

INTRODUCTION

IN THE LATTER years of the reign of the Korean King Seonjo (r. 1567–1608), Europe's late sixteenth century and the Momoyama period in Japan, violent events provoked the dispersal of Korean women and men throughout the Asian region, some even further. The invasions by Japanese forces of the Korean kingdom, then ruled by the I (or Yi) dynasty and known as Joseon, represented perhaps the most intense military conflict among East Asian peoples before the late nineteenth century.¹ Through these invasions, the effective if not official leader of Japan, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, had hoped to gain a strategic foothold from which he could conquer Ming China. When Seonjo refused to acquiesce to Hideyoshi's demands that the Joseon kingdom be used as a steppingstone for Japanese troops, in part because of Joseon's tributary relationship with the Ming emperors of China, Hideyoshi attempted to force access. Over six years, the Joseon kingdom suffered devastation to its lands and resources through violent conflict fought among Japanese, Joseon and Ming forces, and Joseon's people became spoils of war. Accounts of the experiences of Korean women and men in the conflict and diaspora were documented in many local sources as well as others that traversed the globe. Both Korean individuals, and the reports that narrated some of their activities within and beyond the borders of Joseon, travelled through organizations motivated by evangelism, the origins of which were in Europe. Chief among these were the Catholic mission orders.

This work analyzes evangelizing Korean women in both its meanings. It examines how Korean women came to engage with Catholic missions and the nature of that engagement, as both subjects for, and agents of, catechizing practices. It explores the interactions between Catholic Christianity and Korean women as these are recorded in mission archives. As such, it is also about the power of texts written by missionary men because it is through their reports that we have accounts about these women. The perceptions that authors presented in these texts about Korean women, their experiences and their activities were relational in nature. These were shaped in part by how missionary men understood themselves, in relation to each other, those whom they evangelized and those whom they sought to evangelize, variously, as Christian men, as European men (if they were), as Spanish, Italian, or Portuguese men predominantly, as elite men or otherwise. They were influenced by their own perceptions of the nature of the labour they individually conducted for the mission and how they understood the missionary endeavour itself. Their texts conveyed, mostly implicitly but sometimes explicitly, how they felt about themselves in relation to Korean men as well as Korean

¹ There is a vast literature on this conflict in multiple languages, referenced in this work as it is pertinent to specific areas of analysis.

women, and how they perceived Korean gender relations. They judged Korean people, and women and men separately, in relation to other peoples they encountered in the region, such as Japanese, Chinese, Macanese and Filipino women and men. The mission archives contained too, albeit in mediated ways, some perceptions of Korean women about these missionary men, other Korean women, Korean men, and peoples from other societies with whom they interacted in the region. Gender ideologies shaped both interactions between missionary men and Korean women and the way that women's experiences would be narrated in mission archives.

The relationship of Korean women, in particular, to the Christian mission work at this period in Asia has never been the subject of detailed analysis. Studies of Christian developments in Korea take varied starting points to their research, depending on their focus on the first missionary endeavours, on the first martyrs—in Korea or elsewhere—or on the institutional foundation of Catholicism and Protestantism.² The very substantial research produced by the historian Juan Garcia Ruiz-de-Medina, S. J. on the engagement of Catholic missions, especially the Society of Jesus, with the Joseon kingdom from the sixteenth century, made available vital documentation about Korean women, providing significant foundations for critical study.³ Joseon's engagement with Christianity at this period has since been further developed and nuanced by scholars examining diverse Asian sites where interactions between Korean people and Catholic missions occurred over Europe's early modern period.⁴ For example, Pierre-Emmanuel Roux's work on the contact zone of Beijing for Korean envoys stresses the importance of transnational encounters for the spread of knowledge about Catholic Christianity.⁵ Yet, to date, how Korean women might have experienced mission engagement differently to men, and consequently responded in different ways, has not been explored.

