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From the Cross to the Pyre: The Representation of the Martyrs of Japan in Jesuit Prints

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Abstract

The iconography of the martyrs of Japan is often linked to that of the Twenty-Six Martyrs of Nagasaki. This group of mostly Franciscans was crucified in 1597 and beatified in 1627, and also included three Jesuits. The Society of Jesus, however, did not emphasize these martyrs in their engravings and representations of the victims of their Japanese mission especially before their beatification. The close study of two major works, Nicolas Trigault's *History of the Martyrs of Japan* (Latin, 1623; French, 1624) and the famous *Imago primi saeculi* (1640), reveals how text and image combine to generate a different discourse of martyrdom that centered on sacrificial fire rather than death on the cross. Although the first three beatified martyrs were never forgotten, the *Imago* in particular foregrounds another Jesuit martyr, Carlo Spinola, whose prominent family had played an important role in that work's creation.

Keywords

martyrdom – martyr – Franciscans – Japan – Nicolas Trigault – *Imago primi saeculi* – Carlo Spinola

Introduction

Due to Europe's Wars of Religion, the sixteenth century was both an age of martyrdom and one of controversies, which opposed Catholics and Protestants regarding the validity of each other's martyrs. In this context, Catholic missionaries who were killed during their mission work overseas were presented by the

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church as irrefutable and actual martyrs. Among them, the first to be officially recognized and beatified were the Twenty-Six Martyrs of Japan. This group includes both six Franciscan friars and seventeen Japanese members of the tertiary order, as well as three Jesuits. Until their beatification of 1627, there was a struggle between the Franciscans, who actively pushed for the beatification, and the Jesuits, who did not, and as a result two separate beatification edicts were promulgated. Not surprisingly, the same was also true for the group's iconography, with separate representations of either the six Franciscans grouped with the seventeen Japanese, or the three Jesuits.

One of the major reasons for the martyrs' beatification was that they, like Jesus Christ, were crucified. Their death on the cross was a powerful symbol, which would define their iconography as well as, for a time, the image of Christianity in Japan. The impact was such that the Franciscans even displayed a painting of the martyrs in the Aracoeli church in Rome but were instructed to remove it by the Holy See.[1] This was part of a larger lobbying effort pushing for their beatification. The first representation in print was in a German pamphlet published in 1599, and the most famous was the undated engraving made by Jacques Callot (1592–1635).[2]

The Jesuits also used the same crucifixion-centered iconography to represent their martyrs, especially in paintings produced after the beatification,[3] but as a whole, they followed a different agenda. Indeed, in their production of engravings and representations of the victims fallen in the missionary effort in Japan, the Jesuits did not even particularly highlight the three blessed, especially before their beatification. A notable exception are the engravings that were first included in the 1608 *Triumphus Jesu Christi crucifixi* by Bartolomeo Ricci (1542–1613) and that were reused in Pedro Bivero's (1572–1655) *Sacrum sanctuarium crucis* in 1635. In such works, Jesuits embraced the iconography of the cross, in what was, at least for Ricci, a discourse designed to compete with the Franciscans.[4]

However, mirroring evolutions in Japan itself as well as a general change of orientation among the Jesuits, subsequent publications and

1 Pope Benedict XIV, *De servorum Dei beatificatione et beatorum canonizatione*, ed. Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum (Vatican City: Lib. ed. vaticana, 2012), II/1:212–13.

2 Hitomi Omata Rappo, *Des Indes lointaines aux scènes des collèges: Les reflets des Martyrs de la mission japonaise en Europe* (*XVIe –XVIIIe siècle*) (Münster: Aschendorff, 2020), 269–71.

3 See chapter four of Omata Rappo, *Des Indes lointaines*.

4 Hitomi Omata Rappo, "Death on the Cross: The Beatification of the Twenty-Six Martyrs of Nagasaki (1627) and the Iconography of the Crucifixion," in *A la luz de Roma: Santos y santidad en el Barroco Iberoamericano*, *vol. III: Tierra de santidad*, ed. Fernando Quiles García et al. (Seville: Enredars, 2020), 129–50.

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representations—while never abandoning the cross as a symbol and rhetorical device—would develop a new symbolic language for the martyrs of Japan, which focused instead on fire or the pyre. This shift in perspective can be traced to Nicolas Trigault's 1623 *History of the Martyrs of Japan*, the first illustrated monograph on the history of the martyrdom of the Japanese Christians. Indeed, it seldom mentions the Twenty-Six Martyrs of Nagasaki and foregrounds other victims of persecution in the country. This change is even clearer in another influential Jesuit work, not only on martyrs but also for the Society in general, the *Imago primi saeculi Societatis Iesu*, published in 1640.

Image and Text in Trigault's Work

Born in Douai, Nicolas Trigault (1577–1628) is mostly known for his missionary work in China. After a first trip which saw him arrive in Nanjing in 1611, he went back to Europe, arriving in 1614, and worked as a procurator for the Chinese mission before leaving again for China in 1618. His *History of the Martyrs of Japan* was mostly conceived during the period between his trips to Asia. It was first published in Munich in 1623 in Latin, followed by a French translation in 1624.[5] Both books are famous not only for their contents but also for their gorgeous engravings. The Latin edition contains a total of seventeen, and the French edition rearranges them, adding some and combining others.

This work is based on reports and letters from Japan, and especially the work of Pineiro, and it was expanded when Trigault received new materials even after his departure from Europe. It was a cumulative process, involving the engravers and publishers, and also another author. In fact, Trigault compiled the first five parts, while the supplement (*auctario*)—a section describing the events from 1617 to 1620—was composed by the prominent Bavarian Jesuit Matthaeus Rader (1561–1634). It was clearly an important project, which received both a papal privilege and the support of the ducal family of Bavaria.[6] In fact, the book, as a whole, is dedicated to Emperor Ferdinand II and Maximilian of Bavaria and Palatinate, and can be seen as the extension of the efforts Trigault made to gather support in the Holy Roman Empire for his

5 Nicolas Trigault, *De Christianis apud Japonios triumphis sive de gravissima ibidem contra Christi fidem persecutione exorta anno MDCXII usque ad annum MDCXX* (Munich: Sadeler, 1623) [hereafter Latin edition]. For the French version, *Histoire des martyrs du Japon depuis l'an 1612 jusques à 1620*, trans. Pierre Morin (Paris: Sébastien Cramoisy, 1624) [hereafter French edition].

6 Trigualt, *De Christianis apud Japonios Triumphis*, 519. On Rader, see also Markus Friedrich's contribution in this issue.

