From the ineptitude to a higher capability: the Jesuits and the formation of a Christian community in Brazil and Japan (16th-century)

Mariana A. BOSCARIOL  
CHAM, FCSH, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa  
E-mail mariana.boscariol@gmail.com  
ORCID: 0000-0001-9062-0913

Abstract
The Society of Jesus was officially established in Rome in 1540. From the repercussion the group achieved, right in the next year some missionaries were sent to Lisbon by order of King John III. Being promptly incorporated into the Portuguese empire, in less than one decade the Jesuits founded a mission in the geographical edges of the Portuguese Patronage authority: Brazil and Japan. Even though their primary goal was the evangelisation among the non-European populations and their subsequent conversion, the conditions they encountered in these territories were completely different, making the possibility to create a genuine local Christendom more or less reachable. Considering the cases of the Jesuit mission in Brazil and Japan during the 16th-century, this article intends to work on some reflections the missionaries registered about the possibility to establish and consolidate a local Church. The reality showed different demands and struggles, making the creation of a native Christian community too far to be accomplished. For this purpose, it will be analysed letters and reports writing in both missions by its most important leaders - as José de Anchieta and Luis Fróis - during the first decades of their activity, corresponding to the second half of the 16th-century.

Keywords: Jesuits, Mission, Evangelization, Brazil, Japan