

The database uploaded on this page is part of the research outcomes of the Ph.D. project titled *Self through the Other. Production, circulation and reception in Europe of written sources on Japan in the "Christian century"*. The project, completed in 2013 by Dr. Sonia Favi, was promoted by the Department of Asian and North African Studies and was awarded an entrance scholarship by the European Social Fund (ESF). It involved extended bibliographical and textual research on Japanese and Japan-related antique books produced and/or circulated in Italy before the “opening” of Japan in the second half of the Nineteenth century and resulted, among other outcomes, in the book titled *Self through the Other. Production, circulation and reception in Italy of sixteenth-century printed sources on Japan*. (Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, in print).

The database, as part of the project, was specifically aimed at the revaluation of the Japan-related or Japanese documental (historical and literary) materials held by the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana of Venice. These include many valuable and rare documents, whose accessibility is limited by the fact that they don't belong to a single collection. The books were in fact acquired under the many different circumstances that helped the growth of the Library, since its foundation in 1468: through donations, the most significant being the one by the linguist Emilio Teza, acquired by the Library in 1911; through the incorporation of private libraries located in the Republic of Venice and of part of the collections of the religious orders suppressed during the Napoleonic era; and by means of the law, promulgated by the Senate of Venice on May 11th 1603, according to which a copy of every book published in the Republic had to be handed, in parchment binding, to the Library. As a result, the books are scattered in the archives and it is not always easy to locate and access to them.

The database collects all documents of interest in the same electronic archive and includes, for each book, a bibliographic description and a content description. With the exception of some modern reproductions of works of limited accessibility, the books are all dated before 1851, in accord to the strictly chronological criteria applied by Biblioteca Marciana in discriminating between its antique books section and its modern books section. They fall into three main chronological groups.

The first group consists of books dated, roughly, from the mid-Sixteenth century to the first half of the Seventeenth century (even though mentions of the archipelago are included in some earlier works, such as Marco Polo's *Il milione* and the *Isolario*, by Francesco Bordone, of which Biblioteca Marciana's archives include one first edition, dated 1534). This is by far the richest group of materials,

produced in the context of the first cultural encounter between Europe and Japan, brought about by the Jesuits missionaries operating on the archipelago since 1549.

The Jesuits produced the very first direct accounts on Japan to be widely circulated in Europe, and books reporting about the status of the Jesuit Mission in Japan – “Lettere Annali” (Annual Letters), the official reports about the status of the Mission sent every year by the missionaries to the Father General of the Company of Jesus in Rome, and other letters addressed to superiors in Europe or to missionaries and lay Christians stationed in other parts of East Asia – are predominant in this group. Biblioteca Marciana possesses about 70 works of this kind, sometimes in more than one edition. A few reports are printed singularly, but typically they are collected in anthologies, under the generic title of “Avvisi”. 22 of them cover the first phase of the Japanese Mission, extending from the arrival in Japan of Father Francis Xavier in 1549 to the arrival of Father Alessandro Valignano in 1579. These earlier accounts include letters written by Xavier himself, by the Fathers who took charge of the Mission in Japan after Xavier’s departure in 1551 and one rare instance of report written by a Japanese convert, Brother Lourenço, the first Japanese layman to be received in the Society of Jesus (the text, focused on the establishment of the Jesuit Mission in Kyoto, is included in the *Nuovi Avvisi dell’Indie di Portogallo, Venuti nuouamente dalli R. Padri della Compagnia di Giesu, et tradotti dalla lingua Spagnuola nella Italiana*, Venezia, Michele Tramezzino, 1565, and it is the only Italian translation ever realized of the letter – two Portuguese translations also exist, but the original is lost). The remaining reports mostly cover the years during which the Japanese Mission was under the direction of Alessandro Valignano (1579-1603), with only scattered materials from the first decades of the Seventeenth century. They testify the rising fortunes of the Jesuit Mission and its progressive decline, with the arrival of other religious orders in Japan and the beginning of religious persecutions. The way they are written reflects the more organized nature of the Mission in this period and the influence of Valignano’s approach in directing it: Valignano was very conscious of the necessity of gaining a thorough understanding of the linguistic, cultural and religious background of the people he aimed at converting; therefore, while Xavier’s accounts tend to focus very strictly on missionaries’ activities, a tendency only partially rectified by his immediate successors, reports dated from 1579 onwards are usually richer in information about Japanese social, religious and political history. The presence of this kind of materials in Biblioteca Marciana sheds some light on the interest stirred in Europe, during the Sixteenth century, by the Jesuit Mission and Japan in general. The reports are all in Vernacular Italian, and, with a few exception, they are usually editions of reports originally published in Rome, then later reprinted in Venice or in the Republic. As inferred by most

