "Understanding Transculturalism," in *Transcultural Modernisms*, ed. Fahim Amir, Eva Egermann et al. (Vienna: Sternberg Press, 2013), 23.

²⁹ Welsch, Wolfgang. "Transculturality – the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today," *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, ed. Mike Featherstone (London: Sage, 1999).

through extended contacts and relationships between cultures.”³⁰ The theory of transculturality “aims to investigate the multiple ways in which difference is negotiated within contacts and encounters, through selective appropriation, mediation, translation, re-historicizing and rereading of signs, alternatively through non-communication, rejection or resistance -or through a succession/coexistence of any of these.”³¹ Thus, rejection and resistance as negotiations of difference are also part of the transcultural process.

Terms that are often used to convey a similar meaning, like ‘intercultural’ or ‘multicultural’, still adhere to the notion that cultures are singular and strictly divided, instead of being able to mix and transform.³² ‘Hybrid’ is often used to describe artwork or objects that show influences from multiple cultures, but this term implies that there are ‘originals’, of which the hybrid object is a bastardization.³³ It perpetuates a notion of purity that is impossible to maintain when critically looking at the development of art and culture.

When applied to the history of Christianity in Japan, the concept of transculturality can help to look beyond traditional limiting notions of cultural ‘purity’. The remnants of European culture, like the art of the *fumi-e* or the traditions of the *kakure kirishitan*, are then not seen as singular, unconnected fossils of a rejected culture, but rather as aspects of that culture that have been incorporated into and transformed the ‘host’ culture. The perspective of transculturality makes it possible to move beyond the narrative of the ‘culture clash’ and opens up different interpretations of historical events and items.

Considering the above, the terms I will use in this thesis are ‘cultural mixing’, ‘cultural exchange’ and ‘cultural interaction’ for the process of encounter and mutual influence, and ‘transcultural’ for the objects and concepts that are the result of that encounter.

Transculturality may be romanticized into the belief that cultural differences can be peacefully resolved and globalization leads to cosmopolitan and open-minded societies.³⁴ However, interaction with other cultures does not automatically lead to positive adaptation and transformation, and differences are asserted to construct identities.³⁵ This negotiation of differences can be violent. It is the “rejection and resistance” mentioned by Monica Juneja³⁶ that this thesis focuses on. Christianity was rejected by the Tokugawa shōgunate, and my aim is to show how -despite this rejection- European culture, Christianity and the persecution influenced and transformed society, thereby forming a transcultural process.

Research question and methodology

My question in this thesis is: How do *fumi-e*, and in particular the Volkenkunde *fumi-e*, illustrate the transcultural process of the encounter between Christianity and Japan?

To answer this question, I will start with analysing the Volkenkunde *fumi-e*, and in consecutive chapters place it in a larger context. This will allow me to explore the various influences on the item itself, its function within the persecution, and the effects of this persecution as a whole.

³⁰ Juneja, “Understanding Transculturalism,” 24.

³¹ Ibid., 25.

³² Welsch, “Transculturality,” 194-213.

³³ Juneja, “Understanding Transculturalism,” 28.

³⁴ Juneja, “Understanding Transculturalism,” 32.

³⁵ Ibid., 32.

³⁶ Ibid., 25.

The first chapter will be an analysis of this *fumi-e* according to the methods proposed by Erwin Panofsky, David Summers and Megan Winget. This allows the *fumi-e* to be studied as an object by itself, and study the different layers of meaning it has in different contexts. The second chapter will delve more deeply into the development of *fumi-e* and how they were used in the persecution, as well as explore how European and European-style art were received in Japan both during and after the period when the missionaries were active. This shows the many different influences on the visual appearance of the *fumi-e*, making it a transcultural object. The third chapter will give a brief history of Christianity and its persecution in Japan, to illustrate the political motives behind the persecution. It will outline the lasting influence of the persecution, both on Japan's social structure as well as its notions of identity. This will support the argument that the transcultural process of cultural interaction and exchange occurs also in circumstances of rejection and persecution.

Chapter 1: Analysis of the Volkenkunde *fumi-e*

Introduction to Panofsky's method

Erwin Panofsky is an influential and contentious figure in the field of art history and the analysis of artworks, whose method of 'iconological analysis' of art provides a systematic approach to analyse the layers of meaning in artworks. It has been accused of being Eurocentric, because it was developed with Southern European Renaissance art in mind and works best with artworks from that place and period.³⁷ However, the clear structure of his method is helpful to systematically deconstruct the *fumi-e*.

According to Panofsky, the way art is observed and understood is dependent on the observer's frame of reference. It requires knowledge of conventions that were used in the creation of the image, not just the individual perception of 'how it looks'. Every viewer will observe an artwork differently, based on their knowledge of history, symbolism, and other artistic conventions. Descriptions of art should therefore be based 'not on the immediate perception of a given object within the picture, but on the knowledge of general principles of depiction, that include an understanding of style which only a historical consciousness could have provided.'³⁸

He divides three levels of analysis; formal (relating to the form of the picture), iconographical (the subject of the picture) and iconological (the meaning of the picture). Megan Winget, in her commentary on Panofsky's method, describes these steps as the 'generic of', 'specific of', and 'about'.³⁹

As Winget argues, only focusing on an image's subject is not enough to understand the meaning of the complete artwork, and makes it impossible to consider artworks that do not fit with 'narrative-based, representational imagery'.⁴⁰

Therefore, Panofsky's method is useful to analyse the image on the *fumi-e*, but limited when it comes to analysing the entire object. Therefore, the best approach to analysing the *fumi-e* is a combination of Panofsky's iconological analysis with the more contextual view of Summers and Winget.

³⁷ Winget, Megan. "Describing Art: An Alternative Approach to Subject Access and Interpretation." *Journal Of Documentation* 65, no. 6 (2009): 966-967.

³⁸ Panofsky, Erwin, Jas Elsner, and Katharina Lorenz. "On the Problem of Describing and Interpreting Works of the Visual Arts." *Critical Inquiry* 38, nr. 3 (2012): 468-469.

³⁹ Winget, "Describing Art," 962.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 964.

Formal, iconographical, and iconological analysis of the Volkenkunde *fumi-e*



Figure 1.1. The Volkenkunde *fumi-e*, frontal view. Bronze. Edo period, Japan. Courtesy of the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde. Photo by the author.



Fig. 1.3. The Volkenkunde *fumi-e*, side view. Bronze. Edo period, Japan. Courtesy of the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde. Photo by the author.



Figure 1.2. The Volkenkunde fumi-e, back view. Bronze. Edo period, Japan. Courtesy of the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde. Photo by the author.

Formal analysis

The first step, formal analysis, is intended to be an objective observation of the visual elements of the artwork, without attaching meaning to them. Completely 'pure' formal analysis is practically impossible, because that would be limited to nothing more than descriptions of shapes and colours. However, meaning can be given to these shapes and colours as long as it stays within the realm of 'habitual visual experience' that the viewer can logically be expected to have.

Recognizing these meanings is dependent on one's experience with the stylistic tradition of the artwork.⁴¹ This causes difficulties when analysing pictures from different stylistic traditions.

Extrapolating Panofsky's argument of interpretation based on experience, David Summers argues that the interpretation of an image fundamentally implies a social construct. A form possesses meaning because the viewer knows and accepts the artist's way of representing that meaning.⁴² This concept explains misinterpretations of art from different places or periods, because the viewer lacks the social context of the style used. This is relevant for the discussion in Chapter 2.

Applied to the Volkenkunde *fumi-e*, formal analysis yields the following information:

⁴¹ Panofsky, Erwin. *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 11.

⁴² Summers, David. "Real Metaphor: Towards a Redefinition of the 'Conceptual Image'," *Visual Theory. Painting and Interpretation*, ed. N. Bryson, (New York: Icon, 1991); in Winget, "Describing Art," 968.

This is an item in the collection of the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden, The Netherlands, with catalogue number RV-2984-5. It is a bronze, oblong rectangle with rounded edges, 18,5 cm long and 13,5 wide. Its height is not given by the museum, but based on personal examination it is approximately 3 cm.

In the middle of the plaque is a human figure with long hair (or a veil) and flowing robes, seated with crossed legs, holding a baby in the right arm. This appears to be a woman, based on the narrow shoulders and slender, slightly curved body. She is elevated above other human figures, seemingly on a small platform. The other figures are also dressed in flowing robes, kneeling down and looking up to the figure in the middle. Their genders are difficult to determine, due to both the simplicity of the image as well as the wear. The two figures directly left and right from the central figure are more detailed than the smaller figures behind them. The left figure wears a cloak, while the right figure has their arms folded. The central figure reaches down with her left hand, and hands a small object to the figure on the left. That figure reaches up to the object and presses it to their mouth. Below the figures are irregular triangular shapes that look like waves, and behind the central figure is a column that reaches up to the upper edge of the plaque. The image is surrounded by a slightly higher ridge. The plaque has 'feet' on all four corners and is hollow on the inside.

Iconographical analysis

Iconographical analysis delves deeper into the subject matter of the picture. By interpreting what meanings are attached to the forms that were identified in the first step, the theme or concept of the image can be identified. This step requires a familiarity with the motifs and allegories that were used in the time of creation to refer to certain themes, and which would have been familiar to the artist. That is why literary sources are necessary for this step in the interpretation. The observer needs to know what the creator of the image could realistically be familiar with, and how certain themes were conventionally portrayed in that place and time.⁴³ Panofsky distinguishes *theme* to talk about the story or concept that is depicted, and *motif* to describe the way this is visualized.⁴⁴ For example, in 16th century European art, the *motif* of a woman with a child on her lap illustrates the *theme* of the Virgin Mary.

For the Volkenkunde *fumi-e*, the provenance and historical background is known. Knowing the context of the Christian persecution, it might be tempting to jump directly to an interpretation based on Christian images. However, analysing this image as an individual object might lead to other interpretations.

In the middle is a woman with child, seated and elevated above the other figures. Knowing that the image is based on European Christian art, the first 'type' that comes to mind is the motif of Mary with the baby Jesus. But without that context, the knowledge that this artwork was made in Japan requires looking for Japanese 'types' with this motif. It could be possible that the image is purely figurative, but the composition is so unnatural that it points towards a symbolic meaning. The Volkenkunde museum gives a production date halfway the 17th century. At that time, purely figurative pictures of women were indeed popular, but they were mainly *ukiyo-e* of courtesans and beauties⁴⁵ and did not portray them on a throne holding a baby. Rather, this motif seems to fit better with Kannon, bodhisatva of compassion and fertility, specifically the Child-granting Kannon or White-robed Kannon.⁴⁶

⁴³ Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 13.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18-20.