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missionary enterprise in the East, especially in China. The frontispiece of the Latin edition makes clear that its engravings were created by two members of the Sadeler family of Antwerp (Raphael I Sadeler: 1560/61–1628/32, Raphael II: 1584–1627/32). The Sadeler had been working for Trigault since about 1616, and they created the engravings, as well as printed the book, under his direct instructions.[7]

The French version was printed in Paris by Sébastien Cramoisy, a famous publisher known for his work with the Jesuits. The work was translated by the Jesuit Pierre Morin (1562–1625) and dedicated to the queen, Anne of Austria (1601–60). The frontispiece bears a signature that was identified by Kimura Saburō as Michel van Loshom (1601–47), a famous engraver whom Cramoisy had also employed in various other publications.[8] Although the French version reuses many of the engravings of the Latin edition, sometimes combining several of them on the same page, it also contains a few original illustrations, which are clearly of better quality and bear the same signature as the frontispiece.

All the engravings essentially represent scenes of martyrdom that occurred in Japan. Their iconography, however, offers more than a representation of this Asian country. They also forge a link between the martyrs of these new missionary territories and those of the Old World, using iconographic associations to connect them either to martyrs of the early church or the victims of Europe's religious wars. Works such as Richard Verstegan's famous *Theatrum crudelitatum haereticorum* formed a major inspiration for the engravings found in Trigault's book.[9]

Trigault's portrayal of the Japanese martyrs also contains another message, already encoded into the frontispiece of both the Latin and French versions. To decipher it, we have to return to the structure of the work, which can be divided into two sections: parts I–IV, and part V (with its supplement).

The parts I to IV were composed first and are based on Trigault's original work on the topic combined with the information he obtained later.[10] The first

7 Gabriele Greindl, "Die Briefe Maximilians I. und Elisabeths von Bayern an den chinesischen Kaiser im Jahr 1617," in Renate Eikelmann, ed., *Die Wittelsbacher und das Reich der Mitte 400 Jahre China und Bayern* (Munich: Hirmer, 2009), 105–11.

8 Kimura Saburō木村三郎, *Nicolas Poussin to Iezusukai no zuzō*ニコラ・プッサンとイエズス会の図像 (Tokyo: Chuōkōronsha 中央美術公論社、2007), 225.

9 Omata Rappo, *Des Indes lointaines*, 312ff.

10 *De Christianis apud Japonios Triumphis* was intended as a continuation of *Rei christianae apud Japonios commentarius*, which was published in Augsburg in 1615, and covered the period from 1609 to 1612, with the appendix mentioning events which happened in 1613.

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four parts were sent as a sort of parting gift to the Bavarian ducal family, as Trigault himself explains in his *dedicatio* at the beginning of the book,[11] when he was in Lisbon, right before leaving Europe for China in April 1618.[12] While intended for publication, Trigault still considered these parts to be incomplete.[13] In fact, he continued working on the project after his departure for Asia. Part V was written during this trip, with the Jesuit directing their printing through written instructions.

Trigault first stayed in Goa, an important stop on the way to East Asia. There he encountered new materials and received letters from Japan he used to compose the fifth part of his book.[14] Given the importance of the new material, he insisted on including this new section in the final version of his work. In a letter to Rome, he worried that the book might already be published, and urged for printing to be delayed.[15] His message arrived in time. The fifth part was included in the final version, as well as a supplement to which I will return below.

One of the most striking features of this fifth part is the presence in the French version of an engraving of a man dying on the cross (Fig. 1). The image is inserted immediately before the beginning of the fifth part, which signals that this was at least one of the most important issues in this final section. The same engraving can also be found in the Latin edition (Fig. 2), where it illustrates chapter XVII of part V, which relates events that happened in Hiroshima on October 1616. Trigault described the death on the cross of a Japanese Christian, named Dominicus and compared it to the martyrdom of St. Andrew. Other martyrdom illustrations in the *History of the Martyrs of Japan,* often group together multiple deaths in one illustration, but this crucifixion is depicted on its own in both the Latin and French editions.

11 In the same section, he also mentions their financial help for the Chinese mission. See *De Christianis apud Japonios triumphis*, Dedicatio, 1–3 (before the main text). This *dedicatio* is dated April 1618.

12 On his departure, see George Harold Dunne, *Generation of Giants: The Story of the Jesuits in China in the Last Decades of the Ming Dynasty* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962), 178.

13 According to the preface to part V, the first four parts covered 1612 to 1616, but the manuscript barely reached 1616: *De Christianis apud Japonios triumphis*, 383.

14 *De Christianis apud Japonios triumphis*, 495.

15 *Epistola R. P. Nicolai Trigavtii e Societate Iesv de felici sua in Indiam nauigatione: itemque de Statu rei Christianae apud Sinas et laponios* (Cologne: Johannes Kinchius, 1620). See *Copia eines Schreibens von dem Ehrmürzigen Herrn P. Nicolao Trigautioso er den 29. Decembris Anno 1618, zu Goa datirt auß dem Lateinischen verteutscht* (Augsburg: Sara Mangin Wittib, 1620), 51–58.

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FIGURE 1 Nicolas Trigault, *De Christianis apud Japonios triumphis* (1623), 464

This clearly suggests that the presence of such impactful tales of crucifixions was probably one of the main reasons why Trigault insisted on adding the fifth part to the final text. In doing so, he was able to display miraculous deaths by crucifixion (true martyrdom) as part of the Jesuit mission to Japan, which

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FIGURE 2 Nicolas Trigault, *Histoire des martyrs du Japon* (1624), 468

was therefore as "successful" in producing true martyrs as the Franciscans. This probably served as a counterargument to the Franciscans, who were actively producing crucifixion images of the martyrs of Nagasaki that did not include the Jesuits, even before the beatification.[16]

16 See chapter 4 of Omata Rappo, *Des Indes lointaines*.

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The importance of the crucifixion anecdote in Part V is further confirmed by the frontispiece of the whole book. The Latin version's illustration depicts Ignatius of Loyola (*c.*1491–1556), the founder of the Jesuits, and Francis Xavier (1506–52), the pioneer of the Asian missions, surrounding the title. Above the



FIGURE 3 Frontispiece of Nicolas Trigault, *De Christianis apud Japonios triumphis* (1623)

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title is a mysterious piece of firewood inscribed with the Calvary Cross (Fig. 3). This wood is mentioned in the text in Part I, Chapter 3, "Two Miraculous Crosses that Foretell the Coming Suffering of Japanese Christians."

The story of this miracle begins with an incident in December 1589, when the shape of a cross appeared in firewood in Obama, in the western region of the main island of Japan.[17] A similar cross was also found in Omura in 1611. Trigault adds that this also occurred in Nagasaki the following year. He then lists anecdotes from around the country of appearances of the cross on the trunks of trees growing naturally.[18] Similar "miracle stories featuring the cross" are found in a 1589 letter by Luís Fróis (1532–97), collected in the annual report of Japan, and in Fróis's "History of Japan," as well as in the so-called "Baretto manuscripts."[19]

On the other hand, the French version of the frontispiece depicts three crosses in the same position (Fig. 4). The reason for this is explained in the preface to the French version as follows: "As for the door picture, it represents three miraculous crosses that appeared in this country (Japan). Two appeared in a tree and the other in a wonderful light."

