



Chapel on a Japanese nanban screen
(late 16th-century/early 17th-century)



Portuguese Jesuit Missionary Rodrigues' Birth and Early Activities in Japan

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João Rodrigues (c. 1561-1634) was a Jesuit missionary well known as 'Nanban Tçuzu' (Portuguese interpreter) and author of both the *História da Igreja no Japão* and the first Portuguese-Japanese dictionary.

Being a boy of humble birth, Rodrigues could not have received a great deal of schooling before leaving Portugal. Nevertheless, educated by the Jesuit College in Japan, he became a successful interpreter and established friendships with the two greatest rulers and several key leaders in the Edo Period. It was his talent at a time of historical opportunities that earned him the trust and favour of persons having great power in Japan such as Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Konishi Yukinaga, Tokugawa Ieyasu, Maeda Gen'i, and Honda Masanobu. For this reason, Rodrigues is regarded as a talented Jesuit missionary who had a close relationship with leading political figures in Japan during the 16th and 17th centuries.¹

Nothing is known about Rodrigues' family and childhood, perhaps because he was not from a noble family or because he left his hometown at the early age of 13 or 14 and never returned. Although his early life in Portugal is mentioned in some fragmentary records, it is neither explicit nor complete. It is possible to conjecture that he may have been descended from Dona Flamula Rodrigues, the owner of Sernancelhe Castle in the 10th century,² but the name Rodrigues is extremely

Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598).



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common in both Portugal and Spain.³ In the field of history, it is universally acknowledged that Rodrigues was a child from a peasant family, lacking genteel manners or even a primary education. As evidence of that, since the dialect of Beira is hard to understand, Rodrigues, despite his linguistic skill, was distressed by his local dialect, which was a barrier to writing graceful and standard Portuguese.⁴

It is reasonable to suppose that Rodrigues was born in a place called Quintela da Lapa, situated in the town of Sernancelhe in the hilly region of Beira,⁵ for the French Jesuit scholar Louis Pfister asserts, in *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites*

de l'ancienne mission de Chine, 'Rodrigues was born in Sernancelle, Lamego Diocese in 1561.'⁶

Besides, the Japanese scholar Doi Tadao 土井忠生 mentions, in his translation of the *História*, 'João Rodrigues, a Portuguese born in Cernancelte, Lamego Diocese,'⁷ and he affirms in detail, 'João Rodrigues, the author of *Vocabulário da Língua de Iapam*, was born in 1561 in Cernancelte, Lamego Diocese in the province of Beira situated in the hilly region of Portugal.'⁸

João Rodrigues' letter to Rome when he was about 66 years old reads, 'to this man from the district of Our Lady of Lapa of the town of Sernancelhe, for I can be said to be a native as I was brought up there.'⁹

Apart from the differences in spelling and translation, the place names given in the four sources are nearly identical: Sernancelle, Cernancelte, and Sernancelhe. Furthermore, it is recorded in Jesuit catalogues compiled in 1588, 1593, and 1616, that Rodrigues' place of birth is Sernancelhe in Beira Province. As for Sernancelhe, historian Michael Cooper has a detailed description: 'João Rodrigues was a native of Sernancelhe, or Cernancelhe, in the province of Beira. Situated in a remote region of northern Portugal, Sernancelhe now has a population of some ten thousand inhabitants and lies near the eastern bank of the Távora River about twenty-five miles east of Oporto.'¹⁰

Doi Tadao also writes that 'Beira, his place of birth, is situated in the hilly region of Portugal, whose habitants are strong and mainly peasants.'¹¹ In addition, he has another similar description, 'João Rodrigues the interpreter was born in Cernancelte, Lamego Episcopal District, which is situated in the hilly region of middle Portugal and close to the northern border



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of Beira. Inhabitants of Beira are typical country men, stubborn and vulgar.¹²

Rodrigues recalled in his later years, 'I'm a vulgar Beira man, not competent to write in elegant Portuguese.' It seems that Rodrigues, who had received little primary education in his motherland, was embarrassed by his native dialect throughout his life.¹³