There is evidence, however, that women and men did respond to Christian mission engagement differently, not least because missionary men perceived women and men differently, but also because of the contexts and priorities of their own lives that were shaped by the constraints and possibilities of their community's gender ideologies. This is demonstrated in studies of women's participation in Christian missionary endeavours in the Late Joseon and Japanese colonial periods, Europe's late eighteenth to early twentieth centuries. Park Min Yea has analyzed the evidence of women falsifying their marital status in order to live as Catholics in the Late Joseon period, a strategic

2 Clark, *A History of the Church in Korea*; Gim Seongtae 김성태. *Hangukcheonju gyohoesa* 한국천주교회사 [Korean Catholic church history]; Baker, ed., *Critical Readings on Christianity in Korea*; Baker, "The Transformation of the Catholic Church in Korea"; Kim and Kim, eds. *A History of Korean Christianity*; Baker and Rausch, *Catholics and Anti-Catholicism in Chosŏn Korea*. See further references below.

3 However, there has been considerable criticism regarding his arguments in favour of conceptualizing a Korean Catholic Church before the end of Europe's eighteenth century. Ruiz-de-Medina, *Orígenes de la Iglesia Católica Coreana*; a revised and expanded version of which was published in English as *The Catholic Church in Korea*.

4 See studies referenced in [Chapter Four](#).

5 Roux, "The Catholic Experience of Chosŏn Envoys in Beijing."

negotiation of their society's values.⁶ Christine Sungjin Chang and Donald N. Clark have both explored women's evangelizing work among other women, especially as "Biblewomen," in the early Protestant Church in Korea, while Hyaeweol Choi called attention to how the power relations that underpinned ideas of modernity shaped how women were perceived, and themselves responded, to missionary endeavours.⁷ Don Baker has observed that the development of Catholicism in Joseon during Europe's later eighteenth century did not fundamentally change that society's patriarchal structures, arguing that "Korean Catholics acted less to undermine the old patriarchal and hierarchical social order than to replace it with an alternative but similar social order."⁸ As these examples suggest, scholars have, over some fifty years now, nuanced their ideas about the opportunities and the challenges that Christianity presented for Korean women, in domestic environments and court culture, as individuals and as a cohort.⁹

The present work is also concerned with evangelizing gender more broadly, in the sense that gender performances that reflected and conveyed certain understandings of appropriate masculinity, and assumptions about appropriate feminine behaviour, were fundamental to mission activity. Analysis of the influence of gender ideologies in missionary and colonizing activities during Europe's early modern period is a relatively recent development in the scholarship.¹⁰ Yet these ideologies were embedded in mission work. As Ulrike Strasser has argued, the specifically patriarchal dynamics of the Society of Jesus informed performances of particular kinds of masculinity and how missions operated.¹¹ I suggest that European missionaries were implicitly promoting certain views about gender relations in and through their work. These religious actors performed their status and expectations as men in their actions and in their writings, and as they understood those of others across the region. This shaped how missionaries regarded East Asian women and men, interpreted their expressions in words and

6 Park Min Yea 박민예, "Sinyubakaereul tonghae bon cheonjugyohoe nae gwabu sinjawa wijanggwabu." 辛酉迫害를 통해 본 천주교회 내 과부 신자와 僞裝寡婦 [A study of the existence of widow Catholic devotees and false widows in early Joseon Catholicism].

7 Chang, "Hidden but Real"; Clark, "Mothers, Daughters, Biblewomen, and Sisters"; Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea*.

8 Baker, "The Korean Catholic Church's First Hundred Years," 10–11 at 10, responding to Choi Seon-hye's work, "The Holy Mother and the Son of God"; on specifically Catholic experiences, see Kim Jeong Sook 김정숙, "Joseonhugi seohaksuyonggwae yeoseonggwannui byeonhwa." 조선 후기 서학수용과 여성관의 변화 [A changed perception of womanhood through the introduction of Catholicism during the late Joseon dynasty]; Kim Jeong Sook 김정숙, "Cheonjugyowa joseon yeoseongui mannang (1784–1831)" 천주교와 조선 여성의 만남 (1784–1831) [The meeting of Catholicism and women (1784–1831)]; Torrey, "Confucian Exemplars and Catholic Saints"; Torrey, "Between Heroism and Despair."

