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The Elegance of Hosokawa

Tradition of a Samurai Family

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Chastity and Loyalty – Gracia Hosokawa as Role Model for an Elitist Catholicism

Irene Suchy

Some 200 years before the original libretto in Mozart's *Magic Flute* had Tamino entering the stage in a Japanese hunting costume, Japan had already once before been the magical fairyland of princes from the east. It was a princess: Gracia Hosokawa. She is a central side note in Japanese and Austrian history – a figure matching numerous ideals in the projection of the perfect samurai on the one hand and Catholic martyrdom on the other: from chastity to bravery in unrelenting loyalty. Gracia's value increases with her violent and early death, almost a saint to the avenging society of *rōnin*.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, stories from Japan were quite popular among the elites of the Habsburg Empire, from the imperial family to the pupils in Jesuit schools. The Jesuits selected the subjects for their theatrical performances with great finesse so as to always accommodate the goals of the dynasty. Japan was sufficiently far away for political projections; it was unreachable. And for the goals of the Counter-Reformation, the martyrs from the fairyland were the perfect choice.

The Jesuit drama combined the lives of saints with moral education while connecting distant worlds to hierarchical faith. This entertainment for men was intended to strengthen the bond between the boys and justified the assignment of female roles to boys with the Japanese theatre traditions of *Kabuki* and *Nō*. The Jesuit drama, a Catholic manifestation of the Counter-Reformation, was taught in Latin and served as an art production under the veil of faith. Offering entertainment for the masses, it was an excuse and permission for dance, eroticism and gender role plays: some 8,000 plays were created in a period of more than two centuries. The Jesuit Order operated more than 700 schools, some with up to three theatre stages. The alleged moral education through theatre only ended with the vows of religious order in 1773. Other orders copied this model. The Benedictines, for example, commissioned Michael Haydn to compose music dramas, *Singspiele*, with Japanese themes.

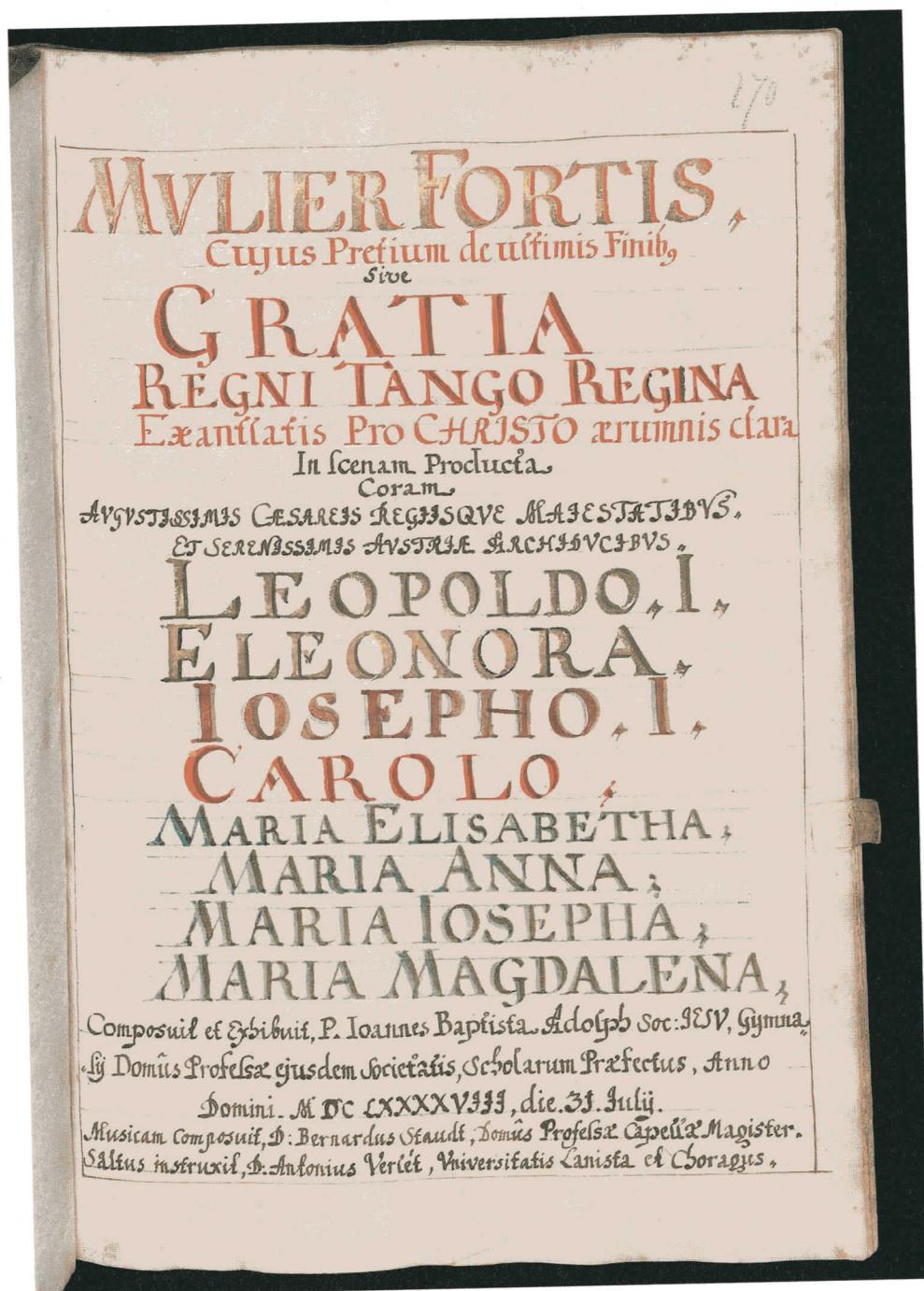
Francisco de Xavier, the 'Apostle of Japan' was the most popular subject: a man of sorrows who gave

