

**The Perception of the Japanese in Early Modern Spain:
Not Quite “The Best People Yet Discovered”**

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I

It is generally believed that Early Modern Europeans considered the Japanese to be almost as civilized as themselves; the only shortcoming being that they had yet to accept Christianity.¹ This understanding comes primarily from two major sources: the Jesuit letters sent from Japan and the writings on the first legation of Japanese sent to Europe in 1594. Francisco Xavier, who arrived in Kagoshima in 1549 and soon after founded the first mission in Japan, made the case to Church leaders and secular courts that the Japanese were superior to any other people found in the rest of the pagan world. The “fair-complexioned” natives could be converted through reasoning and not through war, for their intellectual capacity, interest in education, and civilized way of life made them most ideal for conversion to Christianity (Xavier 217). Xavier’s view was frequently echoed in other writings from the Japanese missions.² It is important to note here that for missionaries like Xavier, a fair skin complexion, as put in Rotem Kowner’s words, “signified culture, refinement, and a ‘just like us’ designation not the explicit connotations of race” (752). For Xavier, all evidence pointed to the conclusion that the Japanese people were the best people yet discovered (“la mejor hasta agoura descubierta; y me parece que entre gente ynfiel non se hallará otra que gane a los japones” [186]). Xavier’s optimistic conception of the Japanese, however, was mostly confined to religious circles. As Adriana Boscaro’s work has shown, news concerning Japanese missions sent by the Jesuits rarely ever reached secular audiences. By and large, Xavier’s European contemporaries remained unaware and indifferent about Japan and its people.

¹ During the Papal reception of the first Japanese legation, Gaspar Gonsalves, a Jesuit professor, highlighted this view in a Latin speech. In it, he declares: “Japan is, it is true, so far away that its name is hardly known and some have even doubted its existence. In spite of this, those who know it set it before all the countries of the East, and compare it to those of the West, in its size, the number of its cities, and its warlike and cultured people. All that has been lacking to it has been the light of the Christian faith. But when not so long ago, the gospel had made its way there with the authority of the Holy See, it was received, by the help of God, as in the case of the ancient Church, first by the lower classes and then little by little by the nobility as well, and at length, under the happy and golden rule of Gregory, the sovereigns and princes” (qtd. and trans. Pastor 462).

² Gaspar Vilela wrote that “la gente es toda blanca y no le hacen ventaja los portugueses;” Luís Fróis compared a Japanese man to that of a German, “en su blancura de rostro parecía un aleman;” and Alessandro Valignano went as far as suggesting that the Japanese were somewhat more naturally civilized than Europeans, “la gente es toda blanca y de mucha policia, porque aun los plebeyos y labradores son entresí bien criados y a maravilla corteses, que parecen ser criados en corte” (Valignano, *Sumario* 5, 5 n.10).

It was the first Japanese legation to visit Portugal, Spain, and Rome that finally “put Japan on the map for most Europeans without doubt,” to quote Donald Lach’s words (705).³ In fact, a year after the Japanese envoys’ visit, Gerard de Jode’s map of the Northern hemisphere, included a note that related the reception of the legates by the Pope (Gregory XIII) (Kish 43). The emissaries were sent from Nagasaki by the Jesuit Visitor Alessandro Valignano in February of 1582 and reached Europe (first in Lisbon) via Malacca and Goa by August 1584.⁴ Mancio Ito and Miguel Chijiwa were the designated legates while Martinho Hara and Juliaõ Nakaura were sent as companions (Schütte 346-54; Elison 408-09; Cooper 5-6). They had all been boarding students at the seminary of Arima since childhood, and thus, were already knowledgeable of European cultural practices. In addition to their schooling in traditional Japanese letters, they had studied Latin and Portuguese, and probably received instruction in European music, chess, and fine arts (Moran 9, 13). The four Japanese legates were accompanied by a Portuguese Jesuit, Diogo de Mesquita, who served as their tutor, guide, and interpreter, and a Japanese *irmão*, Jorge de Loyola (Valignano 1946, 35 n. 5; Fróis xiii).⁵ Valignano had handpicked the four adolescents, between fourteen and fifteen years old, from Christian aristocratic clans.⁶ In his letters, Valignano explicitly emphasized the nobility of the youth as well as their relations to the powerful *daimyos* (or feudal lords).⁷ Ito represented Otomo Sorin of

³ It has been a misnomer to call the first Japanese mission to Europe an “embassy,” because it was not sent to fulfill any diplomatic relations between the sovereign powers. The four legates’s given task was to bring letters from their representative *daimyos* as expressions of allegiance (see Corradini 21). On the other hand, the second mission, led by Hasekura Rokuyemon Tsunenaga and Francisco Sotelo was of diplomatic nature and, thus, is accurately defined as an embassy.

⁴ Valignano was sent to East Asia as Visitor of the Jesuit missions in 1574. His objectives were two-fold. On one hand, he wanted to make the Japanese aware of the greatness of Europe and of its Roman Catholic Church. He hoped to imprint on the youth the richness and the magnitude of the influence of the Catholic religion in Europe. The Japanese tended to see the missionaries as poor and socially inferior and he thought that through his mission he could raise the status of the Jesuits in Japan (1943, 395-96). On the other hand, he wanted to demonstrate to the Pope, the King of Spain, and courtly circles the achievements of the Jesuits in Japan. He attempted to provide a profile of Japan through the example of the four young men he sent to Europe. He believed that an interest in the Japanese as individuals would secure an increase and more constant financial aid for the missions. Unfortunately for Valignano and the Jesuit missions in Japan, the material achievements of the legation turned out to be negligible and short-lived. At the request of the legation, Sixtus V and Gregory XIII increased the subvention for the missions in Japan from four thousand to six thousand ducats per year, but the funds were interminently sent, if at all. As a result, the Jesuits continued to fund most of the missions with their engagement in the silk trade between Macao and Nagasaki (Massarella 332-36).

⁵ They brought three servants: two Japanese, Constantino Dourado and Augustino, and a Chinese servant of unknown name from Macao.

⁶ Valignano believed that the courts of Europe would find them more worthy of note because of their status. “Y desta man[eir]a se movessen os Principes a ajudar Japão y por ysto pareceo bem yr estes meninos tan honrados y tan nobres mandados del Rey de Bungo y del Rey de Arima y de Don Bartolomeu [Omura Sumitada]” (1943, 396).

⁷ European missionaries translated the title of *daimyo* (in Japanese, “great holders of private land,” equivalent to European feudal lords) as “king” and the title of “shogun” (in Japanese, “Barbarian-

Bungo.⁸ Ito's grandfather, Yoshisuke, had been a powerful *daimyo* of Hyuga until 1587. Miguel Chijiwa was the nephew of Omura Sumitada and a cousin of Arima Harunobu, and thus represented both *daimyos*. Martinho Hara and Juliaõ Nakaura, also from noble roots, were sent as companions (Moran 14-15).⁹ Like Hasekura's embassy, which was to be sent decades later, the legation had not been sponsored by the Japanese state (Masarella 332).

As Valignano had hoped, these flesh and blood models of cultured behavior and learnedness greatly impressed their hosts, who observed them meticulously and commented on their refined mannerisms, courtesy and modesty, and generally on their "lack of barbarism."¹⁰ In Spain, they were welcomed by the archbishop of Toledo, and given two audiences by Philip II in a manner that was suitable to ambassadors of principal foreign princes (on the way to Rome and on their return from Rome). Gregory XIII had Rome greet the legates with great pomp and ceremony. He received them in a public consistory in which he was reportedly moved to tears, as he watched the young envoys kneel down before him and kiss his feet (Fróis 155-56).¹¹ They were received with comparable eagerness in Venice, Milan, Genoa, and Barcelona among other cities. The first Japanese envoys left Europe in April 1586 (Cooper 137).

Evidence of the enthusiastic response of hosts reverberated through the copious letters and publications circulated at around the time of their journey, many in areas where the legates had not visited (Lyons, Liège, Dillingen, Prague and Cracow). There were, at least, seventy-six printed works in Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Latin, French, and German that dealt with some aspect of the delegation between 1585-93 (Boscaro 186-88). That these Japanese "kings" or "princes," as they were erroneously called, aroused a sense of respect, admiration, and wonder about the Japanese as a parallel cultural entity has been well established (Fróis 172-73).¹² What requires further

Expelling Great General," or the equivalent of the "military head of state") as "emperor." Japan had an emperor, but since the twelfth century any real power was in the hands of the shogun (Cary 28).

⁸ When making references to Japanese names (of non-Christians or in non-Christian forms) we follow the Japanese norm, which requires that the family name be placed before the given name.

⁹ Hara's sister had married one of Omura's brothers. Juliaõ Nakaura's father had been the lord of a fortress between Omura and Hirado.