The two crosses on the top left and right of the door in the French version, which are placed on what looks like tree trunks, represent the miracles of the crosses of Obama and Omura. The second, which "appeared in a marvelous light," is described in Part V, Chapter 21.[20] This cross is said to have foreshadowed the martyrdom of Johannes of Daju, a convert who was responsible for spreading Christianity throughout Japan on behalf of the European missionaries, and another convert named Petrus Susuque. They were imprisoned in the country of Suruga and were left to die after their torture. Five companions survived but they too would eventually die as witnesses and martyrs for their faith. A Christian named Didacus Mangoichi witnessed a miraculous manifestation of the cross with seven rainbow-colored lights, which represented the two deaths that had already occurred and emphatically foretold the future martyrdom of the other five.

17 Renso de Luca "The Miraculous Cross of Obama: A World-Famous Story of the Japanese Christian Period," *Bulletin of Association for the Study of Kirishitan Culture* 148 (2016): 1–17.

18 Latin edition, 7–9; French edition, 9–11.

19 Gaspar Coelho and Luís Fróis, *Copia di lettere annue scritte dal Giapone del 1589. & 1590* (Milan: Pacifico Pontio, 1593), 61–71. The Baretto manuscript consists of a set of handwritten documents written by the Jesuit Manoel Baretto (*c.*1562–1620), a missionary who was active in Japan. The manuscripts remained in possession of Christina, Queen of Sweden (r.1632–54), and were later donated to the Vatican Library: Joseph Wicki, ed., *Historia de Japam*, 5 vols. (Lisbon: Biblioteca Nacional, 1984), 5:201–5.

20 Latin edition, 480; French edition, 595.

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FIGURE 4 Frontispiece de Nicolas Trigault, *Histoire des martyrs du Japon* (1624)

This prophetic rhetoric around the cross stems from the status that this symbol had not only in modern Catholic iconography—one thinks in particular

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of the frescoes of the church of San Stefano Rotondo in Rome[21]—but also in Jesuit doctrine beginning with the *Spiritual Exercises*.[22] Moreover, the cross is at the heart of the representations of the three martyrs of the Society among the Twenty-Six and of early discourses on Japanese martyrs,[23] and it even plays an important role in images of Xavier.[24] Its presence weaves a narrative web that structures the story, but it does not appear as an instrument of martyrdom, and, surprisingly, does not conclude the whole work. Encoded in these representations of the cross is another story that leads not (just) toward crucifixion but eventually toward the pyre.

Martyrs in the Emblem: The *Imago primi saeculi*

The supplement to the fifth part reveals the main attitude of the Jesuits regarding the Japanese martyrs at the time. This short addition, written by Rader, was not part of Trigault's original text and follows directly after the end of Part V. This suggests that, despite Trigault's efforts from Asia, the book as a whole cannot be seen as the original work of a single author, but as a product of cumulative writing, updated and expanded according to the current situation and also according to the circumstances.

The last part of this supplement lists the most recent martyrdoms, in 1620. In this context, we find a mention of the fate of the missionaries Ambrósio Fernandes (1551–1620) and Carlo Spinola (1564–1622). Both are said to have died in prison and are praised for their martyrdom. In fact, this part of the book, which is drawn from a letter by the Jesuit Matheus de Couros (1567–1632), is mistaken, as Spinola only died during the great martyrdom of Genna in 1622.[25] However, the fact that his book ends with this figure is significant, as

21 Omata Rappo, *Des Indes lointaines*, 312–15. For a study on these frescoes, see Thomas Buser, "Jerome Nadal and Early Jesuit Art in Rome," *The Art Bulletin* 58, no. 3 (1976): 424–33.

22 Omata Rappo, *Des Indes lointaines*, 291–93. For an analysis of the spiritual practices of the Jesuits, with many references to the cross, see Pierre-Antoine Fabre, *Ignace de Loyola—Le lieu de l'image: Le problème de la composition de lieu dans les pratiques spirituelles et artistiques jésuites de la seconde moitié du XVIe siècle* (Paris: Editions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1992).

23 For examples see Omata Rappo, "Death on the Cross."

24 On the Cross in Jesuit art in general, see Mia M. Mochizuki, "Connected Worlds—the World, the Worldly, and the Otherworldly: An Introduction," in *The Nomadic Object: The Challenge of World for Early Modern Religious Art*, ed. Christine Göttler and Mia M. Mochizuki (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 1–34.

25 French edition, 631.

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it points to the Society's changing priorities regarding Japanese martyrs, especially before the beatification of the twenty-six martyrs in 1627.

Spinola had been considered a hero by the Jesuits well before his martyrdom and efforts to obtain his beatification began immediately after his death. In this context, the writing and publication of martyrology became a means for the Jesuits to promote the sanctity of the martyrs and facilitate the canonization process. Despite its reliance on various miracles of the cross, Trigault's book does not insist on the twenty-six, whose beatification process was underway at the very time he was compiling the last part of his book.[26] As the Twenty-Six Martyrs were mostly associated with the Franciscans—and the friars minor took care of all the beatification procedures—the Jesuits needed to promote their own martyrs. This objective is not entirely apparent in Trigault's work, which was principally produced as part of a fundraising effort for the *Chinese* mission, but the presence of Spinola, and to a lesser extent Fernández, reveals that *De Christianis apud Japonios Triumphis* can also be seen in the context of the Society's ongoing endeavor to obtain their own saints of Japan, independently from the Franciscans.

While the Jesuits would eventually embrace their three representatives after the twenty-six had been beatified, these efforts would only increase in the years after 1627. Promoting beatifications through the use of both discourses and images, with again Spinola as a key figure, can be seen as one of the main goals of the famous emblematic book published to mark the Society's centenary, the *Imago primi saeculi* (1640). This book was far more than a collection of emblems, it also offered a kind of history assessing the first century of the Jesuits and its meaning. While criticized by contemporary emblem specialists of the time,[27] the *Imago* was an official publication by the Society, as the preface written by Muzio Vitelleschi (1563–1645), the Jesuit superior general, makes clear. Its emblems of Japan show how this new visual language of martyrdom was rooted not in crucifixion but in fire.

26 See Omata Rappo, *Des Indes lointaines*, 178–80. For the rivalries during the process itself, see Hitomi Omata Rappo, "Profiling the Japanese Martyrs: The Beatification Process of the Twenty-Six Martyrs of Nagasaki (1597–1627)," in *Profiling Saints: Sanctity in the Modern World*, ed. Elisa Frei and Eleonora Rai (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2023).