If there is some doubt about the exact location of Rodrigues' place of birth, there is even less certainty about the year of his birth. The Jesuit catalogues listed only the age, work, and domicile of members, but the catalogues of those times were not documents of meticulous accuracy, and it is doubtful whether compilers went to great lengths to ensure precision.¹⁴ However, the age of Rodrigues is recorded in many sources,¹⁵ from which we may calculate that he was born in 1561, though the exact month and day is unknown. Cooper asserts, 'It's quite possible that Rodrigues himself was uncertain of his exact age, as all the evidence points to the fact that he was a poor, uneducated boy born and raised in a remote rural district of Portugal.'¹⁶

As for this, Doi Tadao infers, 'He may be one of the orphans who were sent to the Orient to assist the Jesuit missionaries,' and he adds, 'Nothing is known about the story of Rodrigues before he came to Japan. Besides, the time of his arrival in Japan in some records may not be precise. Neither is his year of birth, but we can infer that he arrived in India in 1576 and landed in Japan in 1577.'¹⁷ This inference can be drawn from Rodrigues' own *História*:

I am not certain whether Nagasaki is the first land I set foot on Japan, but I am certain that I was staying in Bungo in the summer of 1578, when Ōtomo Sōrin was receiving baptism. One month later, he raised an army to march towards Hyūga, in the name of helping the Ito family invaded by the Shimazu family, with the dream of establishing a Christian world.¹⁸

Professor Qi Yinping holds the opinion that Rodrigues' voyage to Japan as a child is suggestive of the notorious slave trade that prevailed later. Although this connection still needs further study, it would be evidence that in the 14th and 15th centuries, which are called the Age of Exploration, the western imperialists enslaved not only children in Asia and Africa, but also those from Europe. At that time, a large number of children and

youths from Europe were sent involuntarily to the Far East to serve traders and missionaries.¹⁹

Whether Rodrigues was traded as an unfortunate slave to Japan is worth further discussion, but why such a young European country boy undertook the dangerous journey to Asia is still not explained. This study tends to agree that Rodrigues longed to work as a servant of missionaries in Asia like many Portuguese youths—particularly orphans. It may also be noticed that Gonçalo Garcia, the Franciscan martyr crucified at Nagasaki in 1597, first went to Japan as a 15-year-old boy to serve the Jesuit mission as catechist

Tokugawa Ieyasu (1541-1616).



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and interpreter. The Jesuits recruited volunteers to carry on their mission in Asia so as to expand their influence by adding fresh blood and, more importantly, to fill the vacancy of missionaries in the Far East. It must have been the influence of elder missionaries, religious zeal, and ambition for fame and fortune that brought Rodrigues, Gonçalo Garcia and many other Portuguese youths with the same fate to Asia, rather than that they were trafficked as slaves. As a matter of fact, all the information on hand shows that it was quite common for missionaries to take a boy servant to Asia, which is essentially different from the slave trade. This point of view is further supported by Rodrigues' accounts.²⁰ Moreover, Cooper holds the opinion that 'The missionaries who worked in Asia never lacked volunteers. Take the Italian missionary who worked with Rodrigues as an example. He voluntarily asked his supervisor to send him to Asia.'²¹

Fortunately, inhabitants in the hilly region of Portugal are born physically and mentally strong. Otherwise, it would be impossible for a boy at the age of 13 or 14 to survive the hard journey from Portugal to Asia. In accordance with the private letter of Jesuit Francisco Vieira written in 1617, the arrival time of Rodrigues in Japan is 1577. Rodrigues' own letter from Nagasaki also confirms this. He wrote: 'I grew up in Japan and have stayed here for 21 years.'²² In his letter from Macao in 1622, he wrote: 'I went to Japan 45 years ago.'²³

In short, Rodrigues' early years spent in Portugal were comparatively short and lack corresponding accounts. As Doi Tadao asserts,

Rodrigues, the interpreter, grew up in the environment of a foreign country far away from his motherland. He went abroad when he was a boy, having no chance to receive an education

Iaponiae Insulae descriptio, by Luís Teixeira (1695). In Abraham Ortelius, *Theatro d'el orbe de la Tierra*, Anvers, 1612.