his life for his faith. Xavier, who had lived in Japan as a Catholic missionary for three years, was canonised by the head of the Catholic Church only seventy years after his death. Similarly, Gracia Hosokawa's story also alternated between the sixteenth century Habsburg Empire and Japan in the Edo period. Her life became a veritable hit on the Jesuit school stages.

In the early sixteenth century, the men of the Society of Jesus were the first to reach Japan as Christian missionaries. In the 1540s, Portuguese missionaries arrived in Japan and brought with them not only their faith but also weapons as well as other achievements from Europe, such as medicine, music, astronomy, and technology like the printing press.

The concept was a success: in around 1580, there were already about 200 churches and 150,000 Christians in Japan. A few Portuguese words from that period, such as *pan* for bread, are still used in Japan today. The same is true for a few melodies whose periodic structure, as in *Sakura, Sakura*, made it difficult to deny their occidental origins. Despite being banished and prohibited in the Edo period (1600–1868), Christianity was still practised in Japan, *kirishitan* (Christian) culture having the appeal of exoticism. (The Jesuits probably did not anticipate the particular appeal of Christianity to Japanese women who wished to get married in a white princess wedding dress.)

The disparity in research is staggering: while Japan studies the Jesuit texts and their conception of Japanese history, the Japanese dramas in Jesuit tradition are nothing more than a side note in our research – even though their influence must not be underestimated. Margret Dietrich, the eminent theatre scholar renowned for her work on Japan, called Gracia Hosokawa 'a Japanese role model for the Habsburg dynasty'. The educated woman, devoted to her Christian God and the patriarchal system, was crafted into a role model for Habsburg empresses. The intention of the Jesuits bore fruit: the protagonists in all their school dramas were consistently sons of kings to impress the Habsburg royals.



Figs. 1, 2:

For a reproduction of the original pages shown here see Walter Pass and Fumiko Niiyama-Kalicki (eds.), *Johann Bernhard Staudt (1654–1712), Mulier fortis. Drama des Wiener Jesuitenkollegium*, *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich*, vol. 152 (Graz, 2000) © Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS1580-4°/152 MUS L

The memoirs of theologian and Japanologist Elisabeth Gössmann reveal that Empress Michiko, the wife of the current Heisei Emperor (Heisei being the current era in Japan: the Gregorian calendar year 2018 is the thirtieth year of that era, Heisei 30), was eager to learn more about Gracia in several private lectures. Posing the rhetorical question 'Japan. Land of Women?', Gössmann determined that Gracia was one of the very few educated women to go down in Japanese history and was recognised as a heroine of Christianity.

Mulier fortis, the brave woman, is an honorary title awarded in Christian writing, which was also accorded to Saint Anne, the grandmother of Jesus. Johann Baptist Adolph (1657–1708) incorporated the honorary title of the Catholic Church in his work: *Mulier fortis – The Brave Woman Whose Values Go Beyond All Bounds* is the name of his theatre play with music by Johann Bernhard Staudt (1654–1712) (figs. 1, 2). The Jesuit priest left a legacy of five volumes with stage plays for the Jesuit school theatres, mostly based on Jesuit reports and historical

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Ut firmata stet columna, et fu-

rorem despiciat, Sic Virtutis Stat A-

accounts on Japan. As the author and director of the play, which premiered on 31 July 1698, Father Johann Baptist Adolph dedicated his play to 'Their Supreme Imperial and Royal Majesties, Their Serene Highnesses the Archdukes of Austria'. He made Gracia the queen of the kingdom of Tango, and her husband Hosokawa the 'Barbarian' King Jacundonus. In this telling, she was a wife and mother, abused, lashed, and beaten by her husband, who refused to return to the 'pagan' faith. She insisted on giving her children, the heirs to the throne, a Christian

education and stood her ground despite the abuse and hardship she had to suffer for it. Exhausted, she 'sent her unwavering soul up to heaven'.