27 Marc Fumaroli, "Classicism and the Baroque: The *Imago Primi Saeculi* and Its Detractors," in *Art, Controversy, and the Jesuits: The Imago Primi Saeculi Societatis Iesu (1640)*, ed. John W. O'Malley (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2015), 57–88.

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Emblems of Japan as a Theme in *Imago primi saeculi*

Eagerness in the Fire of the Japanese

The first emblem with Japan as its subject, is the second from the end of the fourth chapter, "the suffering Society" (*Societas patiens*), which describes the persecutions and martyrdoms of the Jesuits that occurred all over the world. Titled " Eagerness in the Fire of the Japanese" (*Iaponum in igne alacritas*), the emblem is accompanied by the inscription "*Se pandit amori*" (It opens from itself out of love).[28] (Fig. 5) The picture depicts a pinecone on the right and a flame burning on a stone pedestal on the left. The accompanying text reads as follows:

> The pine nut expands from fire nearby and when touched by heat opens its green folds. You might think that it wanted to enclose the flames by which it might perish under the center of its rind and was not mindful of its loss. These cease to seem marvels to me from the time in which the



FIGURE 5 *Imago primi saeculi* (1640), 579

28 *Imago primi saeculi Societatis Iesu a prouincia Flandro-Belgica eiusdem Societatis repraesentata* (Antwerp: Balthasar Moretus, 1640), 579–80.

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> Faith grew in the fire of the Japanese. Gods, what miracles of men this land begets!
> How miraculous that You would create a land of people like this! […] Europe is awestruck and applauds Japanese triumphs.[29]

The third verse explicitly mentions Japan, while the general tone develops a metaphor for fire and pain which will be a consistent theme in the emblems related to this country. Moreover, as has already been pointed out, this emblem was inspired by an engraving dedicated to St. Barnabas and found in the fourth volume of Paolo Aresi's *Della sacre imprese*.[30] St. Barnabas, a first-century martyr, is said to have been executed and burned in the course of his missionary work.[31] In his emblem, the pinecone is placed inside the flames. Originally, the pinecone, which also appears on the top of the rod used to worship the pagan god Dionysos (who died and was reborn through fire),[32] was a symbol of rebirth and immortality, similar to the pomegranate, as it does not turn to ashes immediately after being burned, but instead gives birth to a new fire. By analogy, religious sources made it symbolize the act of martyrdom.[33]

However, in the *Imago*, the pinecone is placed not in but beside the flames. This detail is not without significance. In order to understand it, it is necessary to return to the stories of the Japanese martyrs presented in the *Imago* and their historical context. In the second part of the *Imago*, we find a very precise description of the Great Martyrdom of Genna:

> To make the punishment longer and more cruel, the fire was six cubits[34] away from the (martyr's) body. The arms were lightly bound to the posts, and [the restraints] were tied loosely. And they were made so that they were not difficult to untie. Those who did not dare to endure the

29 *Imago*, 579. Translation in O'Malley, ed., *Art, Controversy, and the Jesuits*, 623.

30 Marc Van Vaeck, Toon Van Houdt, and Lien Roggen, "The *Imago Primi Saeculi Societatis Iesu* as Emblematic Self-Presentation and Commitment," in *Art, Controversy, and the Jesuits*, 143. For an analysis of Aresi's *Impresa*, see Anne-Elisabeth Spica, *Symbolique humaniste et emblématique: L'Évolution et les genres* (*1580–1700*) (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 1996), 386.

31 See Marek Starowieyski, "La Légende de Saint Barnabé," in *Nouvelles Intrigues Pseudo-Clementines: Plots in the Pseudo-Clementine Romance,* ed. Frédéric Amsler (Prahins: Editions du Zèbre, 2008), 135–38.

32 Gunnar Samuelsson, *Crucifixion in Antiquity: An Inquiry into the Background and Significance of the New Testament Terminology of Crucifixion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 70n119.

33 Hassan Amjad, *Pomegranate: Anatomy of a Divine Remedy* (n.p..: Lulu Press, 2005), 70–71.

34 One cubit equalled half the length of an arm.

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> punishment could escape if they wanted to. But there was not one of them who did not look to the heavens with his eyes, not one who did not endure the fire without moving his heart and body, even though the wood was burning strongly around them.[35]

This description is fairly consistent with previous sources, such as the letter by the Jesuit Bento Fernandes (1579–1633), which seems to be the inspiration for this section of the *Imago*.[36] In short, the victim was not immediately burned by the flame, but was restrained in such a way that they could move and escape their torment. Contemporary sources explain that this was intended not only to make the execution more painful but also to prevent the victims from attaining true martyrdom by encouraging them to flee.[37]

In reality, escape was not truly possible: those who attempted it were thrown into the flames by the executioners.[38] The first two verses of the text present clear references to this type of execution and to martyrs accepting death without fear. While the text does not say so explicitly, placing the pinecone beside the fire must be a reference to the very method of execution during the Genna martyrdom. The presence of this particular event in the other Japanese emblems included in the *Imago* is even more striking still and makes clear the centrality of Spinola and Genna in Jesuit presentations of their martyrs in Japan.

Precious Deaths of the Martyrs

This emblem is titled "The Precious Death of Martyrs" (*Martyrum pretiosa mors*, 580) (Fig. 6). The inscription reads, "It is impossible to die for a nobler destiny [than martyrdom]" (*Non poterat fato nobiliore mori*). The engraving represents a bird on a mountaintop, surrounded by fire, catching the rays of the sun. The text describes it as the "one and only bird,"[39] an expression which

35 *Imago*, 528–29.

36 Yūki Ryōgō 結城了悟, *Nagasaki to Genna daijunkyō: Bento Fernandes shinpu ni yoru kiroku* 長崎の元和大殉教ベント・フェルナンデス神父による記録』（Seibo no kishi—sha 聖母の騎士社、2007). For the original text, see Rome, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (hereafter ARSI), *JaSin.* 60, fols. 224^{v}–233^{v}.

37 Dainihon shiryō, vol. 12, book 46, 196.

38 Sakuma Tadashi 佐久間正訳, *Kirishitan bunka kenkyū 4 Diego de san Francisco hōkoku—shokanshū* キリシタン文化研究４ディエゴ・デ・サン・フランシスコ報告・書簡集』（Kirishitan bunka kenkyūkai キリシタン文化研究会, 1971）127.

39 *Imago*, 580.

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FIGURE 6 *Imago primi saeculi* (1640), 580

has been associated since the ancient times with the phoenix,[40] which it interprets this way:

> Though death be envious they will live on after their passing. The second life unlike the first says that there is no end. The anger of kings that snatched the first will not take this life away nor will barbarian madness with sword and savage fire.[41]

The text clearly shows that this emblem represents martyrs whose lives were taken by execution by sword and fire, which is probably also a reference to the Genna martyrdom. In fact, at Genna, only a minority died by fire, most were beheaded by the sword. The accompanying text includes a passage that compares the martyrs' leader, Spinola, directly to a phoenix:

40 On the origins of the symbolism, Paul-Augustin Deproost, "Les métamorphoses du Phénix dans le Christianisme ancien," in *L'Oiseau entre Ciel et Terre*, ed. Michel Mazoyer (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), 112–37.