⁴⁵ Munsterberg, Hugo. *The Arts of Japan: An Illustrated History*. (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1957), 152.

⁴⁶ Ho, Hsiu, "Guanyin Unveiled" (Diss., University of the West, 2014), 29-30, 112.



Figure 2.1 Kannon bodhisatva statue. Ceramic. Provenance unknown. Courtesy of Tokyo National Museum.



Figure 2.2 Child-granting Kannon (Maria Kannon). Porcelain. Edo period. Courtesy of Tokyo National Museum.

Because of the similarities with the Virgin Mary, Kannon statues of this type were used for worship by Japanese 'hidden' Christians during the persecution.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Foxwell, "Merciful Mother Kannon," 330.



Figure 3. White-robed Kannon (detail). Hanging scroll, ink on silk. Muromachi period. Courtesy of Tokyo National Museum.

Child-granting or White-robed Kannon is commonly depicted wearing a veil, loose flowing robes, and holding a child on her right arm. She can be either standing or seated, usually on a platform or throne.⁴⁸

All this fits the figure of the central woman on the *fumi-e*. The other figures, who appear to be venerating her, are harder to place.

From the Kamakura period comes another style of painting, that also shows a similarity in composition to the *fumi-e*. This is the ‘Amida rising over the mountains’, *Yamagoshi Raigō*, a

⁴⁸ Shin, Junhyoung. "Avalokitesvara's Manifestation as the Virgin Mary: The Jesuit Adaptation and the Visual Conflation in Japanese Catholicism after 1614." *Church History* 80, no. 1 (2011): 11-12

scene that has been popular since the rise of the Amida cult in the Heian period and attained its distinctive form of Amida rising over the mountains like a sun in the Kamakura period.⁴⁹



Figure 4. Amida Coming over the Mountain (*Yamagoshi Amidazu*). Hanging scroll, colour on silk. Kamakura period. Courtesy of Kyoto National Museum.

A common depiction of the *Yamagoshi Raigō* is a mountainous landscape with Amida Buddha rising behind it, similar to the rising sun. To his left and right are two other figures, and towards the bottom are sometimes other admirers. This composition is visually very similar to the *fumi-e*. The mountains may correspond to the rock-like shapes in the foreground. Then the female figure in the middle with her companions on either side would correspond to the rising Amida.

Amida Buddha and the Pure Land sect were popular in the late Momoyama period. Due to the similarity in doctrine and religious practice, Christianity was often confused with Pure Land Buddhism.⁵⁰ This, in addition to the observation that the *Yamagoshi Raigō*'s composition is

⁴⁹ Munsterberg, *Arts of Japan*, 95.

⁵⁰ Higashibaba. *Christianity in Early Modern Japan*, 76.

consistent in multiple images, makes the similarity to the *fumi-e* much more relevant. However, it does not explain the child, and assuming the middle figure is female excludes it from being Amida. Child-granting Kannon is not commonly depicted as rising over the mountains in that way, so it is impossible to make a satisfying analysis of the *fumi-e* in a strictly Japanese art tradition.

The above attempt at iconographical analysis is based on the assumption that both maker and observer would have no knowledge of 16th and 17th century European art, and would only look for interpretation using Japanese sources. However, knowledge of its context and history are necessary to correctly interpret it.

As will be discussed more in-depth in Chapter 2, this *fumi-e* is the result of a long line of multilateral influences. The image shows a motif that occurs frequently in European religious art, the first known incarnation of which can be found on an altarpiece in Lucca by Francesco del Brina, dating 1563.⁵¹



Figure 6. *Madonna del Rosario* by Francesco del Brina. Oil on wood. 1563, Lucca, Italy. Courtesy of Museo Nazionale di Villa Guinigi.

The similarities to the Volkenkunde *fumi-e*, especially when put in chronological order with earlier *fumi-e* that are also based on the same motif,⁵² is obvious beyond a doubt. For all its

⁵¹ Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Mission*, 78; and Kaufmann, “Reconsidering Fumi-e”, 151.

⁵² Which will be done in Chapter 2.

similarities to Child-granting Kannon or *Yamagoshi Raigō*, even an entirely untrained observer will see that the *fumi-e* was made in the likeness of the European prototype. Considering the *fumi-e* purely as part of a European tradition, the iconographical analysis changes completely. Because there is a prototype of which the interpretation is well known, the *fumi-e* simply keeps that meaning. It is a depiction of Mary, the mother of God, holding the child Jesus on her lap and handing a rosary to a kneeling St Dominic, surrounded by other saints, angels, or admirers. This motif is so well known it has its own name: the Madonna of the Rosary. This will be discussed in more detail in the iconological analysis below.

However, even though the motif of the image is unmistakable, there are some obvious differences. Regardless of the wear of use and age, the design on the *fumi-e* itself is less detailed and differently stylized than the prototype. The anatomy of the figures and the draping of their clothes is different, and they lack distinguishing features. The reason we can identify it as the Madonna of the Rosary is because of its similarity to other works with that motif, not because of recognizable clues from the image itself. Perhaps the most striking difference are the rock-like shapes in the foreground, which are distinctly non-European.⁵³ Therefore, it also does not seem to fit entirely in a European tradition.

These analyses have only looked at the image on the *fumi-e*, but the item itself has more to tell. While the Madonna of the Rosary motif is found on oil paintings, engravings, and medals, the shape of the *fumi-e* is uncommon in Europe and would not be used for religious art. The same goes for the analysis that attempted to place it in a Buddhist art tradition. Metal plaques with Buddhist images do exist, in the form of wand hangings called *kakebotoke*.⁵⁴ But these are normally circular instead of rectangular, and don't have feet that indicate a placement on the ground, facing upwards. Those characteristics are entirely unique to *fumi-e*, and when letting go of the meaning of the image and purely looking at the shape of the object itself, the Volkenkunde *fumi-e* can only be compared to other extant *fumi-e*. The development and practical use of *fumi-e*, which caused it to take on this characteristic shape, will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Iconological analysis

The last step in this analysis is the iconological interpretation. This attempts to determine the intrinsic meaning of the work, going further than just the image itself. The individual artwork has to be placed in a certain worldview, that involves the social, political, and cultural aspects of the time and place it was created in.⁵⁵

The *fumi-e* features an image of a motif that occurs frequently in paintings and other media in Renaissance and Baroque Europe. It is a depiction of the Virgin Mary with the child Jesus on her lap, handing a rosary to St. Dominic,⁵⁶ surrounded by other saints and devotees. It symbolizes thanksgiving for the victory at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, when a coalition of European Catholic states won a decisive naval battle against the Ottoman empire.⁵⁷ The motif is referred to as either Madonna/ Our Lady of the Rosary or Our Lady of Victory. When placed in the context of the Christian mission in Japan, its association with victory over

⁵³ Kaufmann, "Reconsidering Fumi-e," 154.

⁵⁴ For example the Kamakura period *kakebotoke* featuring Kannon, in the Tokyo National Museum, catalogue nr. E-19920.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵⁶ Butler, Alban. *Lives of saints*. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Eighteenth Century Collections Online Gale, 1799), 99.

⁵⁷ Candelaria, Lorenzo F. *The Rosary Cantoral: Ritual and Social Design in a Chantbook from Early Renaissance Toledo*. (Rochester: University Rochester Press, 2008), 109.

heathens takes on another layer, where the Japanese may be compared to the Ottomans in the Battle of Lepanto, and faith in the Madonna may grant a similar victory for Christianity. In this case, the image symbolises victory of Christianity over heathens. The image was most likely introduced by missionaries of the Dominican order, given the association with their patron saint.⁵⁸

However, this analysis only covers the image on the *fumi-e*, and not the history and context of the item itself. The reception of an artwork by different groups in society and the way it impacts that society, also plays a role in its interpretation.⁵⁹ This relates to the social construct introduced by David Summers.; not only observation, but also other ways in which the viewer interacts with an artwork, the way it is displayed or used, play a role in contextualizing it. Art objects are spatial things that have a relationship with the space around them, and cannot be seen as separate.⁶⁰ The use of materials and the method of construction (factice) is as much part of the biography of the artwork as the image on it.⁶¹

This approach is more anthropological, focusing on context and culture. The way humans interact or relate to an object should also be taken into account.⁶² In the case of *fumi-e*, this is a relevant factor, because the shape of the object is related to its use, irrelevant of the image on it. The intended use had an effect on the way it was designed.

Considering the facture of the item, it is far removed from Europe. It is made in Japan, using Japanese techniques and most likely by a Japanese artisan. Before it became a museum object, it was used exclusively in Japan, for an almost exclusively Japanese audience. It was specifically designed to be trampled. The development of *fumi-e* in general will be discussed in Chapter 2, but the conclusion that can be drawn here is that this is an item that was made to resemble a Christian image, designed to be trampled by people who would recognize its Christian imagery, with the purpose of persecuting them. In that case, the *fumi-e* symbolises the persecution that was intended to keep Christian influence out of Japan. There is irony in the observation that a motif symbolizing Christian victory is put on an item meant for persecution, and raises the question whether the persecutors were aware of this association.

In summary, formal and iconographical analysis show that the Volkenkunde *fumi-e* features an image of the Virgin Mary with the child Jesus, handing a rosary to St. Dominic, that contains elements of both European and Japanese artistic traditions. The iconological interpretation of the image, in the European context, is a symbol of the victory of Christianity over heathens. In the Japanese context, it is a symbol of the persecution of Christianity. Both these contexts are necessary to fully understand the item.

⁵⁸ Kaufmann, "Reconsidering Fumi-e," 157-158.

⁵⁹ Panofsky, "Describing and Interpreting Works of the Visual Arts," 471.

⁶⁰ Winget, "Describing Art," 969.

⁶¹ Winget, "Describing Art," 970-971.

⁶² Ibid., 972-973.

Chapter 2: Evolution of *Fumi-e*

Development of *fumi-e*

In the previous chapter, one particular *fumi-e* was analysed using a method intended for artworks. This analysis can not stand alone, however, because the item needs to be placed in the context of its time and purpose. Therefore, in this chapter I will first discuss how *fumi-e* came into existence and how they developed over time, followed by a comparison of the Volkenkunde *fumi-e* to other extant ones, that clarify the various influences on the item.