Dying an early death at the age of 37 in the year 1600, Gracia offered a suitable story for dramas and librettos. With a firm belief in Christianity and yielding to Jesuit wisdom, the stage text portrays her as wishing to get a divorce and escape, just to be talked out of this again immediately. After all, separation was not an option for her as a Japanese noble woman who was not granted the right of divorce, nor did it befit her commitment to Christianity. Gracia braves her royal husband's violence because of her Christian faith. Her children are begging their brutal father to exercise leniency for their mother but their efforts are in vain. Reports of the time give rise to reasonable doubt as to the brutality of the man. The reports of Johannes Laurus, a Jesuit missionary in Japan, include a letter from Hosokawa to his wife, in which he allows her to keep her faith, claiming it was a good confession of her Christianity. As this source is incomplete and also questionable, the story of Gracia can be told at the narrator's discretion and in line with his intentions.

The play is divided into a prologue and an epilogue with three parts and interludes as well as several performances and choirs in between. Aside from Queen Gracia, her husband and her four children, the play features a cabinet of personifications: persistence, a column, sings about how she despises anger, as wrath and fury might cause imbalance (quite literally) but she will never fall over. The first print, which was also the playbill, listed all actors man by man. The most welcome audience was handed a German text of the play, while the pupils had to know their lines by heart for the sake of learning Latin. There is a happy ending: after Gracia's death, her husband is full of remorse; in the epilogue, Gracia's soul ascends to heaven 'sending [him] a sign of respect'.

Born in 1654 in Wiener Neustadt, the composer Johann Bernhard Staudt was a Jesuit pupil himself before he was appointed choirmaster of the Jesuit College Vienna. He died in Vienna in 1712. Benefiting from the Jesuit network, Staudt's music was played in more than forty Jesuit dramas staged in Linz, Graz and Salzburg. Much of his work was lost. *Ferdinandus Quintus Rex Hispaniae* was written in 1864 and performed at one of the concerts at Ambras Castle.

His Gracia score was introduced into the *Denkmäler der Tonkunst* (*Monuments of Fine Music*), established by the legendary Viennese musicologist Guido Adler. Staudt traditionally composed his music in four voices with seven instruments. The stage music for *Mulier fortis – The Brave Woman* is orchestrated for two violins and a violone (a lower-pitched viol). The quality of the music is owed to the abilities of the pupils: as teaching music was prohibited at Jesuit schools for moral reasons, they did not have any music lessons in school. Yet, as music was such a great help in spreading the faith (the theatre was free and a welcome attraction not only to the families of pupils), the Jesuits did not want to abandon it: music lessons were held outside of school, and the theatre plays increasingly took the form of small operas.

Hosokawa Gracia, or *Garasha* (originally Hosokawa Tama, 1563–1600), was born as the third daughter of samurai general Akechi Mitsuhide (1526–1582). When she was fifteen years old, she married the samurai general Hosokawa Tadaoki who had received the province of Tango in the area of today's northern Kyōto prefecture as a fief from Oda Nobunaga. She had five or six children, all of whom outlived her. When her own father attacked her husband's

Fig. 3:
Midono ni inton suru Garasha
(*Garasha at her Midono retreat*)
Utagawa Toyonobu (1859–1883)
Meiji period (1868–1912), Meiji
16 (1883)
Woodblock print
© Kumamoto Prefectural Art
Museum



benefactor, Oda Nobunaga, Gracia suddenly found herself the daughter of a traitor and left with no choice but to secretly retreat into the mountains at just a little over twenty years of age (fig. 3). Although she was allowed to return, she was placed under house arrest at Osaka Castle, the seat of the Hosakawa family.

It is believed that Gracia was introduced to Christianity by her servant Maria. Her husband had told her of his conversations with a Christian friend, the general Takayama Ukon (1552–1615, who also had a Catholic school theatre dedicated to his life, set to music by Michael Haydn). When *daimyō* Toyotomi Hideyoshi banished Christianity, the servant, Maria, was encouraged to be baptised. Later she did the same for Gracia, whose baptism went hand in hand with her broad education. It should be historically verified, however, that her husband had made her life miserable for many years before restoring a Christian altar two years before she died. After her death, he had her human remains moved from the Christian cemetery in Sakai to the temple Sōzen-ji in Osaka.

Gracia's violent death was probably owed to the fight for Osaka Castle in 1600. According to one version, the murderer set fire to the castle before committing suicide. It remains uncertain whether Gracia was killed to protect her family's honour or also committed suicide. Her last poem is dedicated to the honour suicide among samurai: a parable on the cherry tree blooming for a mere few days. "The one flower in the world that recognises the right time to fall to the ground is finally in full bloom, so the human being can finally become human."

While Gracia vanished into oblivion together with the Jesuit dramas in the German-speaking realm, she was featured in more than forty plays as well as theatrical and television films between 1887 and 2006. In James Clavell's novel *Shōgun*, she became the model for the character Mariko and – once again – a hit in the television series of the same name.