

[The following is the English counterpart of the short notice entitled “Eine Wiederentdeckung in der Herzog August Bibliothek: Zum Wolfenbütteler Manuskript der jesuitischen Compendia der Philosophie, Theologie und Kosmologie in japanischer Übersetzung.” Both language versions were originally published together on 20 May 2020, but only the German version is currently accessible online at <https://www.hab.de/eine-wiederentdeckung-in-der-herzog-august-bibliothek/>. Note that the footnotes and references were not part of either of the two original versions, but have been added here. — 8 Feb 2022]

**A Missing Link in the Transmission of
Western Cosmology to 16th Century Japan Rediscovered:
The Wolfenbüttel Manuscript of the Jesuit *Compendia* of
Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology in Japanese Translation**

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The introduction of a press from Europe in 1590 finally enabled the Jesuits in Japan to print everything necessary for their missionary endeavors. Each of the about 30 different titles from the years to come known to be extant today qualifies as a bibliographical rarity: Few of them are preserved in more than three copies, and about half of them are known in only a single copy. Scouring collections around the globe hitherto unknown titles are still brought to light at times, such as the *Compendium manualis Navarri* (1597) in 1985. Others whose exact whereabouts had become unknown during the course of the last century have resurfaced as well, such as the *Fidesno quiō* (1611) in 2009 and, more recently yet, the *Exercitia spiritualia Ignatij de Loyola* (1596). Further copies of already known titles are likewise occasionally found. Thus, an additional copy of the *Vocabulario da lingoa de Iapam* (1603) was discovered at the Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro in 2018 – and a third copy of the *Contemptus mundi* (1596) was identified at the HAB Wolfenbüttel in 2017.

The book as such was already introduced in Ernest Satow’s pioneering study on *The Jesuit Mission Press in Japan* (1888) based on the copy kept at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and a second copy at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan, had also become known later on. Its discovery was notable, however, as it was not only the first Jesuit print from Japan to be found at the HAB, but also more generally one of an exceedingly small number of such works nowadays kept in German collections. Owing to a letter preserved in the book we can even tell that it had come to Wolfenbüttel as early as 1662.¹

It was the perusal of a list of manuscripts in Wolfenbüttel appended to an 1831 catalogue of Oriental manuscripts at what was then the Royal Library in Dresden² that in late 2019 has led to the identification of a related manuscript at the HAB: The Japanese translation of the so-called *Compendia* (1593) attributed to Spanish Jesuit Pedro Gómez (1533/35–1600) – i.e. the texts laying the foundation of education in the Jesuit colleges in Japan and later Macau for more than two decades. They cover in three parts the fields of philosophy (chiefly treating Aristotle’s *De Anima*), theology and Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmology.

The original Latin version has been preserved in a single manuscript in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Reg.lat.426), first introduced to scholarship in 1939.³ At least this Latin version appears to have been printed at the mission press,⁴ but no copy has yet come to light. Its translation into Japanese of ca. 1595 was discovered only in 1995,⁵ however in an incomplete copy: Crucially for this key text in the intellectual history of 16th to 17th century Japan as well as our understanding of the global circulation

¹ On the HAB copy of *Contemptus mundi*, see Triplett (2018) and Kishimoto/Shirai (2019).

² See the list of “Codices Orientales Guelferbytani” compiled by Friedrich Adolf Ebert and published in Fleischer (1831: 76–87). Entry 54b on p. 82 gives the following description: “Cursus theologicus et philosophicus a Jesuitis descriptus, lingua et literis Japonicis, interspersa interpretatione latina.”

³ See Schütte (1939).

⁴ See e.g. Laures’s (1957: 97–98) treatment of *A Compendium of Catholic Doctrine*, no. 3 in his list of “Works Probably Printed”. Further cf. Laures (1957: 89, also 53) for a 1596 reprint in Latin of the Catechism of the Council of Trent – which formed the basis for the theological part of the *Compendia*.

⁵ On the identification of the manuscript in 1995, see Üçerler (1997: 12).

of knowledge, Ms. 228 at Magdalen College Oxford lacks besides some subsections at the end of the theological part the entire cosmological part. *De Sphaera*, as the latter in its Latin version is commonly referred to, chiefly introduces the geocentric model and the four elements theory in the tradition of Aristotle and Ptolemy.

The newly discovered Wolfenbüttel manuscript (Cod. Guelf. 7.5 Aug. 4°; Fig. 1) is unique in comprising all three parts, thus filling the gaps in the Oxford manuscript and opening up new opportunities for a critical edition of the Japanese *Compendia* based on both textual witnesses. More importantly yet, scholarship up to now had to rely on the later *Nigi ryakusetsu* 二儀略説 (A Brief Discussion on the Celestial and Terrestrial Worlds) and related writings to catch a glimpse of *De Sphaera* in its Japanese adaptation, even if in a substantially revised and as it were de-christianized form. Now, it is possible for the first time to study and contrast the original Latin version, *Nigi ryakusetsu* and the Japanese translation *Sufera-no nukigaki* スヘラノ抜書 (Selections on the Sphere) as the hitherto missing link in between the other two. Doing so will shed light on the process of how *De Sphaera*, whose cosmology is inextricably interwoven with Christian thought, was first translated in a Jesuit context, and eventually de-christianized in its later transmission via *Nigi ryakusetsu*.

Finally, a word on the authorship of *De Sphaera*, or at least its Japanese translation. For decades the cosmological part of the *Compendia* has almost universally been treated as the work of Gómez despite a lack of solid evidence to that effect, which in fact is only available for the other two parts.⁶ The newly discovered Wolfenbüttel manuscript now calls for a revision of that view, as the Japanese translation actually explicitly names its compiler right after the title as such (Fig. 2): It is Spanish Jesuit Pedro Morejón (1562–1639?), who incidentally has long been known to have taught using the *Compendia* at the Jesuit college in Amakusa.⁷

Work on an edition and study of the manuscript has commenced in January 2020, starting with *Sufera-no nukigaki* as the manuscript's most significant part.

Image captions

Fig. 1: Diagram of the celestial spheres and the signs of the zodiac, which are also the object of the Latin mnemonic hexameters in Greek script above.

Fig. 2: The beginning of the third part, *Sufera-no nukigaki*, including its title and the name of Pedro Morejón as its compiler.

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⁶ Schütte (1939: 234) himself was clear about the lack of contemporary sources on Gómez as the author of *De Sphaera*. It was only later, in part at least due to Obara's (1965: 134) unfortunate misrepresentation of the passage in question, that Gómez became to be considered the sole author of the tripartite *Compendia*.

⁷ See already Schütte (1939: 229, n. 13, 230, 234, 235), but also e.g. Üçerler (1997: 38).

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