Historical documentation on the first start of the *e-fumi* ceremony is sparse. From the Nagasaki city archives, it can be concluded that the practice started there, approximately in the 1620s, but because of missing documents and changes in magistrature the exact time cannot be pinpointed.⁶³ It is assumed that by 1634, the practice had spread to more places in Kyūshū, but whether the ceremony was the same as in Nagasaki, or what kind of *fumi-e* were used, cannot be recovered.⁶⁴

In that early period, many different items were used as *fumi-e*, from roughly drawn crosses to items that had belonged to priests or martyrs. Considering that stepping on the *fumi-e* meant escaping a death sentence, it may be surprising that suspected Christians hesitated to trample it. However, because of the Catholic belief that images of saints are embodiments of those saints themselves, soiling and permanently damaging the prized European-style paintings, that had been extremely valuable and desirable not long before, would constitute the worst kind of blasphemy.⁶⁵

Because all items relating to saints were considered holy, items like bibles, rosaries and oil paintings were taken from the houses of Japanese Christians and used as *fumi-e*. Items that survive today are mainly metal *fumi-e*, as paintings, fabrics, and paper objects became damaged from regular use; they were eventually nailed to wooden boards to make them last longer. In 1669 a Japanese artisan named Hagiwara Yūsuke was commissioned to make 20 new *fumi-e*, the first known records of specifically constructed *fumi-e*.⁶⁶ These were based on the metal medals that were mounted to wooden planks.

Finally, objects that were text-based or less clearly identifiable as Christian may not have been recognized as such by illiterate people, and thus they would not have considered it sacrilegious to step on them- defeating the purpose of the persecution. Therefore, durable items with clearly recognizable Christian figures, looking like the precious European-style paintings, turned out to be the most sustainable kind of *fumi-e*.⁶⁷

Scholars make a distinction between two kinds of surviving *fumi-e*.⁶⁸ One category is made up of the items that were seized from the Japanese Christians, and the other consists of the newly made items that were produced when the old ones wore down. Based on its date of creation, material, shape and the simplification of the image, the Volkenkunde *fumi-e* falls into the second category.

⁶³ Okada, Akio. *Fumi-e ni tsuite*, in *Kirishitan kenkyū*, ed. Takeo Yanagatani. (Tokyo: Kirishitan Bunka Kenkyūgo, 1944), 201-202.

⁶⁴ Okada, *Fumi-e ni tsuite*, 201-202.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁶⁶ Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art.*, p. 336.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁶⁸ Kaufmann, "Reconsidering Fumi-e," 159

The artistic influences on *fumi-e*

Due to their recognizability, ease of use and durability, metal medals ended up being the items that continued to be used as *fumi-e*. These would form the basis for the later reproduction *fumi-e*. These medals were ‘original’ European items,⁶⁹ and their copies show how closely they were based on the originals, but also betray a change in visual style. But this change in style did not first occur when the reproduction *fumi-e* were made. There is a precedent in the European-style Japanese Christian art, which was also used as early *fumi-e* and would thus have been a source of inspiration. Before the various influences in the Volkenkunde *fumi-e* can be explained, it is necessary to explore the background of this artistic exchange that started when Francesco Xavier first brought Christian pictures to Japan.

The arrival of the Portuguese sparked an entire separate genre within Japanese art, namely *nanban* art. The name comes from the Japanese word for ‘southern barbarians’, which is a concept taken from China they used to refer to the Iberians.⁷⁰ This term did not apply to all Europeans- when the Dutch and English arrived later, they were called *kōmō*: redheads.⁷¹ *Nanban* art, therefore, is purely about the Iberian, Catholic Europeans, and is separate from the art inspired by the Dutch that occurred later in the Edo-period. *Nanban* art covers everything from lacquerware and pottery to folding screens and paintings, and is an umbrella term for any kind of art or craft that that often - but not exclusively-⁷² features Catholic European people or themes.⁷³

Nanban covers art and artefacts made in Japanese as well as European media and styles. The majority of the artworks in European style are the religious works made by the Japanese students of the Jesuits. The works in this category would go on to form the basis of some of the first *fumi-e*.

Art was considered helpful for the Christian mission. Francesco Xavier had brought devotional images with him to aid conversion, and they proved to be very popular with the Japanese people.⁷⁴ Despite the relative success of the mission, it was not just religious fervour that made these images desirable. Rosaries, relics and paintings were popular items for collectors, and it was their exotic ‘otherness’ that made them appealing.⁷⁵ Christian items were used as fashionable accessories⁷⁶ and talismans, also by people who weren’t necessarily Christian in the European understanding.⁷⁷ The Jesuits reported about people praying to Amida Buddha and ‘Deus’ at the same time, to broaden their chances of salvation.⁷⁸ The

⁶⁹ On the question whether these medals were imported or cast in Japan, see Kaufmann, “Reconsidering Fumi-e,” 157-159

⁷⁰ Gutiérrez, Fernando. “A Survey of Nanban Art,” in *The Southern Barbarians: The First Europeans in Japan*, ed. Michael Cooper. (Tokyo: Kodansha International in Cooperation with Sophia University, 1971), 149; and Kotani, “Studies in Jesuit Art in Japan,” 23-24.

⁷¹ Kotani, “Studies in Jesuit Art in Japan,” 25.

⁷² One example of European style but non-European subject is the portrait of a Buddhist philosopher. Gutiérrez, “A Survey of Nanban Art,” 163.

⁷³ It is prudent to note that the black servants that accompanied the Europeans were also a popular feature in *nanban* art, and thus the term applies to them as well, despite them not being ‘European’.

⁷⁴ Boxer, *Christian Century*, 188.

⁷⁵ Kotani, “Studies in Jesuit Art in Japan,” 33.

⁷⁶ Boxer, *Christian Century*, 207-208.

⁷⁷ Leuchtenberger 2005, p. 120.

⁷⁸ Higashibaba, *Christianity in Early Modern Japan*, 37-38.

black ship from Macao was seen as good luck because of its association with overseas treasure and the god of good luck, Ebisu, protective deity of merchants whose name means ‘foreigner’ or ‘barbarian’.⁷⁹

Valignano, the Jesuit Visitor to Japan who came some 30 years after Xavier, realized that import could not quench the Japanese demand for Christian images. Thus in the 1580s the Jesuits started producing art at the school they founded in Japan, called the *seminario*.⁸⁰

There, the Italian artist Giovanni Niccolò artists taught Japanese boys how to create paintings in the European style. Having Japanese boys create these paintings not only helped fulfill the commercial demand for pictures, it was also part of the method of *adaptationismo* chosen by Valignano. This was the policy of adapting Jesuit practices to local culture, which would make Christianity more palatable to indigenous people and help it spread more easily.

Valignano expressed the wish that these paintings, being a mixture between Japanese and European art, would prove that the two cultures were compatible together.⁸¹ He believed that “indigenous painters of devotional images would be capable of manufacturing images suitable for Japanese sensibilities.” Thus, training the natives to create religious imagery was considered an effective method of facilitating the non Christians’ conversion to Christianity.⁸²

The education was done through copying European originals, and the goal was commercial rather than artistic. To quench the demand, the Japanese artists became adept at copying the imported pictures that were so popular with collectors and converts.⁸³

The paintings created by the students of the Jesuits have certain unique qualities, perhaps caused by this way of painting, that betray the Japanese influences on the images. The paintings show their “Japaneseness” through a different use of perspective and anatomy, the pictures being outline-based and surface-oriented,⁸⁴ as well as through the materials that were used. The two pictures below demonstrate the style change that occurred during the copying.⁸⁵ The first is a European painting, of which the second is a Japanese copy. The Japanese version betrays unfamiliarity with Western style of anatomy, most prominent in the faces, necks and arms. The foreshortening on the child’s face is done differently, and his curls are more regular in shape and placement. The shading is simplified, lending a ‘flatness’ to the image. Similar changes can also be observed in the Volkenkunde *fumi-e*, as will be discussed in the next paragraph.

⁷⁹ Curvelo, “The Disruptive Presence of Namban-jin,” 591. Ebisu was also used to refer to Ezo (Hokkaido) or Mongolia; Leuchtenberger 115

⁸⁰ Mochizuki, Mia. “Idolatry and Western-Inspired painting in Japan,” *The idol in the age of art: objects, devotions and the early modern world*, ed. Michael Cole and Rebecca Zorach. (Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2009), 248.

⁸¹ Kotani, “Studies in Jesuit Art in Japan,” 59.

⁸² Levy, Evonne. *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 203.

⁸³ Kotani, “Studies in Jesuit Art in Japan,” 55.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁸⁵ For a thorough analysis of these two images, see Kotani, “Studies in Jesuit Art in Japan,” 165-168.



Figure 7. *La Virgen de la Leche*, by Luis de Morales. Oil on panel. 1565, Spain. Courtesy of Museo Nacional del Prado.

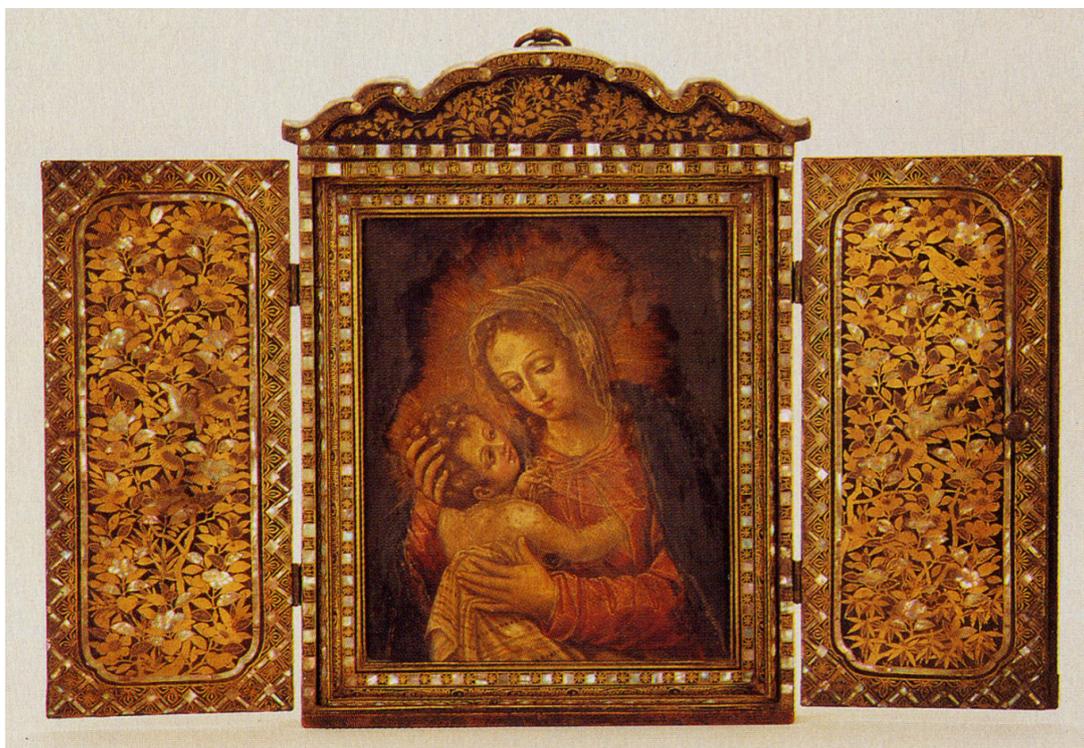


Figure 8. *Madonna and Child*, by a Japanese student of the Jesuit *seminario*. Latter half of the 16th century (Azuchi-Momoyama period). Oil on copper framed in *urushi* lacquerware. Courtesy of Suntory Museum of Tokyo, Tokyo

Chronology of the Volkenkunde *fumi-e*

To explain how the image on the Volkenkunde *fumi-e* was influenced and changed from the European ‘original’ it was based on, I will place it in a chronology with two other known *fumi-e* that depict the same motif, the Madonna of the Rosary. These *fumi-e* are part of the collection of the Tokyo National Museum. They were brought to Tokyo in 1874 from Nagasaki, where they had been stored since the end of the persecution in 1858.