bibliographies focusing on Japan-related texts, this was a very common occurrence: reports, mainly written in Spanish or Portuguese, were usually collected in Rome and, after having being submitted to the board of censors, they were translated into Italian and printed, with the exclusive for the first distribution granted to Jesuits themselves. After the first edition, they could be reprinted freely, in Rome or in any other Italian State, and were usually translated into other languages as well. In this process, reports basically lost their original epistolary character, and acquired a more “journalistic” nature: they became instruments of popularization, designed to appeal the interest of a general public. Venice, which was at the time the largest printing centre in Italy, became also a centre of pivotal importance in their diffusion. The high number of such texts in Biblioteca Marciana is a sign of the comparatively high demand for the kind of information they provided.

The first chronological group also includes a number of printed books focused on the first Japanese embassy sent to Europe. The embassy, planned by Valignano and sent in the name of three *daimyō* (lords) from Kyūshū (Ōtomo Yoshishige, Arima Harunobu and Ōmura Sumitada), was received by the Holy Father, in a public hearing, and by the King of Spain in 1585. The event stirred much curiosity in Europe, and prompted the publication of a huge number of booklets (at least 80 titles published in a time-span of a few years). Biblioteca Marciana preserves 23 books of this kind. The earliest booklets are dated 1585, and are in the majority pamphlets and gazettes aimed at divulging news about the embassy. Some are reports of the public hearing granted by the Pope to the ambassadors, while others provide more detailed accounts about the voyage of the ambassadors and include short descriptions of Japan (the *Avisi venuti novamente da Roma delli XXIII di marzo 1585 dell'entrata nel publico concistorio de due Ambasciatori mandati da tre Rè potenti del Giappone*, Bologna, Alessandro Benacci, 1585 also includes an illustration showing the clothes worn by the ambassadors in attending to the hearing). The *Relationi della venuta degli Ambasciatori Giaponesi a Roma*, by Guido Gualtieri (Venice, Gioliti, 1586) of which two copies are kept in Biblioteca Marciana, is the most complete extant work about the embassy: it includes a long description of Japan, a detailed account of the voyage of the ambassadors, and collects and reorganizes all the somewhat repetitive information scattered in previous publications (the work is in fact so exhaustive that previous pamphlets were no longer reprinted after its publication). Later works about the embassy consist mainly in *Avvisi* including copies of the letters the ambassadors had brought to Europe, or in letters written by missionaries in Japan that include accounts about the return trip of the ambassadors. The presence in a single Library of such a consistent number of titles, some of which were reprinted in a

very close succession even after the departure of the embassy, testify an editorial boom that sheds light on the impact the embassy made in Europe.

Another piece of great value kept in Biblioteca Marciana and belonging to the first chronological group is one of the very rare extant examples of *kirishitanban*, the books printed, in Latin, *rōmaji* or Japanese, by means of the moveable type printing press which was brought by the above mentioned ambassadors in their return trip from Europe. It is a copy of the *Sanctos no Gosagveono Vchi Nvqigaki*, a *rōmaji* narration, in 365 folios, of the lives of the saints, printed in Kazusa (Japan) in 1591. The printing press that produced the *kirishitanban* literature was installed first in Goa, where the earliest books were produced, and then, subsequently, in Kazusa, Amakusa, Nagasaki, Manila and in Macao, according to the change of political circumstances. We know of only two editions printed in Kazusa, the *Dochirina Kirishitan*, a catechism in Japanese characters, and the *Sanctos no Gosagveo* itself. The copy kept in Marciana, discovered in 1979 and the one belonging to the Bodleian Library in Oxford are the only extant copies we know of as of now, and are the earliest extant example of *kirishitanban* printed in Japan. The book includes a Japanese-Portuguese glossary with a total of 2152 words, and is of great interest both from an historical and a linguistic point of view.