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in his own country. As a Portuguese missionary, Rodrigues was distressed by his native tongue for life...²⁴

In what capacity did Rodrigues sail to India and then to Japan? Apparently, he was not a missionary at that time on account of his age, so it is quite possible that he came as the servant of a missionary.

As early as 1550, Pedro Domenech, a worthy priest who ran a Lisbon orphanage housing 160 boys, was ordered by King John III to send seven of his charges at royal expense to help the missionaries in Brazil. Domenech was subsequently asked to choose nine orphans for India so that three Portuguese boys could attend each of the three Christian schools in Goa, Bassein, and Cranganor. The boys were to make themselves useful by serving Mass, singing the liturgical responses, learning the local language and acting as interpreters, and in general setting a good example to the native pupils.²⁵ One of the orphans was a boy named Guilherme Pereira. He landed in Japan with four other boys, 'so that the divine offices may be more solemn', and that, having learned the language, 'the boys may serve as interpreters for the priests who come from Rome to Japan,' as the missionary Nunes Barreto explained.²⁶

Two years later, Guilherme Pereira entered the Society of Jesus and spent the remaining 45 years of his life as a Jesuit brother, instructing and preaching in various parts of Japan until his death in 1603. His work was particularly valuable as he had an excellent command of the Japanese language. The Jesuit Mateus de Couros remarked in his obituary notice, 'He knew Japanese so well that he spoke it like a native.'²⁷

It may be noticed that Pereira and Rodrigues had at least four things in common. Both were Portuguese; they sailed to the East at an early age; they entered the Society of Jesus in Japan; and they both learned to speak Japanese fluently. It is tempting to extend this parallel a little further and suggest that Rodrigues may also have been an orphan who left Portugal while still a boy to serve the missionaries in the Indies. Rodrigues himself notes that after his exile to Macao, he applied for permission to return to the Japanese mission 'to which I was called as a boy.'²⁸ But neither of these references is sufficiently precise to enable us to determine with any degree of certainty when the youthful Rodrigues first realised that he had a religious vocation. It is possible that he wished to become a missionary before he left

Portugal; on the other hand, he may have become attracted to the Jesuit way of life either during the long voyage to the east or after reaching Japan.

Once a Portuguese boy had decided to travel to the East, the most common way was to stow away on a ship. Alternatively, they could travel as a soldier or sailor, and often enough neither post required any special ability or experience. Frenchman François Pyrard, who reached Goa on a Portuguese ship in 1608, alleges that all of them were:

children of peasants and other folk of lowly estate, who are taken by force from the age of ten to twelve. Many of the soldiers were too young and inexperienced to bear arms efficiently, while others were often incapacitated by seasickness and other ailments.²⁹

Pyrard's allegation must be exaggerated. Nevertheless, in fact, children and youths accounted for almost half of the crew sometimes. Cooper writes:

They were lodged on deck, between the mainmast and the foremast, and were rated as the lowest on board—which was very low indeed. They cleaned the nao, and worked the pump... Their services were divided out, and grumets worked as apprentices to the surgeon, the carpenters, caulkers, coopers, and other artisan officials on board. One of their duties took place at dawn when they gathered on deck to chant hymns and prayers for an hour, praying for all conditions of men aboard.³⁰

In whatever capacity the youthful Rodrigues sailed to the Indies and thence to Japan, his voyage was bound to have been both long and arduous, even though the ship he took was as large as two thousand tons. The science of navigation was still at a comparatively elementary stage of development, and without the instruments capable of measuring longitude with precision, much depended on the pilot's luck, skill, and experience. The pilots had therefore to rely a great deal on their *roteiros*, which were written accounts of earlier voyages, and so could thus profit from the experience and mistakes of those who had gone before them. Besides, some experienced pilots could distinguish regions by observing the colour of the seaweed floating on the water and the different types and colours of the gulls and albatrosses that flew in those regions. Today one marvels that at least four or five ships each year relying on such vague

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and unreliable directions could possibly have made the long voyage and successfully arrived at Goa. But arrive at Goa they did, though often in a sorry state.³¹ Conditions on board were usually incredibly harsh. As Cooper describes:

Living quarters were both squalid and cramped for the majority of passengers and crew, personal hygiene was minimal, toilet facilities were practically nonexistent, and the food was revoltingly bad.... A water and wine ration was issued daily, but the food itself was generally doled out monthly; the salt meat rapidly corrupted in the intense heat of the tropics and would soon begin to smell in a vile way.³²

As the experienced Lischoten observed, 'all the water in the ship stinketh, whereby men are forced to stop their noses when they drink.'³³ Pyrard adds, 'While English and Dutch ships were kept clean, the Spanish and Portuguese ships were allowed to become incredibly filthy and, as a result, disease rapidly spread on board and killed a lot of crew during each voyage. In a single ship sometimes two, three, or even four hundred men died before Goa was finally reached.'³⁴ One case is known of ships leaving Lisbon with more than a thousand men on board to the accompaniment of artillery salutes, religious processions, and carnival rejoicing, only to limp into Goa some six months later with less than two hundred survivors, wasted away with scurvy, dysentery, and disease.³⁵

Foul food and infectious diseases were not the only hazards on board. Discipline among the motley crew and soldiers was liable to break down in the fetid and crowded quarters; thieving and accusations of alleged thieving were common occurrences, and the guilty were flogged at the mast.

To these wretched conditions on board could be added the external dangers of pirates and storms. Vivid descriptions of the driving rain, the mountain waves, and the terrible winds which battered the ships for days on end find a prominent place in the annals of Portuguese navigation to the Indies. In the twelve-year period between 1579 and 1591 some 22 ships sank between Portugal and India with a resultant heavy loss of life and cargo. Over the longer period between 1580 and 1640 about 70 ships were lost en route for India, and an even larger number went down on the return

Detail of a 17th-century Japanese nanban screen.

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voyage, when the carracks were liable to be grossly over-laden with merchandise.³⁶

Alessandro Valignano, who sailed from Lisbon in 1574, succinctly lists the suffering endured on what he describes as the most arduous voyage known to man. Among the discomforts on board he mentions the cramped accommodation; the putrid food; the dreary periods of becalming, sometimes lasting two months, when clothing was continuously soaked with sweat in the stifling heat; the lack of clean drinking water; and the prevalence of loathsome diseases.³⁷

Valignano then records some of the external hazards of the voyage to the Indies: the dangerous shoals that wrecked so many ships, the tropical storms lasting days on end, and the possibility of attack from pirates. Some men sailed off to the Indies in search of fame and fortune, carrying with them nothing more than a shirt, two loaves, a cheese, and a jar of marmalade.

Another missionary marvels that some passengers embarked on the voyage as if they were merely crossing a river and would arrive at the other side by noon the same day. However, not every voyage to Asia was a nightmare of storms, disease, and starvation, and there are not a few contemporary accounts reporting a fair and prosperous passage to India. In a word, conditions on board were undoubtedly primitive and harsh, and thus, to survive, the passengers and crew had to be tough in body and mind.

There is no historical record of the exact date of Rodrigues' departure from Lisbon, but it is agreed that he arrived in Japan in 1577. The voyage from Europe to Nagasaki, Japan, took more than two years to complete even under the best conditions, so Rodrigues must have left Lisbon, from where all Portuguese voyages to the Indies commenced, no later than the spring of 1575. If, in fact, he did, he would have reached Goa later that year. In 1574, a fleet made up of five ships carried Valignano and 41 other Jesuits to India, and there is a great possibility that Rodrigues might have traveled in this fleet, because 'he was later to be closely associated with Valignano in diplomatic business with the Japanese missionaries.'³⁸ Furthermore, among the fourteen Jesuit missionaries (seven priests and seven lay brothers), who reached Japan in 1577, the same year of Rodrigues' arrival, at least five (Pedro Ramón,



The house of the Society of Jesus in Kyoto on a fan (late 16th-century).

