

Max Feliu Merce

Historical Context of Catholic Japan

The fight for power in Japan between Spain and Portugal was seen within the religious orders of the Catholic Church. After many disputes, the Jesuits of Portugal were not successful in their attempts to gain sovereignty in Japan. The religious orders that gained power were the Mendicants, Dominicans, Franciscans, and the Augustinians. In the year 1630, there were 760,000 Christians out of 12 million in Japan. Even the Friars had to tell the Japanese Catholics to moderate their fanaticism because of their urges to go into martyrdom. Even though there was prominent religious action in Japan, the people in Spain did not give much importance to international affairs.



Funding of the Play

The topic of this play was not Lope de Vega's choosing. The play was commissioned by a Spanish Dominican friar named Navarrete. Navarrete is also a character in the play.

Since the story was funded by the Dominicans, *Los Mártires de Japón* has elements of bias that favored the Spanish did not leave the Japanese in a good place.

Los Mártires de Japón



This is a play written in the 1600s by Lope de Vega, one of Spain's best ever writers and playwright.

This is one of the only surviving play from the oriental world that was written by a Spanish author. Even though it is a very rare piece of literature, it is a part of Spain's Golden Age of Baroque Literature.

Many people, though, were not interested in the topic of Japan and the orient. They preferred literature that was more closely related to their own culture.

Comedias in Spanish Literature

In the genre of comedias, a life's story is told, featuring dramatic, romantic, comedic, and tragic events. *Los Mártires de Japón* serves as an example of how an author can use comedias to not just tell a story but to change a targeted audience's thoughts on a subject.

The Play's Conclusion

The conclusion of the play in act three ends the story on a hopeful note that opens the possibility of Christian success for Japan's future generations. Although there was not much true hope for Christianity to prevail, this is Vega's final manipulation that portrays an inaccurate narrative. The story ends with Quildora converting religions. Even though there is a promise that Quildora will convert to Christianity, Vega provides no evidence proving that she does convert. Proof that Vega accomplished the Dominican friars' yearning is seen in the celebratory nature in the end.

References

Hsu, Carmen. Conversation during Office Hours on March 22, 2022

Hsu, Carmen. "Martyrdom, Conversion and Monarchy in Los Primeros Mártires Del Japón (1621)." *Zwischen Ereignis Und Erzählung*, 2016, pp. 217–34. *Crossref*, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110471502-012>. Vega, Lope De, and Christina Lee. *Los Martires De Japon (Spanish Edition)*. Juan de la Cuesta, 2006.

[h-century-illustration](#)