Very interesting from the standpoint of linguistics are also the (rare) copies of two works written by the Dominican Father Diego Collado, both printed in Rome by the Congregatio de propaganda fide, and dated 1632. The first book is the *Niffon no cōtobani yō confesion* (also known with its Latin title *Modus confitendi et examinandi poenitentem iaponensem*), a collection of formulas for the sacrament of Confession, written in *rōmaji*, with parallel Latin text and with added grammar annotations. The formulas, as specified in the Latin prologue of the book, are aimed at exemplifying the grammar rules illustrated in the *Ars grammaticae Iaponicae linguae*, another work by Collado dated 1632. The second book, the *Dictionarivm sive thesavri Lingvae Iaponicae compendivm*, is a Latin-*rōmaji* dictionary, meant as well as an integration of the *Ars grammaticae*, and created at the scope of providing a basic vocabulary for the missionaries in Japan. The books are two of the earliest extant examples of works specifically focused on Japanese linguistics.

Books published from the second half of the Sixteenth century to the first half of the Seventeenth century include also a number of historical works, of various nature: some are general histories of the monastic orders, that include passing references to Japan; others, instead, focus more specifically on the experiences of Christians in East Asia and dwell in more detail on Japan's social and political history. The second group includes works by Juan Gonzalez de Mendoza and Giovanni Pietro Maffei, and a copy of the well-known *Historia del regno di Voxu del Giapone* by Scipione Amati, dated 1615.

This last text focuses on the experiences of the Franciscan missionary Luis Sotelo in Japan and is one of the few books to provide a detailed account of the embassy sailed in 1613 and guided by Sotelo himself to the Pope and the King of Spain, in the name of the Japanese *daimyō* Date Masamune.

Among manuscript materials, a (supposedly) original copy of the third letter addressed by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (and written by an unknown Buddhist monk) to Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas, governor in the Philippine Islands, in 1593, also stands out.

The second chronological group of books includes works dated from the second half of the Seventeenth century to the end of the Eighteenth century. If one excludes the reprinted editions or translations of earlier works (such as the 1749 edition of the *Le istorie delle Indie Orientali*, originally written in Latin by Giovanni Pietro Maffei) it is, comparatively, a small group of documents. This reflects the change in the nature of the intercourse between Japan and Europe imposed by the final edict of expulsion in 1639, and by the consequent decline of missionaries' activities in Japan. The island of Dejima in Nagasaki bay remained the only formal point of access to Japan for Europeans, and it was reserved to the activities of the members of the Dutch East India Company. Therefore, in the second half of the Seventeenth century, only people working for the Dutch East India Company had the possibility to collect direct accounts on Japan.

Books from this period include some late examples of historical works related to the Jesuit Mission in Japan: a copy, dated 1653, of the *Dell'istoria della Compagnia di Giesu. L'Asia descritta*, by the Jesuit Father Daniello Bartoli, which offers a summa of the rich production of missionaries' reports of the preceding century; a copy, dated 1665, of the *Delle missioni de' padri della Compagnia di Giesu nella Prouincia del Giappone* by the Jesuit Father Giovanni Filippo de Marini (first printed in 1657); and a copy, dated 1667, of the first, Latin edition, printed in Amsterdam, of the *Soc. Jesu China monumentis* by the Jesuit Father Athanasius Kircher.

The other works are instances of the literary production connected with the Dutch presence in Dejima. These include a number of works by the German scholar Kaemper Engelbert, who, employed in Nagasaki by the Dutch East India Company from 1690 to 1692, collected a vast amount of books and first-hand information on Japan. Biblioteca Marciana preserves a copy, dated 1712, of his *Amoenitatum exoticarum politico-physico-mediciarum*, and two copies, dated respectively 1729 and 1732 of the French translation of his well-known *History of Japan*, first published, posthumously, in 1727. The first work is focused mainly on Persia and Japan, the second exclusively on Japan, and they both belong to the field of natural history; the *History of Japan* in particular dwells on a range

of matters including geography, history, ethnography and botany and is considered by the majority of scholars as the most complete extant work about the archipelago from this period. The French edition includes also, in its preface, a small bibliography of the missionaries' reports on Japan published up to that moment.