41 *Imago*, 580. Translation in O'Malley, *Art, Controversy, and the Jesuits*, 625.

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> [Spinola] was brought to the sinister pyre and tied to a post. Then, by cruel mercy, he was loosely bound so that if his patience wavered, he could more easily escape. Thus, yielding to the fire, like a phoenix, Spinola died on earth (this world), but in heaven he began to live.[42]

Martyrs Are God's Chosen Vessels, by Which Japan Triumphs

The third Japanese emblem to appear in the *Imago* is the second from the end of Part V, which recounts the many triumphs and achievements of the Jesuits, especially the martyrs. The emblem is entitled "Martyrs are God's chosen vessels, by which Japan triumphs" (*Martyres vasa Dei electa, quibus Iaponia triumphat*), making it clear that the subject is again the martyrs of Japan.

The engraving represents a candlestick glimmering in the darkness, lit by a flame (Fig. 7). This is based on the famous passage in Matthew 5:14–15, "Place the lamps on the candlestick, not under the squares, and all the house will be lighted." The inscription reads, "These are symbols of triumph (*Haec signa*

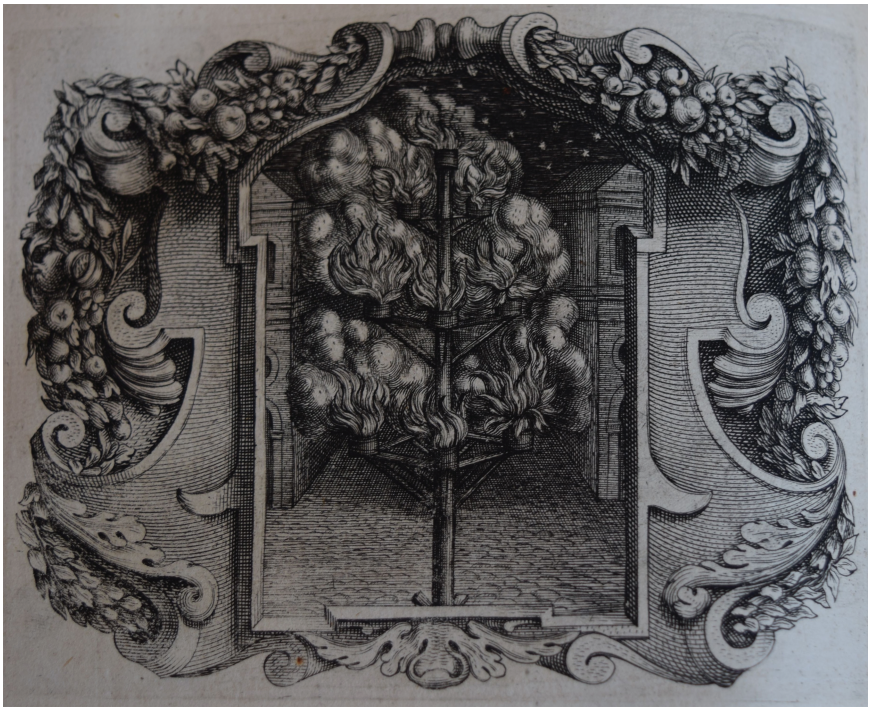


FIGURE 7 *Imago primi saeculi* (1640), 726

42 *Imago*, 548.

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triumphi). Martyrs again symbolize the triumph of the faith to Japan, and their triumph is represented by fire.

Carlo Spinola Is Burned on a Slow Fire

The fourth emblem appears immediately after, closing part V of the *Imago*. The title of this emblem is "Carlo Spinola is burned on a slow fire" (*Carolus Spinola lento igne comburitur*). (Fig. 8) The motto, "it is sweet and honorable" (*Dulce & decorum est*) praises Spinola's death and does so in strikingly sensual language to which we will return. The engraving also includes a salamander. Its presence clarified in the accompanying verses:

> Is the fire that conquers everything conquered and trampled upon? Will the pyre that lacks reins learn to accept reins? Now it has learned. The salamander more forceful than the fire it has conquered receives burning brands in its face without effect. So it is that you, untamed fires, are not always victorious. (…) Spinola burns and flourishes in the reddening flames just as many a rose grows fresh from a sweet rain. Blood is the



FIGURE 8 *Imago primi saeculi* (1640), 727

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> color of roses and thence it is glorious to live in the middle of the flames, it is sweet to die.[43]

The salamander burning in the flame, then, is a figuration of Spinola himself.

Salamander, Phoenix, and Immortality

Salamanders, creatures that according to legend could put out fires and were nourished by flames, have been symbols of immortality and rebirth since Aristotle (384–22 BCE).[44] In emblem books, the salamander was traditionally associated with members of the French royal family,[45] but it had also acquired a specific meaning in the Jesuit tradition. For example, Pedro de Ribadeneyra (1527–1611) wrote in his 1591 *Tratado de la tribulación* that the salamander, when paired with the phoenix (firebird), embodied divine truth (true faith).[46] In 1600, Juan de Pineda (Ioannis de Pineda, 1558–1637) published a commentary on Job 13 (*Commentariorum in Job libri tredecim*), where the salamander and the fire motif featured on the frontispiece, symbolizing the passion of Christ.[47]

Above all, it was the canonization (1622) of Ignatius and Xavier that gave the salamanders special significance in the Jesuit iconography. This canonization was, of course, an unprecedented achievement for the Jesuits, and was celebrated around the world. The festivities made ample use of symbolic languages, and especially emblems. The salamander was employed in the canonization

43 *Imago*, 727. Translation in O'Malley, *Art, Controversy, and the Jesuits*, 653.

44 Peter Maurice Daly and G. Richard Dimler, *The Jesuit Emblem in the European Context* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2016), 31–32.

45 The symbol was used by François I (1494–1547); see Anne-Marie Lecoq, "La salamandre royale dans les Entrées de François I^{er}," in *Les Fêtes de la Renaissance*, ed. Jean Jacquot and Elie Konigson, 3 vols. (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1975), 3:93–104.

46 Pedro de Ribadeneyra, *Tratado de la tribulación* (Barcelona: Layma Cendrat, 1591), 95^{r}; Spencer J. Weinreich, *Pedro De Ribadeneyra's 'Ecclesiastical History of the Schism of the Kingdom of England': A Spanish Jesuit's History of the English Reformation* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 81.