9 Baker, ed., *Critical Readings on Christianity in Korea*, vol. 2, pt. 4 and vol. 3.

10 Amsler, *Jesuits and Matriarchs*; Laven, ed., "The Jesuits and Gender"; Laven, "Jesuits and Eunuchs."

11 Strasser, *Missionary Men in the Early Modern World*.

through bodies, and reflected upon their suitability for evangelizing as subjects and as proselytizers themselves. We can occasionally put these ideas in dialogue with gender ideologies expressed by Asian-born converts or by non-Christian onlookers and see where moments of confrontation or indeed alignment occurred. Predominantly, though, I consider how missionaries' conceptualizations of gender relations affected not only decisions that determined their own activities in the mission, but also how others, both women and men, in the East Asian region could engage with the Christian message.

Thus far, gender-informed analyses have begun to explore mainly the role of women in missionary activities, considering such diverse aspects as the contours of their spiritual agency and their value as powerful sponsors of mission activity. Although women were denied participation as full members of some orders and societies, a number of scholars have demonstrated, for example, how their financial support was sought to support mission work.¹² Additionally, Nadine Amsler's analysis of Jesuit activities related to women in Ming and Qing China highlights the complex position of the Jesuits regarding women as converts and the proselytizing activities considered appropriate for them.¹³ Her research emphasizes the dynamic female religious sociabilities and practices that shaped Chinese Catholicism in that period, where domestic households, finances, and networks could support and sustain Jesuit priests in their work.

So, too, were women active in the Christian movements in Momoyama and Tokugawa Japan, as detailed studies of their activities by Kataoka Rumiko and Haruko Nawata Ward indicate.¹⁴ Studies of Christian missions in Japan have identified Korean women among those engaged with Christianity and the Jesuits there. A small number of individual Korean women converts have been the subject of scholarly accounts.¹⁵ However, there has been little broader analytical exploration of the particularities of Korean women's interactions with Christian missions. Studies of Japanese women's experiences, especially the foundational work of Kataoka and Ward, provides rich evidence from which we can set Korean women's experiences in wider context. Unlike Japanese women, the vast majority of Korean women did not meet missionary men, ideas, and practices in their homeland. These women were not operating in their own society but rather in locales such as Japan, China, Macao, and Manila, as part of a diaspora of Korean people removed from the Joseon kingdom often as survivors of wartime violence. This profound upheaval imposed new dynamics on the encounters and interactions between Christian missions and Korean women, and new possibilities for Korean women's actions and participation in Christian practice. It also diverges from the contexts in which women experienced Christian missions in their homeland in the later Joseon period, Europe's late eighteenth century and later still, under Japanese colonial rule.

¹² Hsia, ed., *Noble Patronage and Jesuit Missions*.

¹³ Amsler, *Jesuits and Matriarchs*.

¹⁴ Kataoka Rumiko 片岡瑠美子, *Kirishitan jidai no jishi shūdōkai: Miyako no bikunitachi* キリシタン時代の女子修道会 [Women of the Christian era]; Ward, *Women Religious Leaders*.

¹⁵ Studies on these women will be referenced throughout the work.

This book concentrates its focus on the approximately fifty-year period that begins with the Japanese invasions of Joseon and extends through the violent conflicts some forty years later between Joseon and the Later Jin, who emerged to rule China as the Qing dynasty, concluding in the establishment of diplomatic exchanges between Joseon and Qing. The consequences of these deeply disruptive events meant that Korean women encountered Christian missions primarily outside the Joseon kingdom.