I will base this on the work that Thomas Da Costa Kaufmann has done regarding these *fumi-e*,⁸⁶ extrapolating his framework to include the Volkenkunde *fumi-e*.



Figure 9. *Fumi-e*. Bronze or copper medal nailed to wooden board. Edo period, Japan. (Medal likely 16th century European). Courtesy of Tokyo National Museum

This is a bronze medal, small and oval, with a detailed depiction the Madonna of the Rosary motif. A mountainous landscape can be seen in the background, a cross in the foreground, and

⁸⁶ Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*, and Kaufmann, “Reconsidering Fumi-e.”

a rosary surrounds the image. The association with St Dominic makes it likely that the medal was brought to Japan by Spanish Dominican friars, likely by way of the Phillipines.⁸⁷ It was later turned into a *fumi-e* by nailing it to a wooden board. There are clues that make it recognizable as a used *fumi-e*.⁸⁸ The wood is cracked and the medal has been nailed to it quite crudely. It shows signs of wear in particular on the elevated areas, most notably the face and hand of the Virgin and the head of the infant Jesus, because the feet that stepped on it would only wear the highest part of the medal. Despite the wear, the details of the figures are still clearly visible.

The Tokyo National Museum possesses multiple examples of devotional medals nailed to wooden boards and used as *fumi-e*, at least 2 of which show the Madonna of the Rosary in an extremely similar composition with slightly different details.⁸⁹



Figure 10. *Fumi-e* by Hagiwara Yūsuke. Brass. Edo period, Japan. Courtesy of Tokyo National Museum.

This *fumi-e* is one of the second category: specifically produced for the persecution. This can be determined by the shape and size: it is much larger than the first *fumi-e*, and it has a more rectangular shape. The figures are more simplified, and more kneeling people have been added around the Virgin's throne. Still, the figure of St. Dominic kneeling on the left of the

⁸⁷ Kaufmann, "Reconsidering Fumi-e," 150.

⁸⁸ Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*, 315.

⁸⁹ The catalogue numbers for these are C-714 and C-716.

Virgin and the female figure to the right, are very similar to the ones on the first medal. Details like the rosary surrounding the picture, the rosary that the Virgin hands to St. Dominic, the cross in the foreground and the way the clothing drapes over the figures, are also similar to the first *fumi-e*. So similar, in fact, that it seems very likely they were directly copied from it. Even so, the scene has been simplified. The throne has lost its shape and is turned into a simple rectangle behind the figure of the Virgin. The rocks of the landscape are reduced to a few simplified triangles at the bottom of the image. The mountains in the background have disappeared and behind the figures is nothing but a relatively large area of empty space. This is likely a result of the change of an oval shape to a rectangular one, but it is also reminiscent of the use of empty space in Japanese art of that time. The rocks in the foreground have become much more pronounced and cover a larger area. This, again, might have been to fill up the extra space created by changing the shape of the image, but they are reminiscent of the way mountains were painted in the *yamato-e* style⁹⁰ that was practiced by the Kanō school, which was the leading art school at the time.⁹¹

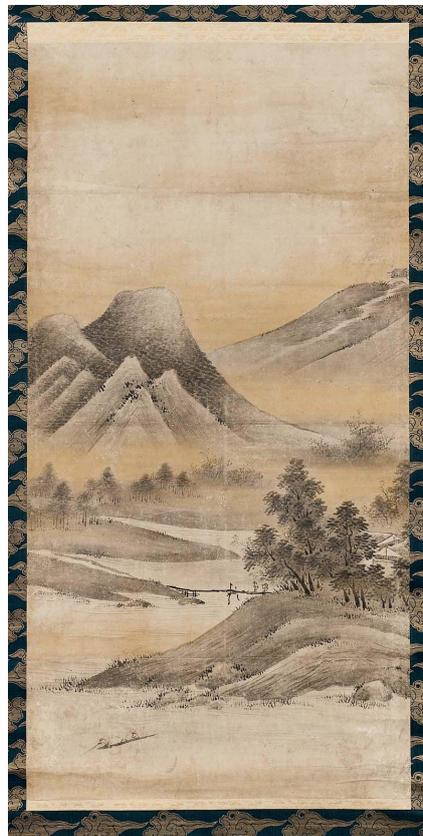


Figure 11.1. ‘*Mountain and water painting*’ by Kanō Motonobu. Hanging scroll, ink on paper. Muromachi period, Japan. Courtesy of Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

⁹⁰ Kaufmann, “Reconsidering Fumi-e,” 154. *Yamato-e* means ‘Japanese pictures’ and was a term used to contrast against ‘foreign’ Chinese-style art. Despite this, in fact the school was open to diverse influences and drew inspiration from Chinese and Indian art. Curvelo, “The Disruptive Presence of Namban-jin,” 583.

⁹¹ Curvelo, “The Disruptive Presence of Namban-jin,” 582.



Figure 11.2. *Byōbu with Cypresses* by Kanō Eitoku (detail). Folding screen, ink and gold on paper. Azuchi-Momoyama period, Japan. Courtesy of Tokyo National Museum.

This *fumi-e* wasn't created as a religious image and was made in Japan, by a Japanese person.⁹² Because it was meant to uncover Christians and thus had to be recognizable as a Christian image, it was made as much like the Christian example as possible. Still, influences of a more typically Japanese style can clearly be seen. Comparing this *fumi-e* to the Japanese copy of the Madonna painting, the same kind of stylistic changes can be observed- anatomy, treatment of surfaces, perspective, and folds of clothing. The Japanese Jesuit paintings would have been in use as *fumi-e* by the time this particular one was created, so they may have served as example.

⁹² The Tokyo National Museum attributes it to Hagiwara Yūsuke, who has been mentioned before.



Figure 1.1. The Volkenkunde *fumi-e*. Bronze. Edo period, Japan. Courtesy of the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde. Photo by the author.

Finally, this is the *fumi-e* that comes from the collection of the Volkenkunde museum. The Tokyo National Museum two *fumi-e* in its collection which look exactly the same (with different levels of wear), so it is likely they come from the same cast.⁹³

The size, shape and the presence of feet on the back are in contrast to the smaller medal of the first *fumi-e*, which has an eyelet hook on top and would have originally been hung on a wall or worn around the neck. Furthermore this *fumi-e* shows obvious signs of heavy wear on the highest surfaces, especially in the middle. The faces of the figures are polished shiny from the many feet that touched them. This is an indication that the object was actively used as a trampling plate for a considerable time.

An extensive analysis of this item has already been done in Chapter 1. Comparing it to the other two *fumi-e*, however, changes can be observed. These are so significant that it casts doubts as to whether the maker had access to the prototype, the ‘first generation’ *fumi-e* with the European medal nailed to the board.⁹⁴ The Tokyo National Museum does not identify a maker, which suggests that it was not the Hagiwara Yūsuke who made the first *fumi-e*, but someone else. That might mean that this is a recast of a recast, which has lost knowledge of the original source. In any case, it must be of a later make than the first ‘second generation’ *fumi-e*, because of its even more drastic changes.

The figures are even more simplified than in the previous *fumi-e*. The rosary surrounding the image is missing, which points to a maker unfamiliar with Dominican imagery. The rosary that the Virgin hands to the kneeling saint on her left is unrecognizable as such, which also

⁹³ The catalogue numbers for these *fumi-e* are C-721 and C-725.

⁹⁴ Fig. 9.

suggest that the maker did not know its significance.⁹⁵ However, the rocks in the foreground are even more pronounced than the ones on the second *fumi-e*. They are hardly recognizable anymore, and without the other two images to compare them to, the vague shapes could be anything from mountains to waves to clouds. Kaufmann suggests that these shapes might have been used to suggest that the scene is set above the earth. Ambiguous shapes like this are a common feature in Kanō-style paintings from the same period, and are used to suggest a setting in space or ‘heaven’.⁹⁶

This leads to a comparison between other pictures that are set ‘above the clouds’ and depict a religious scene. In contemporary Buddhist art, cloud-like shapes can also often be seen surrounding a deity to suggest a setting above the earth.

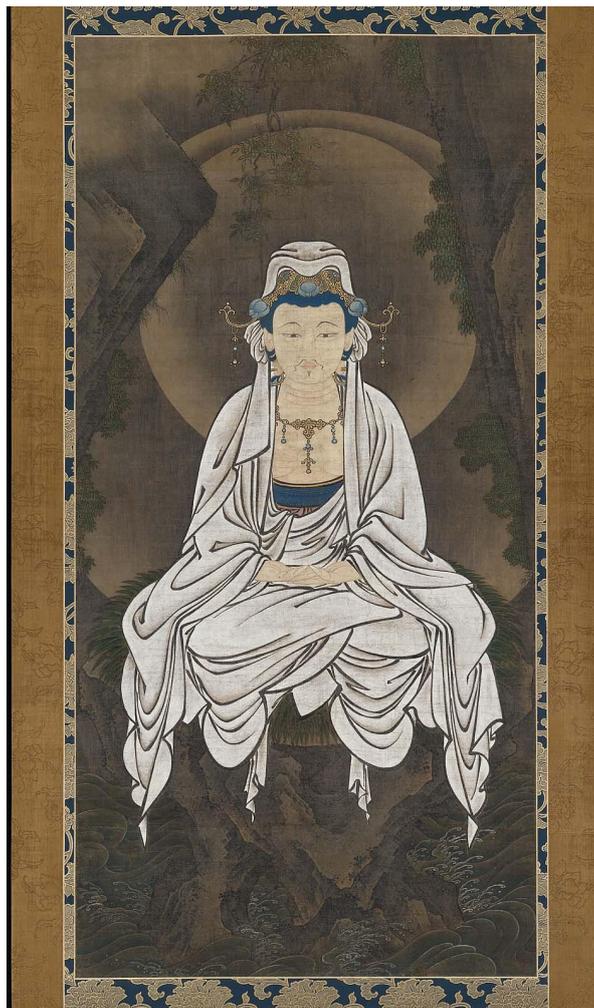


Figure 12. *White-robbed Kannon* by Kanō Motonobu. Hanging scroll, ink on silk. Muromachi period, Japan. Courtesy of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

This painting of the White-robbed Kannon is an example of how Buddhist deities were depicted in contemporary art. The depiction of cloud-like or craggy rock-like shapes around and below the figure is similar to the pictures of White-robbed Kannon and *Yamagoshi Raigō* that are discussed in Chapter 1. Kannon was often compared to the Virgin Mary, and her image was to represent Mary by the ‘hidden’ Christians in the time of the persecution. These

⁹⁵ Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*, 333.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 316.

images are known as ‘Maria Kannon’.⁹⁷ Hidden Christian art found on the island Ikitsuki has a similar composition of the Madonna with the child Jesus on her lap and two adoring saints. It also features cloud-like shapes beneath Mary.