47 Andrea Catellani, "Before the Preludes: Some Semiotic Observations on Vision, Meditation, and the 'Fifth Space' in Early Jesuit Spiritual Illustrated Literature," in Ut pictura meditatio*: The Meditative Image in Northern Art, 1500–1700*, ed. Walter S. Melion and Ralph Dekoninck (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 157–72.

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processions in the cities of Toledo,[48] Bordeaux,[49] Pont-à-Mousson, Goa, and possibly many others.[50] In the Pont-à-Mousson procession, the emblem of a salamander inside a flame was painted on the side of the chair on which the statue of Loyola sat (Fig. 9).[51] The printed version of the image added the motto "Nourished by the flame" (*ignis alit*). This metaphor of live-giving fire nourishing salamanders may recall for us a line from the *Imago*'s description



FIGURE 9 *Aux ss. Ignace de Loyole et Francois Xavier: A raison de leur Canonization, faicte par nostre S.le Pape Gregoire xv d heureuse mémoire, le 12 de Mars 1622* (1623)

48 For an analysis, see Ignacio Arellano, "Theatrical Elements in Baroque Festivals (the Jesuit Celebrations in the Golden Age)," in *St Francis Xavier and the Jesuit Missionary Enterprise: Assimilations between Cultures/ San Francisco Javier y la Empresa Misionera Jesuita; Asimilaciones entre Culturas*, ed. Ignacio Arellano and Carlos Mata Induráin (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2012), 47–56.

49 *Solemnité de la canonization de sainct Ignace de Loyola fondateur de la Compagnie de IESVS, & de François Xavier de la mesme Compagnie, faicte à Bourdeaus* (Bordeaux: Jacques Millanges, 1622), 27.

50 Georg Schurhammer, "Festas em Goa no ano 1624," in *Gesammelte Studien: Herausgegeben zum 80. Geburtstag des Verfassers*, vol. IV: *Varia I Anhänge*, ed. László Szilas (Rome: Institutum historicum Societatis Iesu, 1965), 493–95. See also M. Gabriela Torres Olleta, *Redes Iconográficas: San Francisco Javier en la cultura visual del Barroco* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2009), 311–12.

51 Paulette Choné, *Emblèmes et pensée symbolique en Loraine (1525–1633)* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1991), 453.

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of Spinola: "As the rose grows anew in the sweet rain, so Spinola burns and flourishes in the reddish flame."

The procession in Goa also depicted a salamander with the same inscription, "ignis alit," which suggests it may have been a recurring element in this context. This shows that, before the *Imago*, the salamander was frequently used as a symbolic motif for the founder of the Society. In fact, Ignatius's faith, passion, and fortitude are often likened to fire. The motif of fire appears frequently in the *Spiritual Exercices*, while Loyola's holiness has long been symbolically associated with fire, as his name (Ignatius) formed an anagram for "ignis a Deo illatus" (fire lit by God).[52] In baroque imagery, this fire is further linked to the idea of the fire of love, and even Cupid, who is reinterpreted as symbolizing spiritual love.[53]

The phoenix has an even longer history in the Christian tradition as a symbol representing the death and rebirth of Jesus Christ. The motif was used extensively in the *imprese* (heraldic devices) and emblems that flourished in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[54] Inevitably, the phoenix, as a symbol of immortality and rebirth, also matched the heroic image of the martyr and was used to honor the English Jesuit martyr Edmund Campion (1540–81), for instance.[55] Like the salamander, the phoenix was also used to portray Ignatius: sermons celebrating Loyola's beatification at Salamanca in 1609, employ a rhetorical strategy very similar to the *subscriptio* of the Spinola emblem studied above. Loyola was said to have been immolated as a phoenix in the love of the divine, before ascending to heaven to eternal life.[56] In the *Imago,* the phoenix

52 Evonne Levy, *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 154–55; Jerome Aixalá, "Ignatius and Ignis, Etymological and Hagiographical Ramblings," *Ignis* 3, no. 4 (1974): 4–10.

53 Van Vaeck, et al., "The *Imago Primi Saeculi Societatis Iesu* as Emblematic Self-Presentation," 171.

54 See e.g. Peter Maurice Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem: Structural Parallels between the Emblem and Literature in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 23–24; Daly and Monica Calabritto, "Introduction: Death and Emblems," in *Emblems of Death in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Daly and Calabritto (Geneva: Droz, 2014).

55 Peter Davidson, "The Flaming Heart of St. Edmund Campion," in *Emblematic Images and Religious Texts: Studies in Honor of G. Richard Dimler S.J*, ed. Pedro F. Campa and Peter M. Daly (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2010), 47–50.

56 Alonso de Salazar, *Fiestas, que hizo el insigne Collegio de la Compañia de IESVS de Salamanca, a la Beatificacion del glorioso Patriarcha S. Ignacio de Loyola* (Salamanca: The widow of Artus Taverniel, 1610), 196r–196v.

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also represents figures other than Spinola, including on the frontispiece where it symbolizes the Society of Jesus overcoming difficulties and being reborn.[57]

The Spinola Family and the Composition of the *Imago*

In the Jesuit iconographic tradition, the phoenix and the salamander thus symbolize vanquishing death through martyrdom. The fact that not one but both of these important motifs were used to symbolize Spinola himself suggests his crucial role in the *Imago*. While many prominent Jesuits are featured and celebrated in the text, only those who had achieved beatification or sainthood are represented directly in emblems, with the sole exception of Spinola (Table 1).

While Spinola was indeed an important figure—but not more than Ambrosio Fernandes in Rader's addition to Trigault's account—his prominence must also be explained through the very context of the composition of this work. This is where the role of his larger family comes into play. Spinola's father, Ottavio Spinola (b.1538), belonged to a wealthy Genoese family of merchants and bankers. After Carlo's martyrdom, the Spinola family, which settled throughout Europe, took pride in his death. This is also seen within the *Imago*. Part VI is a local history of the Jesuit province of *Flandro-Belgica*, and although there are no anecdotes directly related to Catholic missions abroad, the name of Ambrogio Spinola (1569–1639) is mentioned several times. From 1603, he was the commander of the Spanish army fighting during the Dutch Revolt and the Thirty Years' War, where he achieved brilliant military successes.[58] He is presented as a powerful patron of the mission and of the Jesuits in general several times throughout the *Imago*.[59] In Part IV, where the martyrdom of Carlo Spinola is discussed in detail, the following verse celebrates the Spinola family:

57 Ralph Dekoninck, "Du frontispice emblématique au frontispice théâtral dans les éditions anversoises au tournant des XVI^{e} et XVII^{e} siècle," in *Polyvalenz und Multifunktionalität der Emblematik*, ed. Wolfgang Harms (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), 891–95. Also Marc Fumaroli, *L'École du silence: Le sentiment des images au XVII^{e} siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994), 444–49; Lien Roggen, "Celebration Time: The *Imago Primi Saeculi Societatis Iesu* and Its Dutch Adaptation as Part of the Festivities of 1640 Commemorating the Jesuit Order's Centenary," in *The International Emblem: From Incunabula to the Internet*, ed. Simon McKeown (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 170–200.