¹⁰ Alessandro Benacci, emissary of Bologna, writes in a chronicle that "non ha niente del barbaro. Nelle maniere sono civili, cortesi e modesti" (Berchet 152). Valignano explains in his instructions to Mesquita that "os Japões fossem conhecidos de S. Mag[esta]de y de S. Sanct[ida]de y dos Cardeas y mais Senhores de Europa, pera q̃ vendaos [sic] y tratandaos [sic] entendessen de quanta capacidade e primor saõ" (1943, 397).

¹¹ According to Fróis, "o Santo Pontifice não pode reter as lagrimas; antes se lhe arrazarão os olhos d'agua [...] e logo abraçou e beijou á cada hum delles na face cõ tanta brandura, q̃ á todos moveo, e fazia enternecer, sem duvida foi hum espectáculo bem digno de ser visto, ver tres mossos de tão pouca idade, nobres, e de tão remotos, e distantes Reinos virem de tão longe só a professar sua obediencia á Igr[ej] Romana" (155-56).

¹² A booklet published in Bologna in 1585 (*Breve Ragvaglio Dell'Isola Del Giappone, Et di questi Signori, che di là son venuti à dar obediencia alla Santità di N.S. Papa Gregorio XIII*) illustrates the Italians' newly found fascination with all things Japanese. Besides providing news on the journey of the

explanation, nonetheless, is how effective the legation was in sustaining a positive interest about the Japanese in other regions outside of Italy.

This article explores this topic by analyzing how the second Japanese legation sent to Europe, led by Hasekura Rokuyemon and Francisco Sotelo, was received in Spain. A careful study of chronicles, letters, and other documentary records of Hasekura's legation, shows that the so-called early European fascination with the Japanese remained only partial to the regions in Italy. The broadcasted enthusiasm that the Spanish elite had shown in their welcoming of the Japanese envoys sent by Valignano had turned into indifference by the time Hasekura arrived. Indeed, there is not a single reference to Valignano's envoys among all of the many documents produced by Spaniards about Hasekura's visit. For the Spaniards, the treatment and interest in the Japanese were mainly determined by the social standing and public reputation of their spokesmen (within Spanish society). Ultimately, neither Japanese legations improved the knowledge nor roused the curiosity of most Spaniards about the Japanese as a distinct people.

II

On October 23, 1614, the second legation and the first diplomatic embassy from Japan arrived in Seville. The legation had been sent to New Spain, Spain, and Rome by Date Masamune (1567-1636), the *daimyo* of the Japanese territory of Boxu (present Sendai). Date's primary motivation was to establish trade relations between Boxu and New Spain (and possibly Seville). Sometime in 1612, Date met the Franciscan Luis Sotelo, who was at the time trying to organize a Christian legation to pay homage to Philip III and the Pope. Date agreed to finance the embassy in exchange of commercial benefits and sent a samurai, Hasekura Rokuemon Tsunenaga, to lead the embassy along with Sotelo. The Japanese historian Tokutomi best summed up Date Masamune's aims when he said that he represented the interests of "those who wished to use the Kingdom of Heaven for Trade" (Boxer 314). Sotelo, Hasekura, and about one hundred and eighty Japanese men, mostly merchants, set sail to New Spain on January 28, 1613 ("Consulta, 2 de diciembre de 1614" 127-28).¹³ About twenty to

envoys, it includes a description of Japan and Japanese customs. The text is preceded by a list of eight Japanese words and their Italian translation. The words are *Tonxù* (Dio), *mochai* (pane), *sachè* (vino), *voià* (padre), *fauà* (madre), *cò* (figliuolo), *fì* (giorno), and *for* (notte) (see summary extract in Boscaro 34-35).

¹³ During their stay in Acapulco, they were victims of robbery and attacks by the locals. Hasekura was supposedly so distressed over the treatment that he was contemplating to return to Japan without making his trip to Europe. According to Huarte, "por lo que en Acapulco fue maltratado él y su gente, y por avelle detenido su nave y obligado a dejar allí su sustento y reparo 50.000 pesos de los que traía para gasto de su persona, se le representaron mayores inconvenientes en lo que le resta por andar y haçer en su enbaxada; y así quiso bolber a dar cuenta de todo, y dízenme que el virrey, arçobispo, Ynquisición y Audiencia le animaron a venir acá [Seville] y le ofrezieron toda ayuda" (122). To ensure better treatment in the city of Mexico, the Viceroy of New Spain passed a specific law to protect the Japanese.

thirty crew members, probably servants and others from the samurai class, continued on the voyage to Europe.¹⁴ They arrived in the port of Sanlúcar de Barrameda (about 115 kilometers or 75.5 miles from Seville) on October 5, 1613.

The welcoming that Date's embassy was given in their first visit to Seville was nothing short of spectacular. The impression we obtain from reading documents regarding the visitors' reception is that the entire city of Seville (and its neighboring Coria del Río) was exceedingly interested in engaging in a cultural exchange with the Japanese visitors. The local nobility and the city council of Seville went to great lengths to make sure that all the events and activities arranged for the embassy fulfilled the highest standards. Soon after the visitors arrived in Sanlúcar de Barrameda (on September 30), the Duke of Medina Sidonia welcomed them into his town and provided luxurious carriages and accommodations for the entire crew. The Duke also secured for the embassy two galleys that they could use to make their way to Coria del Río, the birthplace of Father Sotelo, where they were to reside for about three weeks while Seville prepared itself for its official reception (Fernández Gómez 41).

The city councilmen believed that the visit of the Japanese was a unique and momentous event and that they needed to make it as memorable and impressive as possible. They agreed that all public activities had to be executed "con la mayor autoridad y aplauso que fuere posible" ("Actas, 8 de octubre de 1614" 63-65). For hosting the Japanese, they chose the renowned Palace of the Alcázar, a place strictly reserved for the royal family and other high-ranking visitors. There was unanimous agreement, at this point, that all of the expenses for hosting the legation had to be disbursed by the city. The council also made sure that the embassy's official entry into Seville was endowed with regal qualities. Escorted by the highest Sevillian officials, the visitors paraded into the city. The apparent excitement of Sevillians was such that the Archbishop of Seville is known to have said that the Three Kings of the Orient had come to town (Gil 394-95). Throughout their month-stay, the envoys were the honored guests at public festivals, theatrical performances, dances, and guided tours. Unfortunately for the visitors, Sevillian hospitality was not to be repeated elsewhere in Spain. On November 25th, the legation left for Madrid, where Sotelo and the Japanese were to receive a much more subdued and distant reception.

Were Sevillians more open and curious about the Japanese than their Spanish compatriots? For Sevillian historian Juan Gil the embassy received an exceptional welcome because it had been orchestrated by Sotelo, his family, and friends in the city

This rule asks that all dealings between "españoles y naturales mulatos Mestiços y negros procedan en todo lo suso dho con los dhos Japones sin hazerles injuria de obra ni de palabra biolencias ni otros exessor con q^e los yrriten" ("Copia de la orden" 999).

¹⁴ There are discrepancies as to the exact number of Japanese that came to Europe. The Duke of Medina Sidonia says that "binieron por la Nueva España con 30 criados" ("Letter, 9 October 1614" 53). Juan Gallardo de Céspedes cites "veynte y tres ó veinticuatro japonés" ("Letter, 2 November 1614" 75). Francisco de Huarte describes: "El embaxador está aquí con veinte criados xapones, su capitán de la guardia, y trae algunos de estos satélites, que la hacen a su persona" (122).

council. Furthermore, we propose that the Sevillian reception was more of a celebration of Sotelo's homecoming and less of a welcome for the Japanese visitors. As argued below, Sevillians were only interested in Hasekura because of his relationship to Sotelo. To them, Hasekura seems to have represented little more than a living testimony of Sotelo's success as missionary in the Oriental Indies.

Luis Sotelo (1574-1624) was the second son of Don Diego Caballero de Cabrera and Doña Catalina Niño Sotelo. Don Diego had been a well-respected Sevillian councilman, a *veinticuatro* (or alderman) of *converso* ancestry (Gil 390). While Diego's first son (named like his father) followed his father's steps to eventually take his post as alderman in the city council, Sotelo joined the Franciscan order and, in 1599, headed to the missions in the Far East. After spending three years in the Philippine Islands the order transferred him to Japan. Sotelo soon stood out for his proficiency in Japanese and became a valued translator for both missionaries and Japanese alike. In 1610, the ex-Shogun, Ieyasu Tokugawa, hoping to begin a trade agreement with Philip III, chose Sotelo to go to New Spain and Spain as his emissary.¹⁵ Ieyasu's plan was to send him along with Rodrigo Vivero y Velasco's in the latter's return trip back to Mexico. Sotelo accepted the post, but later resigned, citing a serious illness as justification.¹⁶ There were rumors that Sotelo was forced to give up the post because he was unable to receive permission to do so from his superiors (Schütte 81-89).