Figure 13. The Virgin Mary in the art of the *kakure kirishitan*. Hanging scroll. Date unknown, Ikitsuki, Japan. Image courtesy of Stephen Turnbull.⁹⁸

In the case of Maria Kannon, the depiction of a Christian deity in a Japanese style is intentional- to disguise it. This would not have been the case with a *fumi-e*, because to be effective in discovering Christians, it had to be a recognizable Christian scene for them. However, when the Volkenkunde *fumi-e* was made in the 1660s, Christian art had become rare and the maker may have been more familiar with Buddhist religious imagery, influencing the final image.

Another explanation might not be religious in nature. The similarity to the *yamato-e* style of the Kanō-school is striking, and because a particular form of art that the Kanō-school is known for are the so-called *nanban byōbu*: painted screens depicting Southern Barbarians, usually the arrival of the black ship.

⁹⁷ See also Figure 2.2. Foxwell, Chelsea. “Merciful Mother Kannon and its audiences.” *The Art Bulletin* vol. 92, nr. 4 (2010): 330; and Smith, Rachel. “A Chameleonic Icon: Questioning the Underground Christian Identity of an Edo-period Amida Sculpture in the Nyoirin Kannon-do, Kawaguchi City.” (Diss., University of Oregon, 2016), 17.

⁹⁸ Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan*, plate 3b.



Figure 14. Nanban *byōbu* attributed to the Kanō school. Folding screen, ink on paper. Edo period, Japan. Courtesy of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Note the shape of the waves (similar to the rocks in the foreground of the Volkenkunde *fumi-e*) and the use of clouds to suggest a foreign or otherworldly setting.

These became popular with Japanese patrons in the 1590s. Similarly to the popularity of Christian religious items, it was the exotic otherness of the Europeans that made them popular. Even in the 1680s when the Iberians had been long gone, *nanban* art was still produced, although made by artists who had little experience with actual Iberians but imitated the style of their predecessors.⁹⁹ This, again, ties into the Japanese style of producing images through copying as discussed earlier.

The maker of the Volkenkunde *fumi-e* may only have had worn-out earlier *fumi-e* as his examples of ‘European’ style. But because *nanban byōbu* with images of Southern Barbarians were still being produced by the Kanō-school in the 1680s,¹⁰⁰ they would have been available in the 1660s when the Volkenkunde *fumi-e* was made. It should be noted that from the 1640s ‘Christian’ and ‘(Iberian) European’ were concepts that were practically interchangeable.¹⁰¹ The word *kirishitan* (the Japanese spelling of *cristão*, Christian) could refer to anything related to the Iberians.¹⁰² So, the *nanban*-screens may have been an inspiration for an image that looked as ‘Christian’ or ‘European’ as possible.

In conclusion, the Volkenkunde *fumi-e* can be seen as an incarnation of the Madonna of the Rosary as depicted on the medal in the first *fumi-e*. In the course of copying, the image has undergone significant changes. Because of the blurry overlap between Kannon and the Madonna, this may have caused the similarity with the Buddhist image of Kannon surrounded by clouds. Furthermore, because of the necessity to make the image look as ‘European’ and ‘Christian’ as possible in order to provoke Christians, the *nanban*-screens, and the paintings created by the Japanese students of the Jesuits may have served as examples. Besides these inspirations, perhaps the ‘Japaneseness’ of the image simply comes from the artist’s unfamiliarity with the European style.

This has culminated in an item that unites styles from different cultures and transforms them into something new. This makes the *fumi-e* a ‘hybrid’ or ‘transcultural’ item.

⁹⁹ Curvelo, “The Disruptive Presence of Namban-jin,” 585.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 585.

¹⁰¹ This was different in the period between 1614 and 1639, see Chapter 3.

¹⁰² Leuchtenberger 2005, p. 7-8.

In tracing this chronology, I have followed the steps of Kaufmann very closely, merely extrapolating his research to cover the Volkenkunde *fumi-e* as well. However, our conclusions are different. While Kaufmann rejects earlier scholarship that regards cultural exchange as a matter of influence of one place over another or a ‘flow’ from center to periphery, in favour of a concept of mutual diffusion, he argues that this should be reconsidered in the case of Japan. In his opinion, *sakoku* meant a voluntary closing to cultural exchange, and raises the question why one culture should always wish to receive goods of another. In his words, the creation of *fumi-e* demonstrates that ‘Asians did not always want to receive’:¹⁰³

“Although *fumi-e* might still seem to represent in some peculiar way the diffusion of Western images [...] they can nevertheless hardly be called representative of influence or diffusion. [...] [T]heir origin and use call into question the way in which such visual evidence can be evoked to support an interpretation of cultural mixture as a result of cultural transfer: in the case of *fumi-e* important aspects of one culture are distinctly being rejected, its forms not transferred beyond the objects used to signify that rejection.”¹⁰⁴

Thus, Kaufmann claims that cultural mixing can be rejected, and *fumi-e* are an illustration of that.

If *sakoku* is considered as a period of total isolation and rejection of foreign influence, with the Dutch and Chinese factories in Nagasaki as the only ‘windows’, as is often the case, then Kaufmann’s argument makes sense. This is, however, a limited view, and exchange did certainly happen. The term *sakoku* or ‘closed country’ is not contemporary, but comes from a translation of Engelbert Kaempfer’s *History of Japan*.¹⁰⁵ The Tokugawa government did not completely reject everything foreign. Exchange was still occurring with the Dutch, Chinese, Ryūkyūans, Koreans, and Ainu, and with even more countries through proxy of these third parties.¹⁰⁶ The attitude towards foreign concepts also changed within the Edo period, as the popularity of *rangaku* or Dutch studies during the reign of Tokugawa Yoshimune shows,¹⁰⁷ as well as for example the adaptation of Western linear perspective in art during that time.¹⁰⁸ The Japanese had agency in the adaptation of Western concepts and techniques.¹⁰⁹ Taking *sakoku* literally and seeing the Edo period as isolated and static does not do justice to the exchange and development that happened during that time.¹¹⁰

Therefore, I do not believe that it is right to claim that the Japanese did not ‘want to receive’. Furthermore, considering the concept of transculturality, exchange is not something that can simply be rejected. It happens when cultures interact and transform because of that

¹⁰³ Kaufmann, “Reconsidering Fumi-e,” 138-140.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 141.

¹⁰⁵ Laver, Michael. “Strange Isolation: The Dutch, the Japanese, and the Asian Economy in the Seventeenth Century.” (Diss., University of Pennsylvania 2006), 246; and Kempfer, Engelbert, and Beatrice M. Bodart-Bailey. *Kaempfer's Japan: Tokugawa Culture Observed*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999).

¹⁰⁶ Laver, “Strange Isolation,” 43.

¹⁰⁷ Kaufmann, “Reconsidering Fumi-e,” 137.

¹⁰⁸ Kobayashi-Sato, Yoriko and Mia M. Mochizuki. “Perspective and its Discontents or St. Lucy’s Eyes,” *Seeing across Cultures in the Early Modern World*, ed. Dana Leibsohn and Jeanette Favrot Peterson. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012) 31.

¹⁰⁹ Kobayashi-Sato and Mochizuki call this ‘global exploration on local terms’. Kobayashi-Sato and Mochizuki, “Perspective and its Discontents,” 28.

¹¹⁰ *Sakoku* was not a static or monolithic policy, but rather a system of political, economic and religious restrictions, issued in a series of responses to specific events.

See Laver, “Strange Isolation,” chapter VIII, for an in-depth discussion of the true restrictions during *sakoku*.

interaction. In the next chapter, I hope to show how the persecution transformed aspects of Japanese culture and society, thus forming a transcultural process.

Chapter 3: The effects of the Japanese persecution

Historical background

A number of key events in the late 16th and early 17th century shaped the policy of the Japanese government towards Christianity.¹¹¹

After a period of proselytization from the arrival of Francesco Xavier in 1549 onwards,¹¹² starting in 1587 a series of decrees were issued that outlawed Christianity and ordered the missionaries to leave.¹¹³ These were not all enforced, but in 1614 an expulsion decree was issued for all European priests,¹¹⁴ and the majority of missionaries indeed went into exile.¹¹⁵ Although a handful of missionaries continued their activities ‘underground’ or were secretly smuggled into the country, their presence was illegal. This is generally seen as the beginning of true anti-Christian policy.¹¹⁶

The reasons for these decrees were mainly political. Converted Japanese Christians were destroying temples and shrines in their religious zeal,¹¹⁷ and the Jesuits supplied Christian *daimyō*'s with weapons and financial support.¹¹⁸ This undermined the social order and authority of the central government.¹¹⁹

Powerful religious organizations were regarded with suspicion, since large Buddhist sects like the *Ikkō ikki* had proven to be significant obstacles to national unification and were violently suppressed.¹²⁰ Certain Buddhist sects were outlawed and persecuted in similar ways as the Christians.¹²¹

Other reasons were the suspicion that the missionaries were preparing the way for foreign conquest of Japan,¹²² conflicts between Japanese and Portuguese traders,¹²³ the meddling of Jesuits in civil affairs,¹²⁴ and the association of Christianity with criminals and subversive elements.¹²⁵ This was confirmed by a number of incidents of court intrigue and bribery involving Christian *daimyō*.¹²⁶ Tokugawa Ieyasu was also suspicious of Christians because there were many Christians and Christian-sympathisers among Hideyoshi's retainers, and Christians visibly aided the side of Toyotomi Hideyori in the battle at Osaka castle.¹²⁷

¹¹¹ That is, late Azuchi-Momoyama period and early Edo period, but the exact dates of these periods are contentious, so I use Western dating here.