58 Robert Bireley, "Les Jésuites et la conduite de l'État baroque," in *Les Jésuites à l'âge baroque (1540–1640)*, ed. Luce Giard (Grenoble: Millon, 1996), 229–42.

59 For example: "Ambrosius Spinola Marchi patronus etiam Missionis castrensis." See *Imago*, x.

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TABLE 1 Major figures of the Society in the *Imago*

	Year of beatification(if before 1640)	Year of canonization (if before 1640)	Emblems in *Imago* (page numbers)
Ignatius of Loyola (*c.*1491–1556)	1609	1622	714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719
Francis Xavier (1506–52)	1619	1622	717, 720, 721
Francisco de Borja (1510–72)	1624		722
Stanisław Kostka (1550–68)	1605		330, 724
Luigi Gonzaga (1568–91)	1605		329, 723
Carlo Spinola (1564–1622)			580, 727
Julian Nakaura (*c.*1568–1633)			None, only mentioned in the text.
Among the Twenty-six so-called Nagasaki saints Three Jesuits. (d.1597)	1627		None, only mentioned in the text.
Marcello Francesco Mastrelli (1603–37)			None, only mentioned in the text.
Camilo Constanzo (1572–1622)			None, only mentioned in the text.

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> In honor of the Spinola family (*Laus familiae Spinolae*).
> O great order of the Spinola family! In the time of Ambrosio, the honor of the Spinola family shone throughout Europe by its own victories. The Order of the Spinola family adorns Japan and (in a larger sense) India as well.[60]

In this section, the military success of Ambrogio Spinola is equated with that of Carlo, who achieved a spiritual victory through his martyrdom in distant Japan. The Spinola family is then praised for their parallel successes in both contexts. It has long been noted that Ambrogio Spinola had strong political ties to the Jesuits in the Low Countries. By 1640, when the *Imago* was published, Ambrogio was already deceased, but his son, Filippo Spinola (1596–1659), remained influential in Madrid.

On another occasion, the Jesuits also used Carlo Spinola to honor a different branch of the family based in the Low Countries on another occasion. Philippe Hippolyte Charles Spinola (1612–70), count of Bruay and the grandson of Don Gaston Spinola y lo Porto (1546–1614), was a soldier in Spanish service who became governor of Lille and other towns of the region in 1655.[61] During his official entry into the city of Lille that same year, he was entertained by a play about the martyrdom of Japan, based on the story of Carlo Spinola, performed by the students of the local Jesuit college. Its title mentions Spinola's death and compares him to a phoenix "martyred by a weak fire."[62] While the play itself is no longer extant, this description clearly suggests an influence of the emblem of the *Imago*.

From Crucifixion to Fire: Jesuit Representations of Martyrdom from Trigault to the *Imago*

This reappearance of the phoenix is consistent with the general theme of the fire weaved into narratives describing Spinola, including the *Imago*. Yet the

60 *Imago*, 548.

61 The Scottish Jesuit John Hay (see the introductory essay to this special issue) already dedicated one of his Japanese missionary reports to Don Gaston: John Hay, *Iapponiensis imperii admirabilis commutatio exposita litteris ad reverendum admodum Claudium Aquaviva* (Antwerp: The Widow of Johannes Bellerus, 1604). On the Spinola family in Southern Low Countries, see Dries Raeymaekers, *One Foot in the Palace: The Habsburg Court of Brussels and the Politics of Access in the Reign of Albert and Isabella, 1598–1621* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013).

62 *Le Phénix mourant au milieu des flammes* (Lille: Ignace et de Nicolas de Rache, 1655).

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centrality of Spinola's martyrdom in Jesuit representations cannot explain the shift towards burning on its own. This insistence of "fire" also faithfully reflects the changing methods of execution in Japan from the times of the Twenty-Six Martyrs to when the *Imago* was published. In the early days of the Christian persecution, Christian executions were frequently carried out by crucifixion, but later other methods, such as fire or drowning, were adopted, in part because authorities responded to local Christian attempts to venerate the martyrs and collect relics.[63]

Trigault's work, in fact, already makes frequent mentions of fire and executions on the pyre, which often employ a similar rhetoric of the fire being fueled by the martyrdom itself. For example, he mentions the "fire coming out of the heart of the martyr."[64] The most telling description can be found in part II, with the burning of eight Christians from Arima in 1613. According to the text, Magdalena and her companions died in a fire "the strength of which was provoked by their desire [for martyrdom])."[65] Trigault provides a lengthy description of their deaths, as the martyrs were slowly engulfed in the increasingly intense flames. Their death scene is one of the few executions by fire to receive an engraving in the *De Christianis*.[66]

The French version is still more explicit. Where the Latin version includes a picture of the burning of the two men (fig. 10), the French version opts instead for a very lavish and detailed engraving of Magdalena and her relatives (Fig. 11). Four of the eight martyrs, including one child and two women, are depicted in the flames. A crowd watches them, holding torches. The adults have almost sensual poses, as if they were inviting the fire, which mirrors the description of the main text.

The burning theme would be amplified still further in later works, such as *Kerckelycke Historie van de gheheele wereldt* (*History of the church*, published

63 On the recovery of these relics and the development of veneration in Europe, see Hitomi Omata Rappo, "La quête des reliques dans la mission du Japon (XVI^{e}–XVIII^{e} siècle)," *Archives des sciences sociales des religions* 177 (2017): 257–82.

64 French edition, 525.

65 French edition, 215.

66 Juan Ruiz-de-Medina, "Un Genovés nacido en Madrid: Carlos Spinola, científico, misionero y mártir," in *Gesuiti fra impegno religioso e potere politico nella Repubblica di Genova*, ed. Claudio Paolocci (Genoa: Scuola tipografica sorriso francescano, 1992). On Magdalena, see Hitomi Omata Rappo, "Immolées et crucifiées: Les martyrs féminins et la recherche de la sainteté magdalénienne dans la mission japonaise (XVII^{e}–XVIII^{e} siècles)," in *Saintetés jésuites: Genre et histoire*, ed. Pierre Antoine Fabre (Louvain-La-Neuve: Presses de l'Université de Louvain, 2023).

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FIGURE 10 Trigault, *De Christianis apud Japonios triumphis* (1623), 169.

in Dutch in 1667 by the Jesuit Cornelius Hazart (1617–90).[67] In this narrative, when Magdalena entered the flames, she took the burning coal with both

67 There is also a German version but the quality of the engraving is far inferior; see Benjamin Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism: Geography, Globalism, and Europe's Early Modern World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 77–79.