Regardless of the exact reason for Sotelo's resignation, the ex-Shogun became increasingly dissatisfied with Sotelo's behavior, imprisoned him, and sentenced him to death in 1612.¹⁷ Date, who was interested in sending Sotelo as his own envoy, learned of Sotelo's sentence and convinced the Shogun Hidetada to reverse the order.¹⁸ As mentioned above, Date believed that his legation could be more effective if he sent Sotelo along with his retainer Hasekura. Sebastián Vizcaíno, who had been in Japan since June of 1611 in search for the legendary "Islas de Oro y Plata," and whose ship had been severely damaged due to bad weather, reluctantly agreed to supervise the construction of the ship in exchange for a passage back to New Spain.¹⁹ This legation, which was allowed to proceed on, was not endorsed by Ieyasu, despite the fact that the

¹⁵ Europeans called Ieyasu (the ex-Shogun) the "Emperor," and his son Hidetada (the Shogun) "the son of the Emperor" or the "Prince." Towards 1610, Ieyasu was interested in tapping on the Spanish's expertise in metal mining and shipbuilding, which they believed was more advanced than their own (Vivero y Velasco 33-47).

¹⁶ Alonso Muñoz was sent with Vivero y Velasco in place of Sotelo (Sola 123).

¹⁷ Sotelo might have been imprisoned for proselytizing lepers in Amakusa, against the orders of the Hidetada (Schütte 85). Sotelo alludes to his imprisonment in the *memorial* he sent to the Viceroy of New Spain. In it, he explains that he was "detenido ó preso en la corte del Príncipe [Hidetada] con otros cristianos por auer predicado la ley de Dios en ella" ("Memorial" 43).

¹⁸ Sotelo's *memorial* states that "le pidió el dicho Rey Masamune al dicho Príncipe le diese libertad y licencia para que biniese con la dicha enbaxada" ("Memorial" 43)

¹⁹ According the folklore, these islands lay east-northwest of the province of Osui (Richman 379).

ex-shogun had intended in an earlier occasion to send Sotelo as his ambassador to Spain.

It was probably Sotelo's idea to stop in Seville, his motherland, before continuing to Madrid. It is also very likely that Sotelo and his family in Seville designed the great welcome that the embassy received from the city. As Gil has pointed out, this was the first time Sotelo was returning home since he had left for the Oriental Indies, and it is quite apparent that he and his family went to great lengths to make a distinguished re-entry to his *patria chica* (390-91).

Soon after arriving to the port of Sanlúcar de Barrameda, the embassy dispatched two introductory letters to the council of Seville (dated September 30, 1614). The city Council decided, after reading the letters, that the embassy had to be received with the highest honors. In fact, the city council designated two members of Sotelo's family, his older brother, Don Diego Caballero de Cabrera and another kin, Hernando Caballero, as co-organizers of the reception ("Actas," 8 de octubre de 1614" 63-65). The first letter, written by Hasekura and translated by Sotelo is addressed to the city of Seville. This letter has a superscript that reads "En todo el mundo á la más conocida ilustre ciudad de Seuilla" ("Letter from Hasekura" 55). In it, Hasekura introduces himself as a subject of Date. He states that he was sent by his master, along with Sotelo, to pay due respect to the King of Spain and to the Pope. He then explains that the embassy decided to make a sojourn in Seville because, thanks to Father Sotelo, news of the greatness of the city had been spread all throughout Japan ("Saiéndose en el Japón la grandeza desa noble República y ser patria de el Señor Padre Fray Luis Sotelo estimó el Rey mi Señor en tanto que de propósito embía embajada á Vuestra Señoría"). Hasekura ends the letter by deferring to Sotelo for further details. He says: "El Señor Padre Fray Luis Sotelo dará aiso de las demás cosas menudas y ansí no me alargo" ("Letter from Hasekura" 54). In this concise letter, Hasekura conveys a deep respect for Spain, and for Seville in particular. He also states his desire to have Sotelo serve as his intermediary. One might even interpret the last cited statement as Hasekura's way of silencing his own voice in favor of Sotelo's.

Sotelo wrote the second letter addressed to the city. He starts out by telling the reader that it was his ability to speak Japanese that landed him a trusted relationship with the Emperor of Japan and his son; "el mismo emperador y su hijo me an tenido buena voluntad y honrrado más de lo que merezco" ("Letter...Sotelo" 55). He explains that the Emperor had intended to send him to New Spain with Vivero's delegation four years earlier, but that he was unable to make the journey because of an illness. He insinuates that the Emperor sent him on the present embassy to Spain to follow up on the previous mission when he says that

me mandó (el Emperador) agora quatro años le traxesse embaxada suya, dándome nauío y auío para ello y estando ya á punto de embarcarme no lo pude hazer por enfermedad y assí la traxo otro rreligioso de mi hábito; que aun no ha llegado allá respuesta della [...]

mandó que pues me hauía entregado su embaxada y estaba ya bueno viniessse por la respuesta con desseo de saber la rresolución de Su Magestad. (“Letter...Sotelo” 55)

Sotelo proceeds to introduce Hasekura as the envoy of Date: “Y también viene conmigo vn Embaxador del Rey de Voju, vno e los más poderosos del Japón y en armas el más aventajado” (“Letter...Sotelo” 56). Sotelo, then, blatantly declares that Date will be the successor of the Shogun because “se entiende entrará en el imperio, después de muerto el que agora es emperador, con cuyos hijo e hija tiene cassados dos suyos” (“Letter...Sotelo” 56). Date, according to Sotelo, was so convinced of the truthfulness of the Christian faith that he sent an embassy to the King and to the Pope to ask that more missionaries be sent to Japan. Like Hasekura, Sotelo makes clear that Date decided to bring the embassy to Seville “por ser essa ciudad mi patria.” In the last part of the letter, Sotelo requests that the city honor Hasekura and his crew, “para que vsando de su acostumbrada nobleza y generosidad le reciba, honrrre y regale [...] por venir encomendadas á un hijo de Vuestra Señoría y de padres y abuelos que tanto le han seruido.” Most importantly, says Sotelo, a praiseworthy reception of the embassy will give Seville the dignified status it deserves, “la nobleza de Vuestra Señoría será más conocida, agradecida y estimada en los fines de la tierra” (“Letter...Sotelo” 56-57).

Sotelo misleads the reader in various key issues. He describes the favor he found in the Japanese Court, initially, but carefully omits all references to the death sentence given to him by the same Court. He refers to Hasekura as “el embajador,” implying that he is only acting as his interpreter when, in fact, Date had also sent Sotelo as his personal envoy. This might have been a way to ask favors without sounding self-interested. It was also a way to present himself as a separate legate sent by the Emperor of Japan. Sotelo’s intention appears to have worked out as intended. We know that one of readers of the letters, Juan Gallardo, states in a letter to the King that the ambassadors from Japan are “el vno del emperador del Japón y el otro del Rey de Voju” (“Letter...Gallardo” 65). In terms of Date’s position in the Japanese hierarchy, Sotelo exaggerates when he says that he will inherit the shogunate upon Ieyasu’s death, which Gil calls “un delirio imaginativo” (391). Finally, Sotelo does not reveal that Date’s primary objective in sending the embassy was to establish a trade agreement between his territory in Boxu and New Spain. It is clear that both Sotelo and Hasekura appealed to the regionalistic pride of the council members, who did not question the integrity of the two letters. Whereas the Court in Madrid was continuously receiving information regarding the missions of Japan and Date’s embassy from Japan and New Mexico, Sevillians relied on Sotelo as their only source.

Soon after receiving Hasekura and Sotelo’s letters, another council member of Seville, Alonso Rodríguez Cámara, published a pamphlet based on the information contained in Sotelo and Hasekura’s letters. The pamphlet was widely distributed throughout the city, probably by Sotelo’s family and friends, as propaganda aimed at

rousing Sevillians interest and support of the embassy. It reproduced much of the same misleading information enclosed in the letters of Sotelo and Hasekura, though it more liberally interpreted a number of the unfounded statements that the letters contained. For instance, the title of the pamphlet reads:

Relación breve, y sumaria del edito, que mandó publicar en todo su reyno del Boju, vno de los más poderosos del Japón, el rey Idate Masamune, publicando la fe de cristo, y del embaxador que embía á España en compañía del reuerendo padre Fray Luys Sotelo recoleto francisco, que viene con enbaxada del emperador del Iapón, hijo de Seuilla y lo que en el viage le sucedió. (1015)²⁰

While Sotelo's letter suggests that the Emperor had chosen him as his special envoy, the pamphlet states it as a matter of fact in the title. The verbal framing of the pamphlet makes it quite evident that the author wrote it to provoke the excitement of Sevillians. The first lines read: "Desta gran Ciudad de Seuilla, tan conocida en el mundo por su nombre, que en las partes más remotas dél no se absconde grandeza de su valor, y que es como patria vniversal de todas las naciones [...] salió della vno de los muchos que an luzido tanto por el mundo [...] el Reuerendo Padre Fray Luys Sotelo [...]" (1016). The last lines recapitulate Hasekura's acclamation of Seville "[e]n todo el mundo á la más conocida ilustre ciudad" (1016).