Francisco Carrion, Gregorio de Céspedes, Francisco de Laguna, and Bartholomeu Redondo) had left Lisbon with Valignano three years previously. Consequently, it is reasonable to conclude that Rodrigues sailed with the Jesuit mission to India from Lisbon in 1574. The fleet left Lisbon on 10 March, reached Mozambique on 14 July, and finally reached Goa on 6 September. Cooper asserts that

Nagasaki was reached on 4 July 1577, and so great was the pious enthusiasm of the local Japanese Christians that some waded chest-high into the water to receive the first blessing of the arriving missionaries. Eleven Portuguese merchants on board were so impressed by this spectacle that they thereupon asked to enter the Society of Jesus.³⁹

Little is known of Rodrigues' immediate activities after his arrival in Japan in 1577. It is reasonable to suppose that the boy stayed at Nagasaki for a period of rest for it is recorded that 'many passengers and crew were in such a wretched condition by the time the ship reached India that a period of rest and recuperation was needed in the Royal Hospital at Goa.'⁴⁰ It is possible that Rodrigues stayed with one of the Portuguese merchants as a servant or apprentice (and contemporary Japanese screen paintings clearly show the presence of such serving boys on board the carracks anchored at Nagasaki).⁴¹ But if, as is more likely, Rodrigues came to Japan as a protégé of the missionaries, he probably would have stayed with the Jesuit community at their residence of All Saints, founded by the veteran missionary Gaspar Vilela.

All that is definitely known about the boy's activities during the next two years are two events:

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his visit to Miyako (Kyoto) and his presence in the Battle of Mimikawa. A visit to Miyako during this period is incontrovertible, for in his *História* he gives a detailed description of the ancient city, adding: 'We came to Japan twenty-six years after the Blessed Father (Francis Xavier) left Japan for India (in 1551) and saw all this.'⁴²

Rodrigues' accounts of the capital strongly suggest that he traveled there soon after his arrival in the country, either in the latter half of 1577 or in 1578.

The first missionary to reach the city had been Francis Xavier, who tried to obtain the emperor's permission to preach Christianity throughout Japan, but the journey was in vain, for he was unable to obtain an audience with the emperor. Some years later, in 1559, Gaspar Vilela stayed in Miyako for a year and a half with little success. Finally, after once being forced to leave Miyako during the disturbances in 1565, the Portuguese Jesuit Luís Fróis, renowned for his *History of Japan*, made another attempt to settle in the capital, and in March 1569 he managed to establish a small mission there. He was joined by Gneccchi-Soldo Organtino, and in 1576 Fróis was replaced at Miyako by another Italian missionary, Giovanni Stephanonio.⁴³

Why Rodrigues made the long journey to the capital right after his long and difficult sea voyage is unknown. However, if the boy was serving the Jesuits, he may have accompanied one of the missionaries to Miyako, for a Christian community had been established in the capital some years previous. Whatever the reason for his journey, Rodrigues found that the capital, once the most populous city,⁴⁴ had long lost the glitter and splendour described so vividly by Lady Murasaki Shikibu in her novel *The Tale of Genji*. Imperial power had waned until the emperor had become little more than a figurehead, and at various times the city had been devastated in the fighting between ambitious barons striving to win political supremacy.⁴⁵

Rodrigues accordingly draws a melancholy picture of the once flourishing metropolis. He notes in his *História*, 'A large part of the city was destroyed and remained in a wretched state as regards houses, their number, and everything else...'⁴⁶

According to Rodrigues, the capital was situated in a spacious plain. In accordance with the classical Chinese pattern, the city was laid out on a symmetrical plan. In the upper or northern half of the city stood the Imperial Palace, which was surrounded by the palaces

and mansions of the aristocratic court and nobility. But at the time Rodrigues saw it, the city lay in ruins, its former magnificence for the most part destroyed by ruinous civil wars and rebellions. He goes on to observe that only one of the original north-south roads and very few of the transverse avenues were still maintained in working use. At this low point in its long history Miyako was reduced to about one-tenth of its size in its heyday and was little more than a medium-sized town. The straitened circumstances of the imperial family reflected this general decline.