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FIGURE 11 *Histoire des martyrs du Japon*, inserted between 210 and 211

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hands, made a crown of it, which she placed on her head. Hazart claims that her child, Jacobus moved through the flames and was able to embrace his mother.[68]

This allusion to this idea connecting love, fire, and martyrdom is present in several of the sources examined above, and is reminiscent of the description of Loyola as a phoenix. The association between fire and love in Trigault's prose foreshadows the emergence of another related symbol in the first emblem of the *Imago* on Japan: the pinecone, which opens out of love, inviting the flames inside itself. As shown by Richard Dimler, this particular image is inspired by Jacob Cats's *Emblemata moralia et oeconomica* (1627). In this earlier emblem book, which had a deep impact on the 1640 *Imago*, the pinecone, which appears associated to Cupid, represents the transfiguration of a cold, jealous heart which becomes able to accept love. However, as we have seen with many similar symbols related to fire, in Jesuit emblems, this love is transformed into a deep love of the faith which leads one to accept martyrdom.[69]

In Trigault, we thus find not only a genealogy of crosses foreshadowing martyrdom, but also an emerging symbolic pattern and discourse around the fire and the pyre, and of the sublime love which leads to martyrdom, which would translate into the emblems of the *Imago*. The martyrs of Japan thus demonstrate how Jesuits used different forms of printed media to disseminate their message and push for their beatification.

The focus on fire does not mean that deaths on the cross, including the Twenty-Six Martyrs of Nagasaki, were ignored in later Jesuit discourses. In the text of the *Imago*, the martyrdom of these three Jesuits on the cross is mentioned several times. Crucifixion is mentioned as "the noblest method of execution" leading, of course, to the passion of Christ.[70] In the margins, they are honored as the "protomartyrs of the Society in Japan" (*Protomartyres Societatis in Iaponia*).[71] The same section also mentions their beatification, emphasizing

68 Hazart, 1667, 1:134–36. See Johan Verberckmoes, "Immer Kloekmoedig Emoties van Zeventiende-eeuwse Japanse Christelijke Martelaars," in *De Steen van Alciato: Literatuur en visuele cultuur in de Nederlanden; Opstellen voor Prof. Dr. Karel Porteman bij zijn Emeritaat*, ed. Marc Van Vaeck et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 628.

69 G. Richard Dimler, "The *Imago Primi Saeculi*, Jesuit Emblems and the Secular Tradition," *Thought* 56, no. 4 (1981): 433–48, here 438.

70 *Imago*, 528.

71 *Imago*, 528.

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that they were the first martyrs in Japan.[72] The Twenty-Six Martyrs also appeared, as we have seen, in Trigault.

Nevertheless, both works rather relegate them to the background. In Trigault's case, this is likely more due to the time span covered by his work, and the fact that they had to be at best shared with the Franciscans. However, the reason for their muted presence in the *Imago* is clearly stated in Argument 2 in Part IV, where the first emblem dedicated to Japan appears. This oration is entitled "Praise of the Jesuits who shed their blood for Christ."

> Why shall I mention this wonderful action of Paul Miki, Jacob Kisai, and Johannes Goto at the cross? Why do I mention their incredible, almost sacred fortitude? Why should I mention their crossed wounds? And from those wounds flows more glory than blood? But you, Father Carlo Spinola, about your martyrdom, I can never keep my mouth shut, nor can I remain silent. Forgive me, Spinola, great athlete that you are. Even in the unlikely event that you do not receive from my voice (what I am about to write) as much glory as you have received through the Flame. Every flame, but especially the flame of the martyrs, has something that can be seen but cannot be handled (by words). In describing the flame of the martyrs, I lack eloquence, and it is as if (one) loses one's equanimity in front of the fire.[73]

The text thus put Spinola's martyrdom on the same level as those of the three beatified martyrs. In order to do so, the author had to focus on the theme of fire, or the Flame, which is almost described on the same level as the cross of the three martyrs. In fact, the idea that these two important symbolic threads, the cross and the fire, should also be connected and intertwined, can also be observed in the frontispiece of the *Imago*, where a figure representing the Society holds a cross surrounded by fire, foreshadowing the many representations of martyrs in the book (Fig. 12).[74]

72 *Imago*, 618.

73 *Imago*, 548.

74 On this frontispiece, see Michael C. J. Putnam, "The Frontispiece and Opening Emblem of the *Imago*: A Translation," in *Art, Controversy, and the Jesuits*, 51–55.

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FIGURE 12 *Imago primi saeculi*, Frontispiece

Conclusion

In Trigault's work, despite the overwhelming presence of fire in the main text, the symbol of the cross plays an important role in the narrative, as well as an iconographic presence through the frontispieces. In the *Imago*, on the other hand, while crosses are present for quite specific reasons, fire is seen and represented as superior. However, these two symbols are present in both works, and also in subsequent texts which represent the struggles the Society encountered in Japan and work towards the martyrs' beatification.

As we have seen, Trigault's main objective was financing the mission in China, but he also mentioned specific martyrs and praised their virtue,

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especially in Part V of the text. Carlo Spinola appears in this context, and his presence in Jesuit accounts would only grow in the following years. By the time the *Imago* was published, members of the Spinola family of Locoli, Italy, had already written to Cardinal Giovanni Domenico Spinola (1580–1646) requesting his beatification. As a result, a total of four beatification trials were held between 1630–32, one in Manila and three in Macau.[75]

This objective was pursued partly through printed sources and the use of engraved images or emblems, which combined a textual and a visual discourse focusing on the two major symbols in the representations of Japanese martyrs. By spreading this iconographical and symbolic shift, engraving and printing it in multiple sources, the Society also showcased its evolution, moving from an initial reticence towards the early martyrs of Japan, to fully embracing them, with a love burning with the same fire as those of the pyres.

The printing process itself reflected the strategy of the Society, especially in Trigault's case. While the *Imago* was published for the centenary, his book was a cumulative work, which was amended to include as much fresh information as possible, but the publishing was also delayed and the manuscript changed, without his direct input for the supplement, thus integrating new narratives. Books such as the *History of the Martyrs of Japan* or the *Imago* are therefore not works produced by a single individual, but cumulative productions that function as vectors of a message whose diffusion is the main objective of their publication. These factors influence both their content and the timing and direction of the publishing process.

The recurrence in these later works of the idea of the martyr's triumph over the flames, symbolized by the phoenix and salamander metaphors, suggests that there is a conception of death by burning in the European consciousness as particularly heroic, especially in the Jesuit context. This, in turn, may have influenced the sublime representation of the fire as ultimately loving and life-giving, both as a central element of Japanese Christian spirituality and European Jesuit iconography.

75 ARSI, Archivio della Postulazione Generale (Santi e Beati), Beato Carlo Spinola e Soci, 42 ("Lettere postulatorie sec. XVII–XIX"), fols. 1r–2r.

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