¹¹² Boxer, *Christian Century*, 45.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 150; and Pacheco, Diego. “The Europeans in Japan, 1543-1640,” *The Southern Barbarians : The First Europeans in Japan*, ed. Michael Cooper (Tokyo: Kodansha International in Cooperation with Sophia University, 1971), 61-64.

¹¹⁴ Boxer, *Christian Century*, 327, 317.

¹¹⁵ Boxer, *Christian Century*, 327.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Cooper, Michael. *Rodrigues the Interpreter : An Early Jesuit in Japan and China*. (New York: Weatherhill, 1974), 106.

¹¹⁸ Boxer, *Christian Century*, 96, 311.

¹¹⁹ Cooper, *Rodrigues the Interpreter*, 117.

¹²⁰ Asao, "The Sixteenth-century Unification," 75; Boxer, *Christian Century*, 71; Nosco, “Keeping the faith,” 136.

¹²¹ Nosco, “Keeping the faith,” 142.

¹²² Boxer, *Christian Century*, 166; and Cooper, *Rodrigues the Interpreter*, 135.

¹²³ Boxer, *Christian Century*, 269-285; Cooper, *Rodrigues the Interpreter*, 263.

¹²⁴ Boxer, *Christian Century*, 323-324; Cooper, *Rodrigues the Interpreter*, 249.

¹²⁵ Boxer, *Christian Century*, 327, 317.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 314-315.

¹²⁷ Boxer, *Christian Century*, 331; Cooper, *Rodrigues the Interpreter*, 184, 194, 217; and Laver, “Strange Isolation,” 88, 269-270.

Persecution of Japanese Christians became more rigorous after the Shimabara revolt in 1638, in which farmers rose up against heavy taxation and cruel treatment and united under a Christian flag.¹²⁸ The Portuguese merchants were suspected of smuggling in missionaries despite the expulsion decree, so they were banished in 1639. Their necessity for trade had diminished with the settlement of Chinese and Dutch traders.¹²⁹ This move is often regarded as the start of ‘*sakoku*’, the policy of the Edo *bakufu* that limited foreign contact.¹³⁰

In summary, the illegality of Christianity can be said to have been established in earnest in 1614 with the expulsion of the missionaries, and the persecution started to become more consistently enforced after 1639. This was institutionalized in that same year by the establishment of a special government office solely aimed at persecution. The establishment of this institution, and the methods it employed, will be discussed in the next part.

¹²⁸ Whether or not all them were genuine Christians remains doubtful, because later records claim that the rebels used force to convert people, but that may be anti-Christian rhetoric. The use of Christian symbols by the rebellion can also be explained by the use of Christian symbols as generic ‘good luck’ symbols. However, the rebel leader Amakusa Shirō was definitely seen as a religious figure, and the Shimabara and Amakusa areas had had a large Christian population because the missionaries had long been active there, so it is reasonable to call the rebellion at least Christian-inspired.

Tamamuro, Fumio. "The Development of the Temple-Parishioner System." *Japanese Journal Of Religious Studies* 36, no. 1 (2009): 19;

Boxer, *Christian Century*, 378;

Curvelo, "The Disruptive Presence of Namban-jin," 591;

and Cooper, *The Southern Barbarians*, 94, 161.

¹²⁹ Laver, "Strange Isolation," 299.

¹³⁰ As mentioned in Chapter 2, see also Laver, "Strange Isolation," 246.

The systematized persecution

Up until the edict in 1614, expulsion was the only punishment for foreign priests and execution was rare¹³¹, but this changed in 1618, when a large number of priests in hiding were revealed and executed. Tokugawa Hidetada introduced new measures such as offering rewards to informants. In 1622 it was discovered that missionaries were still being smuggled into the country, and all captured priests were executed. Other Christians were no longer allowed to be present at the executions, because the *bakufu* noticed the martyrdom only strengthened their belief.¹³²

Indeed, the Japanese Christians were instructed to be prepared to die as martyrs, as evidenced by a Jesuit text from 1622 titled *Maruchiriyo no kokoroe* ('guidelines for martyrdom').¹³³ The text instructs to never deny being a Christian when directly asked, and does not permit them to disguise themselves as Buddhists. It does allow for relocating, hiding and keeping silent, which may have formed the basis for the *kakure kirishitan*'s later behaviour which very much disguised and denied their religion.¹³⁴

The third Tokugawa shōgun Iemitsu seems to have had a nervous obsession with Christianity and keeping out foreign powers.¹³⁵ He executed many Japanese Christians as well as the people hiding them, knowingly or unknowingly, and did not shy away from executing even people from his own retinue.¹³⁶

In 1640 Iemitsu established the office of *shūmon aratame*, the inquisition.¹³⁷ This was a centralized institution under direct government control. The Christian persecution was one of only two matters that were under direct control of the *bakufu*, the other being foreign relations.¹³⁸

Iemitsu introduced new methods and a more organized enforcement of existing measures. The inquisition was systematized into three major ways of persecution, which can be seen as methods of surveillance and population control. These were:

1. Social control:

The use of informants increased, assisted by a raise of the rewards, and spread through the entire country. Boards with the information about rewards were posted throughout the

¹³¹ The only major execution before 1614 were the 26 Nagasaki martyrs in 1597. Cooper, *Rodrigues the Interpreter*, 136.

¹³² Morris, "Anti-Kirishitan Surveillance," 412-413.

¹³³ Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan*, 34-36.

¹³⁴ Morris, "Anti-Kirishitan Surveillance," 426.

¹³⁵ Attested by his strict policy and his repeated attendance of the interrogation of foreign prisoners (both priests from the so-called Rubino group arrested in 1642, as well as Dutch prisoners from the incident known as the *Breskens* affair). Anesaki, "Prosecution of Kirishitans after the Shimabara Insurrection," 295-6; and Hesselink, Reiner H. *Prisoners from Nambu: Reality and Make-Believe in Seventeenth-Century Japanese Diplomacy*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001).

¹³⁶ Anesaki, "Prosecution of Kirishitans after the Shimabara Insurrection," 299.

¹³⁷ Blussé, Leonard. "The Grand Inquisitor Inoue Chikugo no Kami Masashige, Spin Doctor of the Tokugawa Bakufu," *Bulletin of Portuguese/ Japanese Studies* 7 (2003): 30.

¹³⁸ Foreign relations and the persecution of Christians were the only two offices under direct government control instead of being delegated to individual domains. Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan*, 44.

Kagoshima *daimyō* Shimazu Tadatsune and Sendai *daimyō* Date Masamune's plans for trade via Manila and Mexico were cut short when Hidetada limited foreign trade to Nagasaki and Hirado in 1616. Pacheco, "The Europeans in Japan," 89.

A planned expedition against Manila was blown off after the Shimabara rebellion proved that the shogunate troops were not as fit as they ought to be. Pacheco, "The Europeans in Japan," 94.

country. These were called *kōsatsu*, and next to announcing the rewards for informants on *kirishitan*, they also served as a reminder of the law and to reaffirm Tokugawa authority. Next to that, the system of *goningumi* was introduced, in which units of five families kept track of each other. This was not only meant to curb Christianity, but also other religious sects that were deemed undesirable, as evidenced in a village register from 1658, saying that: ‘not a single Christian priest or brother or other member of a forbidden sect may be allowed entry’.¹³⁹

The system of *goningumi* was used to make every head of a *gumi* responsible for the actions of the other members, as well as extending punishment for concealing (knowledge of the existence of) *kirishitan* to a person’s entire *goningumi*. This ensured that informants were motivated not only by financial gain, but fear as well, which proved effective.

2. Monitoring:

By the 1630s the entire population was required to register at a Buddhist temple and be able to produce certificates that guaranteed their non-*kirishitan* identity. This had previously only been required for apostates. It became illegal to not participate in Buddhist festivals. This made Buddhism the dominant religion in Japan, and also provided a way for the bakufu to appease the formerly powerful Buddhist sects by giving them authority and control.

Next to the temple registration, local authorities also compiled family registers like the *kōseki* (which is still used as a population register nowadays) and the *shumon aratame chō*, which recorded details on tax, family composition, and whether people descended from Christians. It was therefore a much larger form of population surveillance.

3. Tests of faith:

The practice of stepping on the *fumi-e* spread through the entire country. Usually it was only done once, if a person was suspected of Christianity, but in Kyūshū it turned into a regularly occurring ceremony. This was the only method directly carried out by the government, without relying on informants or temple registers.¹⁴⁰

These methods illustrate the gradual change in policy from executing believers to creating apostates. This was seen as more effective, because firstly it took away the idealized martyr death, and secondly the existence of government-employed apostates that argued against their former religion made Christianity seem less credible. Since apostasy immediately set a person free, it was also a way to avoid having to execute a person who could otherwise contribute to society, as most Japanese Christians were farmers.¹⁴¹

At the same time, the way Christians dealt with the persecution also changed. With the absence of Jesuit priests, the idea that martyrdom was the only permissible option diminished.¹⁴² Christians registered at temples, participated in Buddhist festivals, hid and disguised their religious items and outwardly behaved as complying citizens.¹⁴³ Even the *e-fumi* ceremony was dealt with: “The *Kirishitan* in Urakami taught their children to tread on the *fumi-e* lightly, whilst *Kirishitan* in Amakusa attempted to tread as far as was possible only on the side of the *fumi-e*. [...] The communities also developed a special prayer, the *Konchirisan no inori* (prayer of penance) to be said after the ceremony.”¹⁴⁴

Thus the *e-fumi* ceremony was incorporated into the practice of Christianity, and over time the *kirishitan* started seeing trampling the *fumi-e* as a kind of martyrdom that showed the

¹³⁹ Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan*, 44. Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁰ All these methods are described in detail in Morris, “Anti-Kirishitan Surveillance,” 415-425.

¹⁴¹ Nosco, “Keeping the faith,” 150.

¹⁴² Higashibaba, *Christianity in Early Modern Japan*, 154.

¹⁴³ Morris, “Anti-Kirishitan Surveillance,” 424-425.

¹⁴⁴ Kataoka, Yakichi. *Nagasaki no Kirishitan*. (Tokyo: Seibo Bunko, 1989), 78.

spiritual strength of the people who endured it.¹⁴⁵

The *bakufu* realized that although the performance of *e-fumi* and the provision of information for the census registers had initially been met with self-incriminating honesty, the Christians adapted to life under persecution and developed strategies to keep themselves safe.¹⁴⁶ While the government could control outward behaviour, they ultimately could not control people's personal beliefs.¹⁴⁷

This led to an entangled development of on the one hand, Christians learning to outwardly comply with government control and keeping their beliefs secret, and on the other hand the *bakufu* changing emphasis from trying to eradicate all Christian thought to just maintaining population control.