The main body of the pamphlet presents a sensationalized version of Sotelo's life and accomplishments in Japan. Sotelo is the epitome of perfection, "vno de los muchos que an luzido tanto por el mundo, assí en letras, como en armas," a sort of chivalric hero whose outstanding mind, benevolence, and devotion to God leads to the Emperor of Japan, his son, and King Masamune submitting to the Catholic faith, "de manera que *señoreó* las voluntades assí del Emperador y su hijo, como las de los demás reyes, y grandes señores de aquel imperio, con aplauso y amor general de toda la nación" (1015-16). It dramatizes the specific moment in which the Emperor and his son would have dispatched Sotelo to Spain, an undocumented and unlikely event.

Despidióse el emperador, y de su hijo, y demás grandes, con el sentimiento que pedía el amor de pérdida de tan santa conuersación y doctrina, y después de abraços embueltos con *algunas lágrimas*, se embarcó encomendándose, y encomendándolos á Dios nuestro Señor, y prometiendo al Emperador la mayor diligencia possible en la breuedad de su buelta. (1017; emphasis added).

The writer, nonetheless, fails to mention that the supposed send-off would have corresponded to the Ieyasu's 1610 mission, in which Sotelo was unable to participate.

²⁰ Published in 1614 by unknown printer. See copy in *Californiana*.

As we see from the pamphlet's narrative, Sotelo not only makes the Emperor cry, but he is also capable of converting the soul of the King of Boxu, "hombre belicosísimo, y poderoso, temido y respectado en todo su reyno, que es el mayor del Japón" (1018). Date became so willing to embrace Christianity, the writer of the pamphlet says, that he decided after his conversion to pass an edict that required all his vassals to accept Christianity. And to continue with his Christian endeavors, Date is said to wish to find the favor of the Spanish King and Pope,

pidiéndole Religiosos Predicadores que les enseñen las cosas de Dios, y declaren el Santo Euangelio; auiendo hecho sobre esto tan buenas capitulaciones y conciertos, que no sólo muestra en ellas el aumento que se a de seguir en las cosas de la extensión de la fe, pero en las del seruicio de Su Magestad, y bien común de sus reynos. (1018)

But in fact, the edict passed in 1611 by Date did not require his subjects to become Christians; it merely allowed the practice of the religion. And its real impact is debatable. Like the letters, the pamphlet says nothing about Date's interest in establishing trade relations with the Spanish Crown. The pamphlet concludes with a verbatim account of Hasekura's letter to the city of Seville.

It is not difficult to imagine that, without any other information or context, many readers of the pamphlet would have believed that Sotelo, the Sevillian son, had single-handedly converted the Japanese nobility to Catholicism. Because Sotelo is the only missionary mentioned in the pamphlet (and the letters), the reader –without any other context– is lured to infer that all Japanese conversions were primary outcomes of his personal works in Japan ("con lo qual, a sido infinito el aumento de los fieles, el acrecentamiento de iglesias y doctrinas, y la mucha fe, y deuoción que se va descubriendo en ellos cada día" [1016]).²¹ Readers could have easily thought that Hasekura had come to prostrate himself before the King of Spain and the Pope in gratitude for having sent Sotelo to their land. The future Emperor of Japan had chosen to have his embassy stop first in Seville, before any other city in Europe. Sevillians must have imagined that the Crown was going to appreciate and recognize their efforts in welcoming the legation. They must also have thought that Sotelo was going to occupy a dominant role at Court for his triumphant endeavors in Japan. It was only after the embassy arrived in Madrid that Sevillians learned that the Court doubted the legitimacy of the embassy. By then, they had already spent considerable financial

²¹ In reality, the ex-Shogun Ieyasu and his son Hidetada had never been genuinely interested in converting to Catholicism. In one of Ieyasu's "diplomatic" letters to Pope Paul V he states that "I don't mind if you take advantage of coming to Japan to make a profit, but don't spread Christianity" (Meriwether 57).

resources to host the visitors.²² As we will show below, the court in Madrid treated the embassy first with aloofness and distrust, and later with open disdain.

III

Sotelo was perceived to be an unreliable figure in Madrid. The suspicion with which Sotelo was seen shaped the treatment that the Japanese received in Madrid. The Court had been receiving scathing reports about the friar from both Japan and New Mexico since their arrival in Acapulco, and was determined to withhold any type of Royal audience until the Council of the Indies conducted an investigation on his person and on his actual connection with the Emperor. The King first heard of Sotelo and the Japanese visitors from the Viceroy of New Spain, who wrote soon after their arrival of the embassy in Acapulco on January 28. In the letter, the Marquis of Guadalcazar (Diego Fernández de Córdoba) tells the King that Sotelo “me a parecido persona de poco asiento y que a mouido en esto más cosas de las que fueran necesarias” (1011). He adds that he thinks poorly of the Japanese visitors (“gente alentada” and “velicosa”), and thus, that he will only provide them with basic assistance; “porque aunque me he empeñado poco en las demostraciones con esta gente he ydo con cuidado de no dexar de hazer algo con ellos” (1011). It appears that Sotelo had made plenty of enemies at every location he had stayed. The King received a copy of a letter that one of his fellow Franciscans, Sebastián de San Pedro wrote to the Viceroy of New Spain. In it, he pleaded the Viceroy to prevent Hasekura, Sotelo, and crew from moving forth with the legation to Europe because it was going to endanger the survival of the Japanese missions. According to San Pedro, Sotelo was not to be trusted. Sotelo had convinced Date to support his mission and had left Japan neither with the approval of the Emperor nor that of his superiors. Another letter that spoke against Sotelo came from Vizcaíno, who had come back to New Spain in the same ship (the *San Juan Bautista*) as the embassy. He wrote to the Marquis of Salinas (Luis Velasco), president of the Council of the Indies, and to Philip III’s Court on May 20, 1614, in an attempt to discredit Sotelo and the Japanese legation. In his letter to Salinas, he gives him a warning: “Hallá conozerá Vuestra Excelencia al padre fray Luis Sotelo [...] pues va a Castilla y Roma con quimeras de embaxadas” (“Carta...Salinas, 20 de mayo de 1614” 1002). In the letter to the King, he asserts that Sotelo had initiated the opportunistic legation and that they were acting independently from the Emperor. If Vizcaíno had joined them in the *San Juan Bautista*, it was because he had no other means of making his return to New Spain. He explains:

Hize otras muchas diligencias para poder salir del dicho reyno; no allé remedio para ello, y así por escusar gastos y salir de entre infieles

²² See “Actas capitulares, 15 de noviembre de 1614” 78; Gallardo de Céspedes, “Letter, 2 November 1614” 75-77 and “Letter, 17 November 1614” 84-85; Salvatierra, “Letter, 1 November 1614” 73-74 and “Letter, 16 November 1614” 83-84; and Arostegui, “Letter, 26 October 1614” 74-75.

acomodé mi gente en un auio de Mazamonendono [Date], un japon principal, que por orden de un frayle [Sotelo] fabricó, en que vinieron a esta tierra cantidad de xapones con achaque de que ynbia embajada a nuestro Santísimo Padre y a Vuestra Magestad, bien fuera de la verdad, porque el interese de sus mercaderías les trae. (“Carta...al Rey de España” 1003)

He points out that Date himself was not a Christian and the only reason for sending the legation had been for purely commercial ends. He also reported that the shogun Ieyasu and his son, Hidetada, had turned against all Christians and that persecution had grown more severe. Overall, he suggests as unlikely Sotelo’s and Hasekura’s request that more friars be sent to Japan (“Carta...al Rey de España” 1005-06).

Upon receiving such negative reports about Sotelo and the Japanese embassy, the Council called on Francisco de Huarte, president of the *Casa de Contratación*, to provide an impartial report on the matter. More specifically, the Council asked that “califique el modo de la venida de Fray Luis Sotelo y lo que se pudiere colegir de la causa della,” given that “han llegado tan uarias relaciones á Vuestra Señoría y al Consejo por esto” (Huarte 116, 120). After meeting with Sotelo in Seville (prior to their departure for Madrid), Huarte determined that the intentions of the embassy appeared sincere at face value. “Lo que he podido entender en las pocas oras que ha que llegué [...] es que este Padre Fray Luis Sotelo [...] siempre ha sido tenido por religioso y cuerdo, si tantos años como ha estado en el Japón no le an mudado, ora por justo zelo y falta de advertencia ó por alguna mal fundada ambición” (120). In terms of the negative letters that were written against Sotelo, Huarte remarked that Vizcaíno was an unreliable source for he had come back from a failed mission in Japan (“ni descubrió las islas ni guardó las ordenes de V.S. para no volber japones, antes consintió fabricar el navió que aora an traído los dichos xapones” [120]). He also suggested that Fray San Pedro might have been motivated by a sense of religious rivalry (“las controversias entre frayles, sus celos y paliadas ambiciones, particularmente los que an arado las Yndias, Vuestra Señoría las conoce mejor” [123]).