The palaces of the king and the kuge were wretched and made of old pine wood, while the walls were constructed of pine planks, the exterior life of the kuge was extremely miserable and poor. The walls surrounding the king's palace were made of wood covered with reeds and clay, and were very old and dilapidated. Everything was left open and abandoned without any guards and anyone who so desired could enter the courtyards right up to the royal palace without being stopped, as we ourselves did several times.⁴⁷

The emperor at that time was Ōgimachi,⁴⁸ who is said to have invited Nobunaga, Daimyo of Ovari Province, to begin the long task of pacifying the realm and unifying the country. The fifteenth shogun was nominally Ashikaga Yoshiaki. He was installed with the support of Nobunaga in 1568 but summarily stripped of his office in 1573 and packed off into a retirement that ended only with his death 24 years later. Thereafter no shogun was appointed until the beginning of the 17th century. As a result, Nobunaga, who controlled practically half of Japan's 66 provinces, was the supreme ruler of Japan. He once flatly told the Jesuits, 'Don't pay any attention to the emperor or shogun, because everything is under my control; just do what I tell you and you can go where you like.'⁴⁹

Nobunaga always stood by the Jesuits. On a number of occasions, he received in audience various Europeans, both religious and laymen, and appeared to enjoy conversing with the 'southern barbarians'.⁵⁰ His friendliness to the Jesuits was also shown in building the Christian Church in Miyako. As Nobunaga was using vast quantities of both men and materials at the time in an effort to restore Miyako, there was a ban on further private building inside the city, but his lieutenant in the capital readily granted the Jesuits special permission to proceed with their plan. Not

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content with this concession, the official even made a donation to the building fund and allowed materials to be brought into the city tax free.⁵¹

It is not explained how long Rodrigues stayed in Miyako, but on account of the arduous journey from Nagasaki to Miyako, it is reasonable to think that he might have stayed for several weeks at least, and thus would have enough time to inspect the city. Thereafter, he returned to the island of Kyushu in the company of missionaries or merchants. There is no evidence that he was received in audience by Nobunaga during his visit.

Another activity that Rodrigues explicitly recorded after arriving in Japan is the Battle of Mimikawa, which was triggered by the feud between Hyūga and Satsuma, lasting for generations and heightened by occasional outbreaks of fighting. The Europeans first landed in Satsuma in 1543. Thereafter, the use of firearms introduced by the Europeans upset the military balance between the two rival provinces. In September 1549, Shimazu Yoshihisa, the daimyo of Satsuma and son of Shimazu Takehisa, defeated the Itō forces, and he occupied Hyūga territory right up to the borders of Bungo five years later. Now, the deposed Itō family sought refuge in Bungo, for the Itō and Ōtomo families were connected by marriage. Ōtomo, whose authority was recognised by more than five of the nine provinces of Kyushu, saw an opportunity to expand his territory. With the excuse of driving out the Satsuma invaders, he raised an army of 60,000 men for Hyūga.

The Bungo forces initially met with little or no opposition, and Ōtomo's army captured three enemy fortresses without any loss. However, the early victories appear to have made the Bungo commander in the field, Tawara Tsugitada, somewhat careless in his strategy, and the chance of ultimate victory was thrown away. In the ensuing battle at Mimikawa on 2 December, Ōtomo's soldiers were utterly routed, and the demoralised survivors began a chaotic retreat back to Bungo. Placing the blame on the cowardice and incompetence of Tawara, Fróis dolefully comments, 'In this fashion the king of Bungo lost in one day what had taken so many years to win.'⁵²

In the Battle of Mimikawa, two men are noteworthy. One of them is Ōtomo Yoshishige, the King of Bungo, and the other one is Rodrigues, who had arrived in Japan not long before. Ōtomo