While this may seem as a defeat for the *bakufu*, in reality anti-Christian policy never had the aim to control people's beliefs. It was first and foremost meant to 'consolidate and centralise Tokugawa power and control potential political threats.'¹⁴⁸ Its focus was not on personal beliefs, but on compliance with *bakufu* policy. It also punished other religious organisations that did not comply with *bakufu* policies.¹⁴⁹ The Christian persecution can thus be seen as part of a larger policy to control organised religion. Because the *bakufu*'s systems of religious surveillance was part of a wider system of population surveillance and was primarily concerned with controlling behaviour, they can be considered effective.¹⁵⁰

The persecution also eventually simply came down to a calculation of costs and benefits. Since by the 1660s the Christians no longer formed any realistic threat, behaved like exemplary citizens and were important for agriculture, it became more beneficial for the government to relax the punishments.¹⁵¹

Because the persecution was so systematized, and thus predictable, it also gave Christians a way to 'hide in plain sight'. As long as they complied with the laws, performed their duties at a Buddhist temple and stepped on the *fumi-e*, there was no ground to suspect them of being a Christian.

Thus, by the 1670s the persecution had changed from a way of detecting and punishing Christians to a means of government surveillance and regulation.¹⁵²

The required registration at Buddhist temples also greatly changed Buddhism in Japan. Before that, not all villages had temples and many people did not belong to one specific temple. The new rules caused a surge in the number of temples and priests, and gave them more administrative power.

For the Buddhist sects in Japan this was an opportunity to regain authority after their influence had been limited in the century before.¹⁵³ The registration system established new power relationships, where temples had unprecedented control over local people.¹⁵⁴ The *bakufu* was concerned about the power this gave abbots, the lack of religious training of the newly installed priests, as well as the potential conflicts between secular and religious

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 192.

¹⁴⁶ Nosco, "Keeping the faith," 148.

¹⁴⁷ Morris, "Anti-Kirishitan Surveillance," 425.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 426.

¹⁴⁹ As illustrated by the exile of a number of Buddhist priests after the 'Purple Robes Incident' in 1627. Nosco, "Keeping the faith," 146.

¹⁵⁰ Morris, "Anti-Kirishitan Surveillance," 426.

¹⁵¹ Nosco, "Keeping the faith," 148.

¹⁵² Anesaki, "Prosecution of Kirishitans after the Shimabara Insurrection," 299.

¹⁵³ Tamamuro, "The Development of the Temple-Parishioner System," 21.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 22.

officials.¹⁵⁵ Therefore a number of new regulations were issued on temple relationships and the training and conduct of clerics, thus exerting government control over Buddhist institutions.¹⁵⁶

In addition, Buddhist organizations that were seen as undesirable faced similar persecution. They also used the method of outward compliance and registration at accepted temples to avoid being persecuted.¹⁵⁷

To summarize, the persecution of *kirishitan* turned into a highly systemized organization that shaped government control of the population and asserted Tokugawa authority. Similar methods of persecution were also used for other religious groups that were perceived as subversive. These methods laid the basis for population registers that are still in use nowadays, and also had a lasting influence on Japanese Buddhism.

¹⁵⁵ Tamamuro, "The Development of the Temple-Parishioner System," 23.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁵⁷ Nosco, "Keeping the faith," 150-151.

Japanese identity and the *Kirishitan* as the ‘Other’

This subchapter looks at the way Europeans have been used in Japan to fit a notion of the “Other”, from the moment of first contact, during the ‘Christian Century’, the persecution, and even after the Edo period ended. It explores the different functions the “Other” figure has served over time, and how changing notions on foreigners have fit into this. The way Japan looks at foreigners can tell us something about the way Japan looks at itself.

The localisation of nanban culture

Before the first Europeans came to Japan, the “Other” was a concept that was perceived as geographically ‘outside’ Japan. Chinese people fit the role, together with Koreans, Mongols, Ainu, Ryūkyūans, and Indians. Although these groups had considerable exchange with Japan and were present in the country, conceptions of foreigners in art, literature or theater were almost invariably staged ‘elsewhere’, outside of Japan.

This changed when the first Europeans came.¹⁵⁸ The surge in *nanban* art has already been discussed in Chapter 2. However, before the name *nanban* was used in reference to the Iberians, they were called *Tenjikujin* – people from India.¹⁵⁹ This, as well as their consequent framing as *nanbanjin* (barbarians from the south), was an attempt to fit the Iberians in the existing Japanese worldview, which was a reimagination of the Sinocentric worldview. In this conception, Tenjiku lay beyond the mainland which included China and Korea, and was the realm of Buddhas and other spiritual beings. Since the Europeans had come from unimaginably far and looked and acted so different from anything the Japanese had seen before, and seemed to preach a form of Buddhism, it was assumed they came from this mythical land. Next to Indians, the Europeans were framed as Koreans and Chinese, other prominent “Others” in contemporary Japanese imagination. These foreigners, too, were a source of wonder and curiosity for the Japanese, as evidenced by the costernation caused by the embassies of Ryūkyūans and Koreans in the same period. Over time, European markers of “otherness” came to indicate “otherness” in general: for example, in artworks Koreans can be seen depicted with plumed hats, frilled collars, boots and trousers, and other details that were previously seen on Europeans. The Europeans were thus made part of the Japanese worldview.¹⁶⁰

To illustrate the popularity of *nanban* culture, not only material culture and art can be used (as has been done extensively before)¹⁶¹, but also fashion and even food. Toyotomi Hideyoshi enjoyed dressing in *nanban* garb, and this caused a fad for European clothing. In diet, too, Hideyoshi’s retinue imitated the Europeans and started eating veal, something which had previously been abhorred. This was in 1593, before any serious ban on Christianity, and even non-Christians wore rosaries and learned Christian prayers, just to be fashionable.¹⁶² Christian artefacts not only fulfilled a demand for exotic collector’s items, but were also used as protective amulets, much like already existing Shintō amulets.¹⁶³ In this way, the Japanese

¹⁵⁸ Toby, Ronald P. “The ‘Indianness’ of Iberia and changing Japanese iconographies of Other,” *Implicit Understandings : Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era*, ed. Stuart B Schwartz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 323-324.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 327. Toby notes the irony that at the same time the Iberians believed to have discovered ‘Indians’ in the New World, they themselves were also believed to be ‘Indians’ in Japan.

¹⁶⁰ Toby, “The ‘Indianness’ of Iberia,” 333-341.

¹⁶¹ See for example Cooper, *The Southern Barbarians*.

¹⁶² Cooper, *Rodrigues the Interpreter*, 104.

¹⁶³ Curvelo, “The Disruptive Presence of Namban-jin,” 590-591.

took aspects of European culture and incorporated them into their daily life, localising them. This is an illustration of a transcultural process, transforming society beyond the intentions or actual influence of the Europeans.

However, attitudes towards Christianity changed after the expulsion decree in 1614, and *nanban* style came to be associated with people who challenged the norms and were dissatisfied with their position in society. They expressed this by dressing in a deviant and unconventional fashion, involving *nanban* clothing and items like crosses. Wearing a cross would not necessarily imply Christianity, but rather subversiveness to the government.¹⁶⁴ To curb this, in 1615, a decree was issued against "people of our times who look different," and in 1628 and 1634 additional rules were set regarding the dress of the lower classes, outlawing *nanban* clothing.¹⁶⁵ This is an example of how Tokugawa policy and society were influenced by the response to the encounter with European culture.

Despite these regulations, the use of Christian objects as amulets was so widespread that even after the expulsion of the Portuguese in 1639, crosses and other elements of *nanban* iconography, like the black ship, remained symbols of protection and prosperity.¹⁶⁶ This may also explain the use of Christian imagery in the Shimabara rebellion, showing their opposition to the government while at the same time acting as protective symbols.¹⁶⁷ This is another example of the localisation and incorporation of 'foreign' cultural aspects, independent of the actual influence of the Europeans.

Kirishitan Monogatari

In 1639, right after the Shimabara rebellion, a text was published called *Kirishitan monogatari* ('Christian stories' or 'stories about Christians'). This text would continue to circulate in various versions and under various titles for 250 years, until the early Meiji period. The term *kirishitan* in these texts refers specifically to foreigners, not to native Japanese Christians. These foreigners come to Japan in the person of Urugan Bateren, who is described as looking strange, not completely human, but more like a *tengu* or *mikoshi nyudo*¹⁶⁸ and various kinds of animals. The name Urugan Bateren refers to Organtino Gneccchi-Soldo, the Jesuit priest who was the head of the church in Kyoto, who did go by the name Urugan. *Bateren* is the Japanese word for *padre*.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Curvelo, "The Disruptive Presence of Namban-jin," 595-596.

¹⁶⁵ Such as the previously popular *bombacha*, wide baggy trousers that the Europeans wore in hot climates, as well as silk and certain colours reserved for higher classes. E. Ikegami, *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 259-60 in Curvelo, "The Disruptive Presence of Namban-jin," 584.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 590-591.

¹⁶⁷ Curvelo, "The Disruptive Presence of Namban-jin," 591; Cooper, *The Southern Barbarians*, 94, 161.

¹⁶⁸ *Tengu* and *mikoshi nyudo* are two kinds of demons. *Tengu* have long noses and big eyes, and *mikoshi nyudo* are long-necked, skinny and tall, and wear priests' robes. Both are tricksters. Leuchtenberger, Jan C., "Demons and Conquerors: The West, Japan and the World in Early Modern Kirishitan texts." (Diss., University of Michigan, 2005), 2-3, 114.

¹⁶⁹ Leuchtenberger, "Demons and Conquerors," 3.



Figure 15. *Urugan Bateren arrives in Nagasaki* (detail). Illustration in the *Kirishitan monogatari*. 1665 (Edo period), Japan.¹⁷⁰

Note the markers of foreignness: his hair, long nose, large eyes, claw-like hands and feet, and Chinese-style clothing.

Developments in printing made the *Kirishitan monogatari* available to a wide audience.¹⁷¹ The text combines two genres of literature popular at that time: journalism-style reports, by covering the recent Shimabara rebellion, and supernatural folk tales, by the description of the frightening *bateren* with his strange powers.