It is quite likely that Huarte’s impressions might have been significantly influenced by the fact that his interviews with Sotelo were conducted in the friar’s home city, where he had become a celebrity of sorts. Huarte’s view of Sotelo, in turn, might have generated a sympathetic perception of Hasekura, whom he met briefly. He reported about Hasekura: “Parecióme onbre de estimación, reposado, adbertido y bien ablado [...] Díxome la causa de su venida, la confianç a que su Rey tenía del fauor y correspondencia de Su Magestad, el ansia de admitir la christiandad y el deseo de llegar á los pies de Su Magestad para representárselo, pidiéndome que como criado suyo aiudase á ello” (122). Again, we should note that Huarte spoke to Hasekura through Sotelo’s translation and that his partiality for the friar might have predisposed him towards a positive report on the Japanese.

Huarte's report did little to sway the disapproving attitude the Council had already taken about Sotelo and the Japanese legation. Juan Hurtado de Mendoza de la Vega y Luna, the Duke of Infantado, concluded that because the legation had not brought a letter from the Japanese Emperor, it could not be trusted ("considera este negocio muy dudoso" ["Consulta, 22 de noviembre de 1614" 130]). The Duke of Infantado's recommendation to the King was that "no se haga caso desta gente, pues lo que se ha gastado con ella es poco y el daño de lo dicho podría ser mucho si se vee que son bien admitidos" ("Consulta, 22 de noviembre de 1614" 130). Following the recommendation of the Council and the Duke of Infantado, the Court opted to host the embassy, but only in an obligatory and cursory manner.

Hasekura and his crew were lodged in the Convent of San Francisco, a very modest arrangement if compared to the luxurious Alcázar where they had stayed in Seville. To make matters worse, they were placed in the cells of the infirmary, which they had to share with ill and convalescing friars. At least on one occasion, they were burglarized while they were at Court.²³ Overtime, the seers of the Convent grew impatient with the visitors who allegedly misused and damaged property. In February 1615, about two months into their stay in the convent, the Council agreed, regarding Hasekura (whom now was addressed mostly as "el Japón que está en la corte") that "es mucha la descomodidad que causa su alojamiento en el monesterio de San Francisco" ("Consulta, 4 de febrero de 1615" 146). In June, the Guardian of the convent (Fray Pedro de Leganés) approached the Marquis of Salinas to report to him that since the coming of the Japanese, five friars had died in the infirmary.²⁴ He suggested that the deaths had been caused because of the room and resources that the Japanese were taking from the ill friars. Now more than a nuisance, they were endangering the lives of the religious men residing in the infirmary. In his complaint, the Guardian states that "y que aunque hasta ahora [...] ha sido pesadísima carga para el convento ya llega ha ser de manera intolerable, que ni por pocos días se puede sufrir, porque los enfermos han sido tantos" ("Memorial of the Guardian" 167). When the visitors finally left in October for Rome, the Franciscans of the convent requested that they be reimbursed for all of the damage and loss of goods that the Japanese, the "gente bárvara," had caused while in residence (qtd. in Gil 409).

The Court was reluctant to give an audience to Hasekura. It is likely that its unresponsiveness was fueled by Sotelo's reputation for unreliability; most discussions regarding the issue questioned the friar's intentions and not Hasekura's. The Court also questioned if an embassy sent by a minor noble was deserving of a royal

²³ Fray Ignacio de Jesús filed a complaint because among the stolen things, there were some valuable linen sheets, for which the Japanese refused to pay. The friar states that "les abrieron una çelda y les hurtaron una *catana* y otras cosas, y entre ellas tres sábanas de lienzo que tenían en las camas [...] y ellos no las quieren pagar al dueño de las sábanas" (qtd. in Gil 410).

²⁴ In Amati's chronicle, the same Guardian appears in a very different light. At Hasekura's baptism, he is described as rejoicing along with his peers, "cantando il Te Deum laudamus, non tralasciando l'Ambasciatore di render a Sua Diuina Maestà le debite gratie per la speranza, che teneua dell'altra vita" (Amati, "Historia...Paolo V" 152).

audience. The Council had established that because “el Rey de Boju que le enuía es vno de los tonos sujetos al Emperador del Japón, se le podría hacer el mesmo tratamiento que á los que viene de parte de los potentados ynferiores de Italia, porque en este lugar se le puede considerar como quiera, que hasta agora no se an presentado en el Consejo por su parte ni de Fray Luis Sotelo” (“Consulta, 16 de enero de 1615” 141). After much insistence from Sotelo, the King finally granted an audience to the embassy about forty days after it had arrived in Madrid.

The only details available on the audience that Philip III granted to the embassy come from Sotelo and the Italian Scipione Amati.²⁵ Amati joined the embassy towards the end of its stay in Madrid. He took on the official role of interpreter and mediator for the embassy in their voyage from the time they left Madrid (at the beginning of August 1615) through their stay in Rome (January 7, 1616).²⁶ Amati’s chronicles echo very closely Sotelo’s *relaciones* or are literal Italian translations of them. For this reason, one assumes that Amati based his chronicles of the Royal audience and of Hasekura’s baptism in Spain on Sotelo’s written version of the events or on his interviews with the friar. As expected, the narratives are propagandistic in nature and are overladen with sensationalism (Amati “Historia, Capitulo XX” 136-40; Sotelo “Relacion que propuso” 1040-43).²⁷

According to Amati Scipione and Sotelo, they were escorted to the palace in elegant coaches as they were surrounded by a multitude of onlookers. Once they entered the royal hall, the King greeted them and kindly requested that Hasekura begin his address to the Court. Hasekura, then, presented him with a letter, which Sotelo translated in the presence of the King. The content of this letter was strictly limited to topics of spiritual nature. It first paid homage to the King, whom Hasekura addressed as “Vuestra magestad que es el sol que alumbra la mayor parte del mundo” (Sotelo, “Relación que propuso” 1040). Hasekura requested, first, that more friars be sent to he missions in Japan. He, then, asked if he could be baptized at Court. He expressed his desire to “ser hecho christiano por sus reales manos, que aunque lo e desseado en otras tierras de propósito se a dilatado hasta aqui” (Sotelo, “Relacion que propuso” 1042). The King deferred a response to the first petition, but he agreed to allow Hasekura to be baptized under Royal sponsorship.

Hasekura’s baptism (February 17, 1615) is recalled by Sotelo and Amati in moving terms.²⁸ The ceremony took place in the Monastery of the Descalzas Reales.

²⁵ We know little of Amati’s biography. All the available information comes from his preface to the *Historia del Regno de Voxu*. V. H. Viglielmo and Robert H. Russell conjecture that he must have been an Italian historiographer of some distinction (620).

²⁶ Amati joined Hasekura’s embassy at the recommendation of the Duchess of Medina di Riosecco, Vittoria Colonna, and of Nuncio Caetano (Viglielmo 621).

²⁷ Diego Pérez published the *relación* in a pamphlet in Seville in 1616 (unknown printer, see *Californiana*).

²⁸ As the previous *relación*, Diego Pérez also published this one in 1616 in Seville (unknown printer, see Sotelo “Relación verdadera” 1045-48 and Amati’s version in “Historia, Capitoli XXI, XXII” 147-52).

The King and the Queen Margarita de Francia were present along with the Royal family and courtiers. The ambassador took a new Christian name, Felipe Francisco Hasekura, in tribute to the Spanish king and to Sotelo's order. The Duke of Lerma and the Countess of Barajas were his godparents. Sotelo recalls the occasion in the following manner:

Hizose el Bautismo con mucha solemnidad, y el Embajador lo rezibio con gran devocion y afecto: en acabandole de echar el agua, empezo la capilla Real el Laudate Dominum, con chanzonetas, ministriles, y organos, que parecia la yglesia un Parayso. Acabado este acto fuymos el Embajador y yo a dar las gracias al Parroco, y luego a los Padrinos [...] respondieron con gran contento dandole para bien, y pidiendole los encomendasse a Dios: el Duque de Lerma nos tomo a el Embajador y a mi de las manos, diziendo que su Magestad nos llamava, y nos metio adentro al quarto Real, a donde salio su Magestad acompañado de la Reyna de Francia y de mas hijas, y de la Infanta monja, hechamonos a sus pies, su Magestad mandandole levantar le abrazo con grande amor y contento dandole el para bien, y pidiendo le encomendase a dios, el Embajador le dixo q^e se tenia por el mas dichoso hombre del mundo assi por verse ya Christiano y cumplidos sus deseos, como por quedar tan honrado y enoblezido, en var (*sic*) sido esto por orden de su Magestad y en su Real presencia, y mucho mas por averle mandado poner su nombre. ("Relación verdadera" 1046-47)

Although we cannot verify how much of Sotelo's account on the reception was sensationalized, we do know that the Royal treatment and Hasekura's baptism did not change the opposition that Sotelo and the Japanese experienced while in Madrid. We have already discussed the adverse reaction of the Franciscans and their attempt to have the visitors expelled from their convent. The Council's impatience towards the embassy also grew over time.