Kaempfer has long been treated as the only authentic and reliable source on Japan for the period going from the end of the Seventeenth century until the beginning of the Nineteenth century. Several scholars, however, have recently attempted at underlying how his works are more the expression of an early surge of Japan studies than the product of the interest of a lone individual. Moreover, scholars have stressed the importance of other authorities, whose works are less organic and complete than those of Kaempfer, but still informative. Biblioteca Marciana includes some instances of this kind of literature. An early example is the *Descriptio Regni Iaponiae* by the German geographer Bernhardus Varenius, published in 1649 in Amsterdam. The book includes a description of both the territory of Japan and its population (with an added brief description of Siam) and is bound together with a treaty on Christian religion in Japan, the *Tractatus in quo agitur de Iaponiorum Religione*. It can be objected that Varenius was less scholarly-oriented than Kaempfer, and more concerned with the practical aims of his work than with Japan as an object of study. In this period, the Dutch were concerned with the production of a literature about Japan that would offer practical knowledge to the men of the Dutch East India Company, and Varenius himself, as clearly expressed in his subsequent work, the *Geographia generalis*, was well aware of the link between geography, politics and trade. This, however, doesn't lessen the value of his work, very informative about the political structure, the society and the customs of Japan. The Library also preserves a copy of the *Ambassades mémorables des la Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, dated 1680. This is the French translation, published in Amsterdam, of a Dutch book by Arnoldus Montanus, first published in 1669. The book, written by the author during his stay in Dejima, and based both on first-hand accounts collected in Japan and on previously published material (such as missionaries' writings), reports of several embassies of the Dutch East India Company, headed to the Shogun's Court since 1640. It includes descriptions of Japanese cities and accounts of political events and of the persecution of Christians.

The third chronological group includes works from the first half of the Nineteenth century. The number of books related to Japan preserved in the Library from this period grows again, reflecting a general renaissance in the interest towards Japan, that would lead to the birth of modern Japanology in the second half of the century.

Some works still belong to the tradition of historical, geographical and ethnographical books from the previous century. Two examples are the *Tableaux historiques de l'Asie, depuis la Monarchie de Cyrus jusqu'à nos jours ; accompagnés de recherches historiques et ethnographiques sur cette partie du monde*, by the German orientalist Julius Klaproth, dated 1826, or the *Storia del Giappone compilata sulle opere di Kaempfer, di Thunberg, di Beaumont, de' letterati inglesi e d'altri*, by Giulio Astori, a compilation mostly based on previous works, dated 1826.

Other books from this period, such as those written by the Captains William Broughton, Adam Johann Von Krusenstern and Basil Hall, belong instead to the category of travel accounts. They offer a glimpse on the political changes in act in the first half of the Nineteenth century and on the growing pressure exerted by both Russia and England on Japanese boundaries. The work by Basil Hall (*Account of a voyage of discovery to the West Coast of Corea, and the Great Loo-choo Island*, London, 1818) is particularly interesting in this respect, as it focuses mainly on Ryūkyū islands, which were to be annexed to Japan in the second half of the century. The book includes also an English-Ryukyuan vocabulary and some comparisons between the Japanese language and the Ryukyuan language.

This is a sign of how Japanese was becoming, in Europe, the centre of a discourse on language. This tendency is also testified by a series of works specifically centered on Linguistics, that anticipates the more advanced studies of the second half of the century. One of the most representative examples, amongst the ones hosted at Biblioteca Marciana, is the *Asya polyglotta*, by Julius Klaproth, dated 1831, which offered the base for a new classification of Eastern languages.

The database is meant to encourage and facilitate the access to and the study of the materials preserved in Biblioteca Marciana. The documents, as illustrated above, offer insight on a variety of subjects, ranging from history, to historical bibliography, to geography, to religion, to linguistics, and may therefore attract the interest of specialists from different disciplines; moreover, analyzing the number and distribution of the documents elicits new, intriguing questions about the kind of public they attracted, and sheds new light on the nature of the cultural intercourse between Japan, Italy and Europe in the pre-modern era.