Yoshishige, best known as Ōtomo Sōrin, was once a devout Buddhist and even adopted the Buddhist name 'Sanbisai Sōrin' on his nominal retirement. At that time, Yoshishige had great authority in the island of Kyushu. Under his protection, the Portuguese ships arrived every year in the Bungo capital of Funai (now called Oita) after 1543, and most of the preliminary activities of the Jesuits took place in the territory of Yoshishige. On these grounds, 'it is reasonable to infer that Rodrigues had first landed in Funai.' In addition, Rodrigues was involved in the Battle of Mimikawa, and he was in Funai at that time. Ōtomo Sōrin finally made the decision to become a Christian, and in 1578 he was baptised and took the name of Francisco. After that he became a staunch defender of the Jesuits and offered more favourable treatment to the Jesuits. Rodrigues got along well with Ōtomo Sōrin in his eight-year stay in Bungo. Francis Xavier was received in audience by Ōtomo Sōrin in 1551 and made a deep impression on the young daimyo. As Cooper says, 'without his help and patronage the Christian mission might not have survived the many vicissitudes of its early days in Japan.'⁵³

Yoshishige extended his benevolent friendship to Europeans in general. He once pleaded successfully with his father not to carry out a proposed plan of killing Portuguese traders. Besides, he accepted the Jesuit to establish a residence and hospital in Funai, and in later years, newly-arrived missionaries went first to Funai to study the Japanese language.

It is generally acknowledged that Ōtomo Sōrin led the large army against Hyūga for three reasons: firstly to support the Itō family; secondly to expand his territory, and thirdly to establish an ideal Christian Kingdom.⁵⁴ On these grounds, he invited Francisco Cabral,⁵⁵ the successor of Cosme de Torres,⁵⁶ to accompany him and establish a new mission in Hyūga. Accordingly, Cabral packed a great deal of church equipment for the mission and set out by boat from Usuki on 3 October, 1578. He was accompanied by his interpreter, Brother Juan de Torres,⁵⁷ the ailing veteran missionary Luís de Almeida, and seventeen-year-old Brother Andrés Douria. This is all that is mentioned about the composition of the party, but according to subsequent events it is certain that some Portuguese boys, including Rodrigues, also accompanied Cabral. As Doi Tadao says, 'To realise the dream of establishing a Christian Kingdom, Ōtomo Sōrin, baptised in the same year, raised his army to

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attack Shimazu's forces in Hyūga in autumn. Rodrigues and some other foreign missionaries also accompanied Ōtomo Sōrin.⁵⁸

The Battle of Mimikawa ended in a victory for Satsuma. Rodrigues witnessed Bungo's defeat and gave an account in his *História* when describing the province of Hyūga:

Don Francisco (Ōtomo) went there (to Hyūga) with an army of fifty thousand infantry with the intention of making the whole of that kingdom Christian and governing it by Christian laws in keeping with the directives of the kingdom of Portugal, which pleased him greatly. To this end he took with him Father Francisco Cabral, Superior of all Japan, with other priests and Brothers of the Society, and we ourselves formed part of that company. But on account of the high and profound ordinances of the Lord and the pride of the Bungo people, who were pagans, God our Lord permitted Satsuma to be the victor and the Bungo army was defeated at the Mimikawa River.⁵⁹

After the defeat, many of the Bungo troops were understandably aggrieved by Ōtomo's temple-destroying policy and attributed the Mimikawa defeat to the just wrath of the offended Buddhist deities.⁶⁰ Added to the missionaries' worries was the thought that the defeat might well turn the newly baptised daimyo against Christianity. The situation went from bad to worse, popular feeling against the missionaries lingered, and people's faith in Christianity faltered. Some of Ōtomo's vassals rose in rebellion. Unexpectedly, Tawara Tsugitada, who was thought to have perished in the battle, renewed the campaign to expel the missionaries from Bungo. Insults and curses greeted the Jesuits frequently. A hostile crowd even prepared to pull down the church. At this dangerous and critical point, the firm stand taken by the doughty Ōtomo Yoshishige, whose authority was diminished,

saved the Jesuits. However, Ōtomo's son Yoshimune bowed to the pressure of influential nobles and restored Buddhist festivals and the temple rents, although secretly informing the missionaries that he remained a Christian at heart.

Rodrigues stayed in Bungo after the Mimikawa defeat like many other missionaries, suffering from the insults and curses of pagans and preparing to die at the hands of the anti-Christian mob, for at the end of the following year, in December 1580, he entered the novitiate at Usuki. After that, Rodrigues was sent to the college of Saint Paul in Funai, from which time onward his story became more colourful and explicit in the increasing number of records on his activities.