Sotelo had petitioned, on behalf of Hasekura, for six specific items, most of which the Council found inappropriate. They were: permission to go to Rome to salute the Pope, the creation of more Mendicant prelates, an increase of Franciscan friars to be sent to Japan, financial aid for missionary materials (wine for liturgies and books) and for the maintainance of seminaries, and a treaty that would allow Date to trade goods in New Spain and would send him Spanish pilots that would teach him about Spanish navigation. The only petition that the King fully granted, against the objection of the Council,²⁹ was the license to go to Rome (although, initially, without financial

²⁹ The Council asked the King to deny the embassy the license to go to Rome to see the Pope, and advised, instead, to have it leave for New Spain as soon as possible ("no conuiene se le dé licencia, porque las causas que da para ella no tienen fundamento") ("Consulta, 2 de abril de 1615" 155).

backing).³⁰ All other requests were, for the most part, declined. For example, Sotelo asked additional Franciscan friars to be sent to the Japanese missions. The Court responded that twenty Franciscan would be dispatched to the Philippines (but not directly to Japan) and that upon arrival, the Governor and Archbishop of the Philippines could decide the fate of the friars. The creation of more prelates was first postponed and later denied. Two thousand ducats were offered in response to the request for wine and books for the missions. The aid for the maintenance of additional seminaries was denied. Finally, Date's proposal for a trade treaty was rejected. The Council stated that it could not consider such a treaty until all of Japan's negotiations with the Dutch were terminated ("Los puntos, sobre que el japon" 160).

Even after receiving the multiple disapproving responses from the Court, Sotelo made another improbable request to the Court, one that clearly revealed his lack of social tact. He requested that Hasekura be granted the prestigious habit of the military Order of Santiago (Saint James) (Wright 43). Santiago was one of the most honored military orders and receiving a knighthood in the order validated a person's *nobility*, *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) and, for many, it was the first step to enter Castilian aristocracy. Not surprisingly, the Court declined this request, which the Council considered to be preposterous. The latter stated in its recommendation that there was no precedence of a person from a gentile land receiving a habit ("es casso nuevo y que no se a visto otro que pueda servir de exemplo por ser gentil su nación" ["Consulta, 29 de abril de 1615" 161]). The Council suspected that the petition had been initiated by Sotelo and not by Hasekura ("y tanuién porque se puede creher que la pide persuadido de Fray Luis Sotelo por algunos fines particulares, con cuya consideración parece que no conuiene concedérsele" ["Consulta, 29 de abril de 1615" 162]).

With the intention of eventually returning to Madrid and with hopes that fate would turn their way after meeting with the Pope, the embassy left for Rome on August 22, 1616. However, they never made it back to Court. While Sotelo and the Japanese were on their way back to Madrid from Rome, the King sent them an order prohibiting them to return. Instead, he ordered the embassy to go directly to Seville, from where they were at once to be dispatched to Japan, via New Spain. This decision seems to have been made after the Court learned that the embassy had asked the Pope to appoint a bishop to Japan and that the Pope was ready to support Sotelo's candidacy

³⁰ In July, the Council finally granted the embassy 4,000 ducats. Apparently, Sotelo had refused to leave without it. An exasperated Council wrote: "Luego que las consultas tocantes á Fray Luis Sotelo y el japon que está en esta corte [...] para que sin esperar otra cosa tratasen de su despacho y dizen que no podrán poner en execución la jornada de Roma [...] si no es que se sirua de mandar que por junto sean proueido de la cantidad de dinero que precisamente hubieren menester para ella, y suplican á Vuestra Magestad que usando de su grandeza les haga esta merced [...] y huiéndolo conferido con fray Luis parece que la menor cantidad que se le puede dar son quatro mil ducados" ("Consulta, 9 de julio de 1615" 170). In the same document, the Council expresses much aggravation at having projected that the visit of the embassy would cost about 20,000 ducats.

for such a post (Contarini, "Letter, 9 January 1616" 321-22).³¹ The Council must have felt aggravation at knowing that, despite all their warnings to the Italians, Sotelo had found favor in Rome.³² It was now more convinced than ever that Sotelo had been motivated to bring the supposed embassy to Europe for the sole purpose of acquiring the title of Bishop of Boxu. The Council decisively concluded that

porque las pretensiones que el japon tubo en Roma [...] se tiene por sin duda fueron á persuación de Fray Luis Sotelo, sauiedo que yba contra la real voluntad de Vuestra Magestad y su seruicio, parece que se encargue al Comissario General de las Yndias le llame y le dé una reprehensión, mandándole que sin perder tiempo se baya luego con el japon á tratar de su despacho, dexando una memoria de las cosas que para él hubieren menester. ("Consulta, 16 de abril de 1616" 344)

Date's embassy was not legitimate, Hasekura was Sotelo's pawn, and the Court had used too many of its resources to fund the objectionable visitors. The King, sharing the rigid stance of the Council responded curtly: "Está bien lo que parece y veasse si será bien darles algo para su viaje, y quanto será, y con esto se acabe con ellos de todo punto" ("Consulta, 16 de abril de 1616" 344).

Back in Seville, in April 1617, Sotelo wrote to the city council in defense of his damaged reputation, which by now had spread throughout his home town. He acknowledged the news that the persecution of Christians had increased in Japan, but tried to convince his fellow Sevillians that Boxu remained safe because of Date's protection of Christians ("Actas, 12 de abril de 1616" 357-58). The city council must have been convinced by Sotelo's appeal because it wrote to Court requesting that Sotelo and Hasekura's petition be reconsidered. But the Court, clearly worn-out from the matter, not only disregarded the appeal, it curtly ordered Sotelo and Hasekura to be dispatched at once, "por que no se detengan más allí y sigan su camino" ("Letter, 20 April, 1617" 361). Even upon receiving such disdainful reply, Sotelo refused to leave without making one last attempt to change the Court's pronouncement. This time the Council and the King left all diplomacy aside and mandated Hasekura's return, stating

³¹ It is clear that the Pope and Cardinal Borghese felt somewhat obliged to bequest some kind of higher ranking title to Sotelo. Borghese writes to the Papal Nuncio in Madrid: "Ha cercato nondimeno Sua Santità di mandarlo sodisfatto, quanto è stato possibile, ne solamente lui, ma l'altro Ambasciatore ancora, et tutti gli altri" ("Letter, 8 January 1616" 316).

³² Besides the request for the appointment of a bishop to Japan, the embassy asked the Pope for more Franciscans to be sent to Japan, an increase in the founding of seminaries, and the Pope's support for a commercial relationship between Boxu and Spain (Borghese, "Letter, 9 December 1615" 301-02). Contarini also writes of rumors that the embassy had asked for two hundred friars to be sent to Japan ("Letter, 31 October 1615" 232). The Pope redirected all petitions to the King of Spain. In the meantime, he gave the embassy one (confirm) thousand ducats for their travel needs and some religious objects to take back to Japan (Borghese, "Letter, 8 January 1616" 317-18; Contarini, "Letter, 9 January 1616" 321-22).

“y si el Padre Sotelo quiziase hir con él que lo haga y si no se quede” (372). The Council’s explanation was quite telling of their lack of interest in harboring any type of relation with Sotelo and Hasekura; “Y supuesto que á este japon le ha echo Vuestra Magestad las mercedes que quedan referidas y que se le a respondido á todos los puntos que contienen los papeles que ha dado parece, al Consejo no se debe hacer con él mas gasto ni dar lugar á que se quede en España” (“Consulta, 6 de junio de 1617” 372-73). To the final relief of the the Spanish Court, Sotelo and Hasekura left Seville for Japan in June 1617 (“Real cedula” 1027).

IV

The initial apathy and later disdain with which the Japanese were received in Madrid stood in stark contrast to how Mancio Ito, Miguel Chijiwa, and company had been welcomed decades earlier. As discussed above, the different treatment was determined by the status and the public reputation of the spokesperson. The organizer of the first legation, Visitor Valignano, was unequivocally one of the most important figures of the missions in the Far East. He was well esteemed, in both secular and religious courtly circles, and most significantly, his mission had been sent with the full backing of an influential Pope. On the other hand, Sotelo did not have a recognizable status outside his hometown in Seville, and lacked the backing of an authoritative figure. In the eyes of the Madrid Court, he was no more than a petty friar desperate to do whatever was necessary to rise in the ranks of his order. It is quite possible that Spaniards were more concerned about the status and reliability of the spokesperson, because they were unable to see the Japanese as individuals.

The legation of Mancio Ito and Miguel Chijiwa had not been of diplomatic nature. Still, they had been addressed and treated as ambassadors and the authenticity of their mission had never been questioned. King Philip II himself had received them as if they were true ambassadors. He had even personally invited the Japanese youth to witness the oath of alliance of his heir, Philip III, at the age of six (Cooper 57). They had come as representatives of feudal lords, just as Hasekura did subsequently. But unlike the latter, they were seen as legitimate envoys. Moreover, in certain elite circles, overly enthusiastic hosts exaggerated their status, calling them “Japanese princes” and “Japanese kings” (Sande 55, n. 28). Despite the positive perception that Spaniards had of the young legates, they were forgotten by the time of Hasekura’s arrival. There does not appear to be a document dealing with Hasekura’s visit that makes reference to the Japanese envoys that preceded him.

