PAPERS COMMUNICATED

8. *New Scientific Knowledge as an Incentive to the Acceptance of Kirishitan Missions.*

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In many a religious propaganda the association of charity or scientific knowledge works a considerable part, both on the part of the proselytes and of the converts. An illustration of this is seen in the history of Kirishitan missions in Japan. Besides works of charity, scientific knowledge as supplied by the missionaries worked to a large extent to arouse curiosity, at least, and to induce some of the seekers after knowledge to contact with the missionaries. This was particularly so because Japanese culture was in its lowest ebb in the sixteenth century and people lived in the depth of ignorance, while a few keen for knowledge, particularly medical knowledge, were attempting to introduce a new Chinese medicine. The Jesuit missionaries brought with them some knowledge of new astronomy, together with much of geographical informations and some elements of natural history and physical geography. Putting aside medical knowledge and practice¹⁾ these scientific or quasi-scientific informations attracted much attention of the scholars of that time who knew little else than legendary lore of astronomy or natural history.

We know through Frois²⁾ that questions about solar and lunar eclipses, the stars, the ebb and tide, and similar matters were eagerly asked, in the early stage of the missions. Later, we are told, an Academy founded by Spinola in Miyako (1609) attracted a number of scholars to its work,³⁾ and an astronomical observatory was founded by the Jesuits in Ozaka (1611).⁴⁾ Though we cannot estimate exactly the achievements of these foundations, their influence can be suspected in some legends, such as the connection of some of the prosecuted Kirishitans with the Prince Hachijo,⁵⁾ who was a great patron of scholars, or some knowledge of astrology combined with meteorology attributed to

1) Cf. Proc. 4. 137-140.2) Frois, *Geschichte Japans*, 108, 122, 124, 138.

3) Pagès, 194.

4) Charlevoix, 4. 228.

5) B. 1579, d. 1629. His consort was a grand daughter of Maria Kyogoku. Cf. Proc. 4. 138.

some soldiers who fought on the side of Ozaka in 1614-15.¹⁾ An evident case of the use of new science by the proselytes is mentioned by a Confucian scholar,²⁾ that the missionary he met showed him a map of the globe, a plano-convex lens, and a prism³⁾ which the Confucianist ridiculed simply as absurd or childish.

Besides these traces of the influence of new scientific knowledge we have before us a definite material showing what kind of physics and natural history was taught by the missionaries, and that is the *Xinjinrocu*, the Japanese translation of a Spanish book of doctrine and apologetics, Luis de Granada's *Symbolo de la Fe*.⁴⁾

The First Book is devoted to the existence and attributes of Deus and the larger parts are apologetic remarks adducing examples from the then modern science of the Occident used for teleological arguments. A system of astronomy, Ptolemeian though it was, plays the chief part beside some elements of physics and physical geography, physiology and anatomy, while among the examples of animal instinct there are cited instances from the new continents. The details can easily be examined by European scholars through the original, but our point here is that those informations published in Japanese translation must have attracted much attention in Japan and aroused more curiosity among scholarly-minded people. Here again it is impossible to ascertain the extent of the circulation of the book, yet we can safely say that it did not remain without influencing some who were eager for knowledge. This can be seen from some later events. One is the case of Arai who, in examining Sidotti who had been arrested on landing in 1708, highly appreciated Sidotti's geographical and astronomical knowledge. Though Arai did not publish all what he had heard from the Jesuit father, the informations given by him gave much impetus to search after new knowledge. The other is the welcome extended to the mathematical and astronomical books published by Jesuit missions in China, which had been rigidly prohibited since the Shimabara insurrection and were partially released in 1720 and more later on. The lifting of the ban was due to a petition presented by the official astronomers to the Government, and this shows a great thirst for knowledge on their part. However, in this stage the books were studied entirely apart from missionary questions.

1) One of them, Goto, was an apostate. Cf. Pagès, 306.

2) Proc. 5. 308. Cf. Pagès, 106.

3) 圓摸地圖, 表凸裏平鏡, 如水晶三角物.

4) Proc. 7. 291.