

BIJUTSUSHI

Journal of Japan Art History Society

184 Vol. 67 No. 2 pp. 252–265

YASHIRO, Kyoko. The Production of *The Monument of the Twenty-six Martyrs of Japan* by Yasutake Funakoshi: Historical Context and Stylistic Sources

Funakoshi Yasutake (1912–2002) is considered to be one of the most significant Japanese sculptors of the post-Second World War period, along with Chuūryō Satō (1912–2011) and Yoshitatsu Yanagihara (1910–2004). As a result of his conversion to Catholicism, many of his works have Christian motifs. Among his Christian-themed works, *The Monument of the Twenty-six Martyrs of Japan*, an extensive bronze relief in Nishizaka Park in Nagasaki City, is considered one of his masterpieces. However, the relief has been discussed mostly in relation to the artist's personal faith, and has rarely been examined in the context of art history. In this paper I will first evaluate the socio-historical circumstances at the time of the monument's creation. I will then discuss Funakoshi's response to his social circumstances and his artistic intentions and decisions by examining documents and formal analysis of the monument.

The decision to erect the monument to the twenty-six martyrs, who were executed by order of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) in 1597, was made by the Nagasaki City Council in 1957. Nagasaki City planned to become an international tourist site as part of its strategy to recover from the devastation of the atomic bomb, and expected the *Monument of the Twenty-six Martyrs* to become a cultural attraction in the grand scheme of the area's redevelopment. Because of the separation of Church and State under the new Japanese Constitution, the Nagasaki City government was prohibited from funding the creation of the monument; citizen's fundraising covered half the cost, and the rest was funded by the Catholic Church. As a result, the commission of the monument was directed mostly by Jesuits.

The Jesuits' intention was to memorialize the martyrdom of the Christians (twenty native Japanese Christians and six foreign priests) and to propagate the virtues of the martyrs and their message. The Twenty-six Martyrs of Japan were well known among European Catholics, and during the Baroque period the subject became a popular Jesuit stage play. For the Catholic Church, the monument symbolized the resilience of the Catholic faith in Japan where there was a long history of persecution, followed by the destruction of the Cathedral in Nagasaki by the atomic bomb in 1945.

To design the monument, Funakoshi had to balance two differing expectations: for Nagasaki City the monument would be a symbol suitable for a cultural tourist attraction, for the Jesuits it would be a monument to martyrdom. Documents indicate that Funakoshi refused to follow the traditional manner of representing the martyrs proposed by the Jesuits, which was to depict their gruesome execution in which they were pierced with lances and crucified; instead he designed a monument that was more symbol than narrative.

Representing the martyrs, Funakoshi combined the styles of several different periods, and appeared to represent their ascent to heaven. While parts of the exposed bodies, such as faces, hands, and feet, are handled in a slightly exaggerated manner characteristic of the naturalistic style of Japanese sculptures after Rodin, the clothed parts are depicted in a relatively abstract and unnaturally regular manner. The overall appearance of the martyrs depicted having the same height and lined up in a single horizontal row gives an impression of Gothic church architectural adornments. The martyrs are mostly depicted singing and facing upward, pressing their hands together in prayer and standing on tiptoe. Funakoshi did not leave documents regarding the sources for the martyrs' poses, but a possible prototype may be Gothic-period tomb sculptures of reclining figures. The reclining figures of such sculptures depicted the deceased singing hymns, which represented the salvation of the person's soul. By appropriating such a pose for the representation of the twenty-six martyrs, Funakoshi seems to symbolically represent their ascension as martyrs.

Funakoshi's artistic decisions to represent the theme of ascension and memorial for the deceased, instead of narrative representation of the act of Christian martyrdom, were more acceptable for the broader Japanese public who had suffered through the War. The monument's location near the site of the detonation of the atomic bomb may have inspired the Japanese public to conjure the image of the ascent of the souls of the victims of the bomb, and therefore allows visitors to the memorial to believe that it is a commemoration for the war victims.

THE JAPAN ART HISTORY SOCIETY

March 2018

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