It is significant to note that Hasekura, unlike his predecessors, was not recognized by the title of ambassador in Madrid. Council officers initially referred to him as the “embajador,” or “embajador del Rey de Boxu” but sometime after his audience with the king (in February of 1615), he started to be viewed with less deference. He was increasingly addressed in documents and memos as simply “el japon” or “el japon que

está / estuvo en la corte.”³³ Hasekura’s downgraded designation becomes more evident when we recall that Italians referred to him as “ambasciatore” or some version of “ambasciatore d’uno del Re del Giappone.” He also appears as often in Italian documents by his baptized name of “Filippo Francesco Faxecura,” to which often the honorific “Don” is added.³⁴ In Genoa, the Doge and the senate addressed Hasekura at all times as “Illustrissimo” (“Manuale,” 12 ottobre 1615” 192).

We might try to argue that the Italians were not aware of the controversy in Spain regarding whether Hasekura had been sent by a *daimyo* and/or by the Shogun, but this was not the case. Cardinal Borghese, who appears to have been curious about the experience of the Japanese in Spain, was continuously informed of the developments regarding the embassy (Borghese, “Letter, 1 May 1615” 174-75; Capua, “Letter, 6 June 1615” 175-76).³⁵ Prior to the embassy’s arrival in Rome, The King of Spain had written to his ambassador at Rome, Francisco de Castro, to ask the Pope not to grant any petitions that the Court had denied “Luis Sotelo [...] y un japon con cartas del rey de Boju” (“Letter, 20 September 1615” 209-10). Religious circles had been equally alerted about Sotelo’s unreliable character. Geronimo de Angelis, a Jesuit who had worked in Date’s fief before the departure of Sotelo, wrote to the Jesuit General to inform him that Sotelo’s only motivation to organize the embassy was to have the Pope nominate him primate of Japan. The controversy about Sotelo and his likely hidden agenda was doubtlessly well known in Rome, as Simon Contarini (Venetian ambassador to Rome) makes evident in a letter to his government saying: “Si tiene per i più si a questo un negozio che mal se’habbia ad interderne il proprio, e che sotto vi sieno deglio interessi” (Contarini, “Letter, 7 November 1615” 265).

It appears, however, that despite the harmful accounts of Sotelo that were being promoted by the Jesuits, Hasekura and his crew were willingly received by the Italians they encountered. Hasekura had certainly made a positive impression on the Pope, who gave the Japanese ambassador two thousand ducats and some valuable objects to

³³ See examples in “Capitulaciones y asientos” 146, “Consulta, 29 de abril de 1615” 161, “Consulta, 4 de junio de 1615” 164-65, “Memorial of the Guardian” 168, “Consulta, 9 de julio de 1615” 169-70, “Consulta, 16 de abril de 1616” 344, “Consulta, 20 de junio de 1616” 347, “Consulta, 5 de setiembre de 1616” 350, “Minuta” 366.

³⁴ See examples in Capua, “Letter, 3 January 1615” 133, “Letter, 23 February 1615” 152, Borghese, “Letter” 153, Ruiz de Contreras, “Letter, 1 December 1615” 174, Capua, “Letter, 6 June 1615” 175, “Libro...12 ottobre, 1615” 193, “Avvisi di Venezia [a], 24 ottobre 1615” 196, “Avvisi di Venezia, 24 ottobre 1615” [b] 197, Masetti “Letter, 28 ottobre 1615” 206, Borghese “Letter, 11 December 1616” 352. It is remarkable that even in his response to Date, Philip III does not address Hasekura by “don” or by his baptized Spanish name (“Haviendo llegado á mi corte Faxecura Rocuyemon” [“Letter, 12 de julio de 1616” 348]).

³⁵ Contarini also comments on the Jesuit’s disapproval of Sotelo and the embassy: “Quello che in questa occorrenza si fa curioso, è il dispiacere, per non dire lo sdegno, che i Reverendi Padri Gesuiti mostrano dell’ arrivo in Christianità di questo personaggio, e dicono non esser lui altrimenti Ambasciatore dell’ imperator del Giappone, ma si bene d’un certo Signore quivi chiamato Massamune suddito suo [...] i quali inoltre van dicendo, che questa è una mascherata” (Contarini, “Letter, 31 October, 1615” 232-33).

take back to Japan. The best witness of the success of the embassy's audience with the Pope was perhaps the dismayed Spanish ambassador who wrote to the King that "[e]stos embaxadores han sido muy bien vistos y honrrados del Papa y del Colegio [...] porque han dado edificación con sus personas, con su modo de proceder" (Castro, "Letter, 8 January 1616" 320).³⁶ The municipality of Rome gave Hasekura one of its highest forms of recognition by granting him the title of honorary Roman citizen. This was the same honor that had been given to Mancio Ito, Miguel Chijiwa, Martinho Hara, and Julião Nakaura over thirty years earlier (Berchet 68-71).

It is possible that the reason why Hasekura was not affected by the controversies surrounding Sotelo was that while Spaniards perceived Hasekura as an extension of Sotelo, Italians viewed him more as his own individual person. It is indeed remarkable that in the documents produced in Seville and Madrid, more often than not, Sotelo and Hasekura are cited jointly as a couple. In Seville, they preferred to refer to them as some version of "el embajador en compañía de Fray Sotelo" whereas in Madrid they were generally addressed as "Fray Luis Sotelo y el Japón que está en la corte" ("Billete, 24 de octubre de 1614" 110; "Consulta, 2 de abril de 1615" 154). And in many cases, as we see here, Sotelo's name appears first. In Italian documents, in contrast, Hasekura is almost always mentioned first, by either his title of ambassador and / or by his Catholic name as mentioned above, and frequently in a separate clause from Sotelo.³⁷

We might even venture to say that the Italians were simply more interested in the cultural distinctiveness of the Japanese visitors than their Spanish counterparts. In effect, the fact that the Spaniards left virtually no records of the individual identities of the other Japanese men that accompanied Hasekura may be seen as indicative of their indifference. Not even Sotelo himself appears to have been concerned with leaving details about the Japanese that accompanied him. It is intriguing to observe that the only document that includes, at least, a rudimentary description of Hasekura in Spain comes, not from Sotelo, but from Huarte. He described Hasekura as "bien adereçado á su usso, vestido de tela y de chamelote de seda. Parecióme onbre de estimación, reposado, adbertido y bien ablado, modesto" (122). Furthermore, of all the *relaciones* Sotelo sent to Seville, we find only one brief reference to the Japanese crew. This reference is taken from Sotelo's narrative of the embassy's official entry to Rome:

³⁶ According to the Spanish Ambassador in Rome, the audience the Pope gave to Hasekura was a cut above that given to the ambassador of Persia (who had visited shortly before Hasekura and Sotelo). While the Persian ambassador had been seen by the Pope in private and with only a few cardinals, Hasekura and Sotelo were received publicly and with the presence of the entire body of cardinals. In his letter to the King, Castro even remarks that the audience given to the Japanese would have been just like one given to a Spanish or French ambassador, if it had not been for the fact that the Pope only wore the stole and received them in the Public Consistory (and not in the Sala Regia) ("Letter, 12 November 1615" 261-62).

³⁷ One example, among many, is the following seen in an "Avvisi di Venezia": "Scriuono di Genova di 17 stante l'arriuio con feluche di Spagna d'un'Ambasciatore del Re del Giapone con comitiva de 27 persone [...] uenendo egli guidato da uno di quei Padre fino a Roma" (197).