Korean women, however, are not an easy cohort to identify through the region. Enslaved people from the Joseon kingdom, for example, were often documented in the region as Japanese, because they had been rendered slaves in the Japanese invasions of their homeland.¹⁶ Because of their interest in the potential of the Joseon kingdom as a future site for mission activities, however, missionary authors do make reference to and reflections upon interactions with Koreans specifically and Korean women in particular.¹⁷ It remains difficult though to assess how many women from the Joseon kingdom identified themselves or were identified as Christians, or engaged with Christian missions for social and practical support—likely more than were individually referenced in Christian texts. Very few authors provided the names of individuals among the cohort of Korean converts and adherents they discussed. The value of these women to their writers' accounts did not lie in their individual subjectivity but most often as examples of types of behaviours. Further, the sources rarely provide detailed biographical information with which we can construct trajectories and analyze decisions made across women's lives. Those authors who did name the female adherents that they were discussing, women whom we now know as Máxima, Clara, Ursula, Ana, Isabel, Catalina, and Inés, typically reported on their actions at only one moment of their lives, sometimes without dating the event. A single Korean woman, Marina, is known to us from a semi-biographical account of her experiences as a Christian that was made after her death.¹⁸ Yet it is another woman, known to the missionaries as Julia, who is perhaps the best documented of all known evangelized Korean women, with a wide range of Christian authors, religious and secular, writing about her deep engagement with Christianity, her activities among the local community, her eventual exile and impoverishment. These establish a more complete biography of her life after conversion than any other Korean woman yet known, and these documents help to enrich the analysis of subsequent chapters.¹⁹ While recognizing their limitations of reach and particular perspectives, mission archives offer us an important resource for exploring aspects of a range of Korean women's lives at this period.

16 As Lúcio de Sousa notes in his *The Portuguese Slave Trade*, 127, 541–42.

17 Korean individuals in Japan were also documented in European records connected to non-Catholic institutions. A Korean man known as Miguel, for example, was listed as the interpreter for the English trading post at Hirado. Sousa, *The Portuguese Slave Trade*, 106.

18 Ruiz-de-Medina, "The First Korean Catholic Nun in History"; Wong, "Marina Pak (c. 1572–1636)."

19 Ruiz-de-Medina, "History and Fiction of Ota Julia."

The Power of the Body and the Text

At one level, this work considers the power of gender ideologies to shape missions. At another, it draws particular attention to two forms of power that operated in the interactions of Korean women with Christian missions, as they are primarily represented through the records of missionary men. The first is the disruptive, unstable force that circulated around gendered bodies, particularly the missionaries' concept of a sexualized female body. The acute vulnerability of displaced Korean women to sexual violence proved a considerable source of economic and other forms of power to some, while creating concerns among missionary men about their responsibilities and duties as men, as father figures, and as spiritual advisors to women they perceived to be at risk. The sexually vulnerable female body could supercharge both women and men to commit extraordinary acts justified as protective measures but also impose restrictions on the ambitions and activities of Korean women as well as the missionary men with whom they interacted.

Moreover, in an environment in which language comprehension was not always assured, the body came to the fore as a key site through which Christian engagement could be performed and witnessed. A new literature focused upon emotional experience in Catholic mission cultures has begun to explore how spiritual feeling behaviours were interpreted in cross-cultural settings.²⁰ Bodies were understood through identities that related both to culture and gender in the accounts of missionary men, and those of Korean women and men were interpreted to perform and display Christian feeling and feelings about Christianity differently to each other and to Japanese people with whom the missionaries were familiar. In their reports, bodies provided missionary men with evidence of feeling experiences as converts and martyrs, as non-Christians and as apostates. They demonstrated religious perceptions and perceptibility in action and in sexual continence, and as the bodies of evangelized women and men became sites of state-sanctioned violence.