The text contains an explanation of the *kirishitan* sect and their magical tricks, their plan to conquer Japan, their expulsion, and the Shimabara revolt. Over time, as the *Kirishitan monogatari* was reprinted and adapted into other texts, the narrative evolved into a more streamlined and sensationalist story, which painted the foreigners as even more evil, gave them more magical powers, and put more emphasis on their plan to conquer Japan. The *bateren* can perform magic and fly. Their sect is a false form of Buddhism. They heal the sick and give money to the poor, but only to trick people into trusting them.¹⁷²

In all versions, however, the ending remains the same. The *bateren* are discovered to be a false sect, their plan to conquer Japan is found out by Toyotomi Hideyoshi and they are expelled from Japan. The *Kirishitan monogatari* ends with the assertion that “Japan is the Land of the Gods (*shinkoku*) and a beneficiary of the law of Buddha and it was because of this that the foreign sect could not take hold.”¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Hiyane Antei ed., “*Kirishitan monogatari*,” *Kirishitan monogatari hoka sanpen* (*Kirishitan Monogatari and Three Others*). *Kirishitan bunko*, vol 1. (Keiseisha, 1926); in Leuchtenberger, “Demons and Conquerors,” 4.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁷² Leuchtenberger, “Demons and Conquerors,” 6, 27.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 25.

This echoes the points laid down in Hideyoshi's 1587 expulsion decree, which calls Japan the country of the *kami*, sees the Christian faith as going against the laws of Japan, and blames the padres for social disorder.¹⁷⁴

Kirishitan monogatari unites Shintō, Buddhism and Confucianism in their understanding of respect (*rei*). This is seen as a marker of civilization which the *kirishitan* religion lacks. Urugan Bateren is considered disrespectful because he does not kneel, and looks his superiors straight in the eye.¹⁷⁵ Especially in later versions of the text, the 'otherness' of Urugan Bateren is expressed not so much through his religion, which is merely a misguided form of Buddhism, but more through his outward behaviour. This marks a shift from religious to cultural arguments against the *kirishitan* doctrine. In this view, Japan's cultural traditions are inspired by the civilized countries India and China, so they are proper and suitable. The foreign *kirishitan* are not civilized, but barbarians, so their culture should be rejected.

Buddhism, Shintō and Confucianism were thus portrayed as the true ideology of Japan and the anti-thesis of Christianity. Later in the Edo period, Confucian principles of loyalty and social harmony were seen as the foundation of Japanese stability, which is undermined by the Christian emphasis on the individual and their spiritual allegiance to a foreign entity.¹⁷⁶ Christians were seen as going against their natural position as barbarians in the extremities of the world, by trying to conquer other countries. The act of giving alms, especially, was considered a subversion from the natural order in which believers should give donations to clerics, not the other way around. These serve as evidence for the unnatural nature of the Christian faith, which would inevitably upset the order of any society.¹⁷⁷

This contrasting confirms a Japanese identity which is in everything the opposite of the "Other" - not *kirishitan*, not disrespectful, not subverting the natural and social order, not loyal to a foreign power. Instead the Japanese are shown as revering the Buddhas and *kami*, respectful and civilized, mindful of social order, protected by a strong leader. Japan, in this narrative, marries Buddhism, Shintō and Confucianism into a culture of social hierarchy and fixed ritual practices. This shows Japan both as an independent country, as well as an active and important part of the Sinocentric worldview.¹⁷⁸

This shift in the narrative from religious to cultural opposition to Christianity and the emphasis on outward behaviour is also seen in the changing attitude of the persecutors towards actual Japanese Christians: from emphasis on their personal beliefs to complying with social norms.

However, *Kirishitan monogatari* was not distributed by the government as propaganda. It was popular literature, part of a larger trend in texts that dealt with foreign countries. Although the Iberians had at first been fitted into the existing Sinocentric Japanese worldview, by the early Edo period it became clear that this worldview had to be re-examined. Not just Iberians, but Dutch and English also came to Japan, with their slaves from Africa and South East Asia, and

¹⁷⁴ For the complete text of Hideyoshi's decree, see Boxer, *Christian Century*, 148.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁷⁶ This is the opinion of the Confucian scholar Miura Baien in response to the perceived Russian threat to northern Japan in 1784. Leuchtenberger, "Demons and Conquerors," 150-153.

¹⁷⁷ As written by the historian scholar Aizawa Seishisai in 1825 in a number of anti-Western and anti-Christian texts, provoked by Western countries requesting trade with Japan. Leuchtenberger, "Demons and Conquerors," 156.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 189-190.

brought information about other continents like Europe and the Americas. This upset the Sinocentric worldview, and suspicion about the colonial aggression of European countries was one of the main reasons for expelling the missionaries. Texts like *Kirishitan monogatari* made the threatening foreigners into a defeatable foe, thereby reassuring the readers of Japan's strength and stability.

The depiction of threatening foreigners as despicable and defeatable foes is not unique to Japan. It is similar to the ways the Middle East has been depicted by Europeans, the Orientalism described by Edward Said.¹⁷⁹ Orientalism changes a threat that is difficult to understand, into something that can be understood, reasonably abhorred, and defeated. The frightening appearance of the *bateren* is domesticated by describing them in terms familiar to the Japanese from folk tales. Next to painting an ugly image of an abhorable villain, using these familiar terms would make the *bateren* seem less threatening because they can be recognized and understood. It also marks them as sub-human and inferior, and thus defeatable.¹⁸⁰

This way of looking at foreigners would continue throughout the Edo period and even into early Meiji, illustrated by foreign figures with magical powers intent on conquering Japan (but of course never succeeding) serving as villains in popular plays and stories.¹⁸¹ This also explains the surge in reprintings of the *Kirishitan monogatari* in the early Meiji period, when Japan again had to deal with foreign powers and re-examine its position in the world.¹⁸² Thus, for over 250 years the Iberian *kirishitan* was used as the archetypical "Other" in Japanese imagination, and a symbol for the imperialistic threat of foreign countries.

Even nowadays, foreigners are still used as a contrast for Japan to talk about itself. In talkshows and other TV programs, foreigners are used to voice an opposing opinion which the Japanese participants can argue against.¹⁸³ In advertising and popular media, too, foreigners function "to delimit Japanese identity by visual quotations of what Japan and Japanese are not".¹⁸⁴ These are echos of the 'othering' that happened in the Edo period, and still serve to help Japanese people navigate their identity and their place in the world.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 112.

¹⁸⁰ Leuchtenberger, "Demons and Conquerors," 114.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 144-149.

¹⁸² Ibid., 107-110.

¹⁸³ Hambleton, Alexandra. "Reinforcing Identities? Non-Japanese Residents, Television and Cultural Nationalism in Japan.", *Contemporary Japan* 23, no. 1 (2011): 32.

¹⁸⁴ Creighton, Millie R. "Imagining the Other in Japanese advertising campaigns," in *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, ed. J. G. Carrier (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 136.

Conclusion: *Fumi-e* as a product of transculturation

The goal of this thesis was to explore how *fumi-e*, in particular the Volkenkunde *fumi-e*, can be seen as an illustration of the transcultural process that occurred in the encounter between Christianity and Japan. To this end, the various cultural influences on the Volkenkunde *fumi-e* were uncovered by Panofsky's method of iconological analysis, combined with the contextual approach of Summers and Winget.

This analysis showed that European art was localised and adapted into the Japanese context. *Fumi-e* are only one aspect of a long line of mutual artistic exchange, illustrated by the art of the Japanese students in the Jesuit *seminario* and the many objects and artworks covered by the term *nanban* art. This artistic exchange was part of a larger process of mutual influence that extended into virtually all corners and classes of society, from religion, to art and fashion, to politics, far beyond the reach or even the intention of the Europeans.

The use of *fumi-e* by the persecution shows how Christian concepts like the holiness of pictures and martyrdom were fitted into the Japanese context of pollution and impurity associated with feet. By casting the 'second generation' of *fumi-e*, the *bakufu* created objects that, although they were meant as a means to keep foreign influence out, in fact demonstrate the irreversible transcultural process in both their visual qualities as well as their application.

The persecution itself can be seen as part of this transcultural process. Anti-Christian and anti-foreign policies served local goals, securing the position of the *bakufu* and protecting the social order. The persecution was not solely focused on *kirishitan* religion but rather on weeding out potential threats to the central authority.

The systematization of the persecution changed existing institutions and established new ones. Its regulations affected not only Christians, but all members of the population, and also influenced the development of organized Buddhism in Japan. Its methods of surveillance were incorporated into the fabric of society and evolved into a form of population control. Thus it transcended its nominal purpose and became part of the the social and political structure of the Edo period.

The anti-Christian policies were part of an ongoing narrative that contrasted the foreign 'Other' against 'proper Japanese'. Next to ensuring compliance with social norms and securing Tokugawa authority, this narrative established a national identity and a way for Japan to assert itself in the world.

Concepts of 'otherness' based on the Iberians remained prevalent throughout the Edo period, and the figure of the foreign priests was a metaphor for the perceived imperialistic threat of Western countries, as well as providing a contrast to negotiate notions of a Japanese identity.

The topic of this thesis, the Volkenkunde *fumi-e*, embodies all the aspects mentioned above. It unites European Christian art traditions with the style of the Jesuit students in Japan, Buddhist iconography and *nanban* art. Its visual qualities are an illustration of the transculturation that happened in the 'Christian Century', while its purpose and use demonstrate how the subsequent persecution transformed society by providing methods for population control, assertion of authority for the Tokugawa *bakufu*, and creating a narrative about identity. It is therefore both a product and an illustration of the transcultural process that occurred in the encounter between Japan and Christianity.

Taking a transcultural approach to *fumi-e* and the persecution allows us to look beyond limiting notions of cultural purity and discover the processes that occur in the encounter of cultures. The encounter between the Japanese and the missionaries changed them both; the missionaries changed their cultural and religious practices in order to better fit Japan, and the Japanese localised and incorporated these practices and items into their own worldview, that subsequently also changed. These changes are not fully covered by terms of adaptation or acculturation, which see the individual cultural assets placed in a foreign environment as isolated, and both sides as fundamentally unchanging. Transculturation instead describes the process of mutual influence; a chain of encounters, reactions, and responses that transforms all parties.

Transculturation is often seen as positive. It is used to attribute agency to colonized people, and it explains the mixed influences in artworks. It is generally not used when talking about iconoclasm or persecution- those are seen in terms of clashes and conflict. However, conflict and war also cause interactions and transformations, and are thus part of the transcultural process.¹⁸⁵

Rather than seeing *fumi-e* and the anti-Christian policies as proof that Christianity and European culture are incompatible with Japan, instead they can be used to show how the response to Christianity has influenced Japanese policy and social structure, and how the ‘foreign’ was localised and incorporated in a larger narrative about national identity.

¹⁸⁵ Juneja, “Understanding Transculturalism,” 31- 32

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