“Venían los tres japones principales, á saber Don Pedro, Don Tomás, y Don Francisco, vestidos como lo andauan en Seuilla. Don Pedro como Bonzo, con bonete de dos picos, que ya niguno de los tres trae armas, ni cabello atrás como los que son soldados” (Sotelo, “Relación...Roma” 1085). Roman and Genoan accounts, in contrast, were much more meticulous on their depictions of the Japanese. Not only did they record the names of Hasekura’s crew, indicating each person’s relative social standing, but also noted their physical appearance and mannerisms. To show this contrast, let us see the following description of the Roman entry from an Italian observer:

Sopra bianche chinee, veniuano poi vno ad vno in mezzo a due nobili romani, quei della famiglia dell’Ambasciadore, e prima sette di loro tra camerieri e paggi; erano questi vestiti con casacconi di seta di verij colori diuisate, con maniconi grandi e larghi, li quali gli arriuauano fin’al ginocchio; portauano poi bragoni larghi e lunghi, fin sopra le scarpe pur fatti di seta; haueuano vn’arme, a guisa di cimitarra legata al fianco, et vn altra a foggia di pugnale fitta nella cintura sotto la parte sinistra del petto, equesti sono i loro nomi:

Simone Sato Curanojo

Thome Tannoquiugi

Thomaso Iagiami Cannoyagiemon

Lucas Yamaguchi Canjuro

Giouanni Sato Tarozayemon

Giouanni Faranda Caniamo, peringhiri

Gabriel Yamasagi Cansque, peringhiri

Doppo questi veniuano con l’istesso ordine, quattro Giapponesi Cauallieri d’honore, doi vestiti como li sopradetti, ma più riccamente, doi altri di nero, con vna sottana sotto fin’a piedi e con vn’altra fin’al ginocchio, ambi di seta, hauendo in testa vna berretta di ormesino nero, a foggia di vna borsa solleuata, con doi cantoni, e con loro il Magiordomo vestito all’Italiana, e questi sono:

Don Thomaso Taquino Cafioye

Don Pietro Itamisomi

Don Francesco Nomano Fampe, et

Don Alonzo Conderaique Guegi

Gregorio Matthias, Magiordomo

Secondo l’vsanza loro del Giappone, douendo seguire l’Ambasciadore, andauano doi coppie di Staffieri, vestiti tutti a vn modo, ma nella foggia de’ primi, o poco differenti; erano i suoi casacconi con vn lauoro di seta gialla e verde, a guisa di minuti scacchi; erano pure a cauallo, e portaua ciascheduno in mano vn’arme alla foggia de’loro paesi; haueua il destro della prima coppia vn’arme in asta, quasi a guisa di croce, tutta

ornata di fiocchi di seta rossa et oro; il destro della seconda coppia portaua vn'ombrella grande di seta verde, abbassata, et il sinistro, vn'arme in asta con taglio e costa, a foggia di cimitarra, le quali armi portauano ritte, hauendo ancora loro come li altri le armi corte, sono questi i nomi loro:

Gregorio Tocuro

Thomas Squeichiro

Giacobe Mofeaye

Nicolas Giouan Quiuzo

Passati questi, a mano dritta dell'Illustrissimo Signor Marco Antonio Vittorij, nipote di Nostro Signore, venne la persona dell'Ambasciatore Don Filippo Francesco Faxicura, attorniato dalli Sguizzeri della guardia del Papa et dalli suoi palafrenieri, vestito quanto alla forma nel modo sopradetto, ma con drappi Indiani ricchissimi et diuisati con molti compartimenti de lauori, figurato con animali, vcelli et fiori tessuti con seta, oro et argento, che dauano assai nel bianco. Portaua vn collare lattugato alla foggia nostra, et il cappello, il quale si cauaua, e con giouiale cera et sorriso insieme molto cortesemente rendeu a i saluti al popolo, che con atti di riueranza l'honorauano.³⁸ ("Relatione Della Solenne..." 224-25)

The Genoan and Roman accounts show that Italians were very curious to observe the differences in the Japanese and among them as well. They also show the writers' efforts in providing a more scientific rendering of the Japanese. Hasekura, for instance, is described as being short, stout, with a square face, small eyes, flattened nose, cleanly shaved, and with tresses tied with a piece of silk on his half shaved head (see Contarini, "Letter, 31 October 1615" 232; "Avvisi de Roma, 31 October 1615" 230). His complexion, like that of his crew's, is dark. Predictably, some justified the Japanese's dark complexion as the effect of their voyage from Japan to Europe. One anonymous writer attempts to scientifically explain that the Japanese "sono di colore oliuastro, ma credo che tal colore non sia naturale, ma preso nel viaggio nel passar particolarmente la zona torida, perchè essendo il loco dell'Indie vicine al circolo Artico, lochi frigidi, non possono di natura essere se non bianchi" ("Relatione Della Solenne..." 226). Besides curiosity in the Japanese's physiology, the Italians repeatedly pointed out mannerisms they found distinct. Among them, they found interesting their use of small rods for eating [chopsticks] ("usavano i suoi corteggiani più principali nel mangiare due bastoncini, lunghi duoi terzi di palmo in circa, grossi come le nostre penne da scrivere, con quali bastoncini prendono destramente e politamente il pane e le vivande, che mangiano" ["Libro Secondo, 12 ottobre 1615," 196.]) and the paper handkerchieves they used only once to blow their noses ("tutti li

³⁸ Also see "Pauli Alaleonis" 215-17; and Amati "Historia, Capitolo XXVIII" 211-15.

suoi portano un quinterno di carta di scorza d'albori, et ogni uolta che si nettano il naso con un foglio et poi lo gettano uia," "Avvisi de Roma," 31 ottobre 1615, 230).

VI

From these accounts, we infer that Italians were intrigued by the Japanese visitors and that they were drawn to the idea of defining Japanese identity in varying degrees. And it seems that their preferred method of delineating what made a Japanese focused on what made them different than themselves. Hence, they concentrated on the Japanese's distinctiveness in physical characteristics and behavior. In contrast to the Italians, Spaniards were not concerned with any type of ethnographic program. Their concern in the Japanese was only limited to what the latter reflected about themselves. Whatever signs marked them as distinct cultural individuals seems to have been overlooked by Spaniards. Because of their undefined and, thus, flexible identity, how the Japanese were perceived in Spain depended mainly on the reliability and status of their spokespersons. While Valignano's intercessory role made it possible for Ito and Chijiwa to be treated with the highest regard, Sotelo made it difficult for Hasekura and crew to be seen as little more than inconsequential visitors.

Needless to say, a single Japanese left in Spain, without a powerful protector, was, in all probability, doomed to misfortune. This was the ill-fated destiny of Don Tomás Felipe Japón, one of the members of Hasekura's crew who, for unknown reasons, was left behind in Spain. In 1622, Don Tomás, "cavallero," writes to the Council to report that he has been branded as a slave in the town of Zafra by a certain Diego Jaramillo.³⁹ He identifies himself as having been among the principal Japanese envoys that were baptized along with Hasekura at Court (he says that he is "ayjado de su Magestad" [see Appendix]). He asks for his freedom and for the Court's license to return to Japan. Don Tomás must have certainly experienced in flesh and blood that in Spain, the Japanese were not quite "the best people yet discovered."

³⁹ See transcription of this document in the Appendix (Archivo de Indias, Indiferente 1452, "4 de julio de 1622").



Figure 1. *Hasekura in Prayer* (ca.1615). City Museum of Sendai.



Figure 2. Claude Deruet, *Hasekura in Rome* (1615). Borghese Gallery in Rome

Appendix: Document regarding Tomás Felipe Japón and Transcription (Archivo de Indias, Indiferente 1452, 4 de julio de 1622).

Transcription⁴⁰

Left Half of Document
[upper left side]
Pide Libertad y Licenzia para pasar
al Japon de donde vino con el en
vaxador y se christiano en esta corte
[right side; caption of petition]
Señor,
Don Thomas Phelipe caua
llero Japon y ayjado de su
Magestad que está en el cielo padre
de vuestra Magestad=
[center, left side]
Muestre lo que
diçe [Juan Ruiz de Contreras's flourish]
[center]
en el Conssejo a 3 de junio de 1622
Béalo el <i>señor</i> fiscal [unidentified flourish]
[bottom left side]
El Consejo 4 de junio 1622
[Left half, bottom right side]
A Ju ^o Ruiz de
contreras [unidentified flourish]
[bottom right corner]
J. Ruys de Contreras
Right Half of Document
Señor
Don Thomas Phelipe. cauallero Japon que bino a
esta corte con el enbajador del Japon y se hico [sic] Chris
tiano. Y su Magestad que goça de dios, padre de vuestra Magestad le
saco de pila y la christianisima reyna de Francia
hermana de vuestra Magestad. Y porque un Diego Jaramillo
en Zafra le herro estandole siruiendo sin ser esclava
vo porque le pedia su salario. Y asi bino a vuestra Magestad A

⁴⁰ We follow the parameters for transcription set by Vicenta Cortés Alonso in *La escritura y lo escrito: Paleografía y diplomática de España y América en los Siglos XVI y XVII* (see bibliography).

pedir le hiciese justicia deste agravio= Y así su
pplica a vuestra Magestad le de libertad y licencia para po
der boluer al Japón pues es libre y Christia
no. por la gracia de dios que en ello reçivira
muy gran bien y caridad=
[response]
Desele licencia para que se buelva [Ruiz de Contreras' flourish]
El Conssejo a 26 de setiembre 1622

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---. “Dottor Amati, Historia dell’ambasciata che Idate Masammune ha inviata al Papa Paolo V. Capitoli XXI, XXII.” *Dai Nippon Shiryo* 147-52.

---. “Dottor Amati, Historia dell’ambasciata che Idate Masammune ha inviata al Papa Paolo V. Capitoli XXIII, XXIV.” *Dai Nippon Shiryo* 177-84.

---. “Dottor Amati, Historia dell’ambasciata che Idate Masammune ha inviata al Papa Paolo V. Capitoli XXV, XXVI.” *Dai Nippon Shiryo* 198-203.

---. “Dottor Amati, Historia dell’ambasciata che Idate Masammune ha inviata al Papa Paolo V. Capitolo XXVIII.” *Dai Nippon Shiryo* 211-15.

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