A second form of power was that of written texts, to make meanings of Korean women (and Korean men), their identities, and their engagement with Christianity, interpretations that circulated around the globe and that shaped women's experiences. Missionary men are fundamentally important to what we can know about evangelizing Korean women. These texts formed part of an extensive Christian literature, but most of the sources drawn upon here were more specifically constructed within the context of Catholic evangelizing practice. These mission archives present complex narratives. Authors and recipients of these texts almost always shared Christian faith; they were overwhelmingly men writing to other men, and their circulation through mission outposts across the world may have tended to consolidate and embed certain viewpoints, as members assured themselves and each other of the importance of their work. Recent scholarship on the Jesuits has sought to recognize their actions as part

²⁰ McLisky, Vallgård, and Midena, eds., *Emotions and Christian Missions*; Haskell and Garrod, eds., *Changing Hearts*.

of a global movement, even in locale-specific studies.²¹ Missionary writings, although authored by individuals with different experiences and life contexts, were produced as part of a collective endeavour, with a potentially universalizing tendency. Here I use the terminology of *Kirishitan*, a Japanese romanization of the Portuguese word *christão* (Christian), and evangelized to describe Japanese and Joseon Korean adherents to the Christian faith respectively, in order to recognize the possibility that their experiences of Christianity may have been felt differently to the manner in which missionaries ascribed it to them, perspectives that are hard to capture directly in the mission archives.

Scholars now give consideration to the dynamics of power between religious men and the women they guided, including in the production of their written accounts. Jodi Bilinkoff, for example, has recently explored the relationships of spiritual directors and female penitents in the production of *vitae* about these women, and has emphasized the importance of understanding religious men's ambitions in creating these works.²² Her call to analyze the contexts in which individual men produced Catholic life-writings has been taken up by J. Michelle Molina and Ulrike Strasser in their study of two hagiographical accounts produced by Jesuits of the seventeenth-century mystic Catarina de San Juan who lived in colonial Mexico. Here they seek to dismantle a historiographic tendency to see Europeans as an unnuanced cohort, rather than individuals with their own contexts, concerns, and individual relationships.²³ The context of interactions in Japan and the works produced often lacked shared linguistic and scribal competencies between parties, meaning that interpretations of the missionaries' written accounts could not be challenged through negotiation between their interlocutors and subjects. Ward has observed how missionaries' narratives of Japanese women replaced descriptions of their apostolic activities with praise of their piety and wifely submission.²⁴ Yet, although the missionaries' accounts that provide most of our information to the activities of evangelizing Korean women in this work were not balanced in their power dynamics, they were at least the product of relationships. Bilinkoff's emphasis on aspects of reciprocity within the relationships in her cases thus provides a productive analytical lens here too. Most (although not all) authors knew the women that they wrote about personally, and their accounts reported conversations and activities that they saw the women engaged in, interactions in which the authors often positioned themselves as spiritual guides. While women were not co-authors of these texts and held no control over how they were represented, the missionaries could not have written these accounts without the women who were their subjects.

²¹ Russell, *Being a Jesuit*; Russell, "The Jesuit Missionary Path from Italy to Asia"; Strasser, *Missionary Men in the Early Modern World*; Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization*.

²² Bilinkoff, *Related Lives*.

²³ Molina and Strasser, "Missionary Men and the Global Currency of Female Sanctity." See also Allan Greer's *Mohawk Saint*, which similarly pays attention to the context in which particular hagiographical accounts were being produced by Jesuit, and other, authors.

²⁴ Ward, *Women Religious Leaders*, 290.

For this study, most important at least quantitatively among the mission archives are those produced by the Society of Jesus. The Society's men were for a long time the only mission order with papal authority to evangelize in Japan, a key locale for Korean-Christian interactions.²⁵ Understanding its particular mission strategies and their distinction from those of the mendicant orders who later both entered Christian evangelizing work in Japan and interacted with Korean peoples across the Asian region are key to interpreting how Korean women are represented in this archive. Yet mission texts varied substantially, perhaps surprisingly so in these circumstances, reflecting their authors' individual characters and personal experiences, as well as by their wide range of readers, in the Asian region and in Europe, within specific mission orders and societies, and in different positions of power within institutional hierarchies.²⁶ By reading across a variety of mission sources, as well as other local archives the insights of which can remind us of the omissions and limitations of such sources, therefore, a rich and nuanced picture of Korean women's interactions with the Christian missions in the early modern world can be established.

Importantly, these Christian archives were not only written for internal consumption within their orders. Many of these texts were intended for wider readerships. Not least among these was a series of female patrons whose role in the evangelizing of the East Asian region is now being recognized. The Castilian Jesuit Pedro Morejón, for example, whose accounts provide vital information about Korean women, dedicated his first published work on the martyrs in Japan in 1614 to Luisa de Padilla y Manrique, Countess of Aranda.²⁷ Catholic women in Europe were perceived by men who compiled the mission archives as critical, primarily as direct sponsors, networkers, and fund-raisers for their activities. Yet missionary men also recognized elite women's own evangelizing ambitions, as the Flemish Jesuit Antoine Thomas reflected of Maria Guadalupe de Lencastre y Cárdenas Manrique, Duchess of Aveiro de Arcos y Maqueda, to Adrian Petrus, Procurator of China, in 1688: "she has in mind great designs, especially for the Oriental Missions."²⁸ Thomas encouraged her fervent engagement not only with stories of evangelized people and the struggles of Society men in that process but also with new knowledge of the region itself, which he promised to send in the form of a map

²⁵ On the Society of Jesus and Korea specifically, see the recent overview by Han and Rausch, "The Society of Jesus and Korea."

²⁶ As is increasingly recognized in the scholarship on the Society of Jesus, see, for example, Romano, "Multiple Identities, Conflicting Duties and Fragmented Pictures." See also Friedrich, "Government and Information-Management in Early Modern Europe"; and Brockey's discussion of nationality in relation to the Jesuit mission in China, "Root and Branch."

²⁷ On Luisa de Padilla y Manrique (1590–1646), see Egido, "La Nobleza virtuosa de la Condesa de Aranda."

²⁸ Madrid, February 8, 1688, *Bibliotheca Asiatica*, 80. On Maria Guadalupe de Lencastre y Cárdenas Manrique (1630–1715), see Gillespie, "The 'Mother of Missions'"; Burrus, ed., *Kino Writes to the Duchess*. Also discussed in Boxer, "Macao as a Religious and Commercial Entrepôt," 87–88.

of the Joseon kingdom, a land that was then awaiting its own dedicated Jesuit mission.²⁹ Finally, these texts also hold historiographical power. They have given us the sources to reconstruct past faith worlds and the lives of women otherwise little documented. Christian writings amplified the voices of a cohort of Korean-born women to which we have few other means of access.

Structure

This book asks how gender ideologies and assumptions held power to shape the agency of Korean women and men in relation to evangelization, not least but not only their spiritual agency. Applying an intersectional lens to understanding of their identities, it considers how evangelized Korean women especially were perceived as distinct, from others who held or practised other beliefs, from Japanese women, and from Korean men, cohorts with which their identity was frequently constructed relationally within the mission archives. Further, it seeks to analyze how these perceptions shaped the realities of their experiences with the Christian faith and how we can know of these.

To do so, the book explores four areas of missionary interactions, following a loosely chronological framework of events in the region. [Chapter 1](#) analyzes how gender ideologies influenced the nature and context in which knowledge of Korean people and Christian teachings were first exchanged, focusing on the Joseon kingdom and Japan as sites of encounter. [Chapter 2](#) then explores how evangelized Korean women and men were seen to form part of, and contribute to, a Christian community in Japan, as well as the ways in which they shaped an active apostolate for themselves. In a context in which authorities progressively restricted the possibilities of Christian practice in Japan, the [third chapter](#) investigates the representation of varied forms of suffering, from the psychic to the fatal, sustained by evangelized Koreans of both sexes, exploring the meaning of these experiences as forms of belonging to the Catholic Christian community. Finally, in [Chapter 4](#), as Christian adherents in Japan moved beyond its borders, I examine the inter-relationship of agency and mobility in the region for evangelized Korean women and men as it was understood and presented by Catholic authors. In so doing, this work identifies how gendered dynamics established expectations and realities about living Christian beliefs for evangelized Korean women in the early modern world.

29 Ruiz-de-Medina, *The Catholic Church in Korea*, 180n23.