Educated by the Jesuit schools in Japan, João Rodrigues, a boy unschooled before leaving Portugal, finally grew to be a successful interpreter entrusted with compiling the *História*, which shows his linguistic talent and, indirectly, the extraordinary achievement of Jesuit education in Japan. In the spring of 1591 Valignano enlisted Rodrigues as his interpreter at the audience with Toyotomi Hideyoshi. With this opportunity, Rodrigues' talent immediately attracted the attention of Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Rodrigues thereafter succeeded Luís Fróis to undertake delicate negotiations with Toyotomi Hideyoshi and other Japanese leaders on behalf of the mission. In 1601 Rodrigues took over the important post as treasurer of the Jesuit mission, and in his diplomatic capacity he made frequent visits to court, received in audience by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and later by Tokugawa Ieyasu. After Tokugawa Ieyasu had taken over political control of the country, Rodrigues was appointed administrator of trade between Portuguese and Japanese merchants in Nagasaki. From then on, Rodrigues, the boy from a poor Portuguese family, shouldered formally the responsibility of making contact with the supreme power in Japan and thus commenced his splendid and legendary career as 'Tçuzu'. **RC**

HISTORIOGRAPHY

NOTES

- 1 Michael Cooper, *Tzuji Rodoriges* 通辞-ロドリゲス (*Rodrigues the Interpreter*). Trans. Matsumoto Tamago 松本玉. Tokyo: Harasiyobai, 1991), p. 347.
- 2 Ibid., p. 2.
- 3 Doi Tadao 土井忠生, *Kirishitan Ronko* 吉利支丹論考 (*Investigation of Christian*). Tokyo: Sanseido, 1991, p. 62.
- 4 Ibid., p. 63.
- 5 The object of veneration was an ancient statue of Our Lady, still preserved in a grotto within the present church. According to tradition, the statue was hidden in a cave during the eighth century to prevent its falling into the hands of the Moors and was not recovered until 1493, when a young shepherdess chanced to discover it. Michael Cooper, *Tzuji Rodoriges*, pp. 1-2.
- 6 Louis Pfister, *Zaihua Yesu Huisbi Liezhuan Ji Shumu* 在华耶稣会士列传及书目 (*Notices Biographiques et Bibliographiques sur les Jesuites de l'Ancienne Mission de Chine 1552-1773*). Trans. Feng Chengjun 冯承钧. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1995, vol. 1, p. 216.
- 7 Doi Tadao, *Kirishitan Ronko*, p. 73.
- 8 Ibidem.
- 9 Macao, 30.11.1627, in Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), *Japonica-Sinica*, 18, f. 86.
- 10 Michael Cooper, *Tzuji Rodoriges*, p. 2.
- 11 João Rodrigues, *Nihon Kyokai Shi* 日本教會史 (*History of the Church in Japan*). Trans. Doi Tadao, vol. 1, p. 31.
- 12 Doi Tadao, *Kirishitan Ronko*, p. 63.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Michael Cooper, *Tzuji Rodoriges*, p. 2.
- 15 Louis Pfister's *Zaihua Yesu Huisbi Liezhuan Ji Shumu*, and Doi Tadao's *Kirishitan Ronko*, and Michael Cooper's *Tzuji Rodoriges* give that Rodrigues was born in 1561.
- 16 Michael Cooper, *Tzuji Rodoriges*, p. 2.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 João Rodrigues, *Nihon Kyokai Shi*, vol. 1, p. 32.
- 19 Qi Jinping 戚印平, *Lu Ruohan de Xueye ji qi shizhi Beijing* 陸若漢的學業及其知識背景 (Rodrigues' Studies and Knowledge Background), unpublished.
- 20 Rodrigues notes that 'our Lord called me at a tender age to his Society (of Jesus) in this Japan.'
- 21 Michael Cooper, *Tzuji Rodoriges*, p. 3.
- 22 Nagasaki, 28.2.1598, in ARSI, *Japonica-Sinica*, 13, f. 132.
- 23 Macao, 30.10.1622, in ARSI, *Japonica-Sinica*, 18, f. 8v.
- 24 João Rodrigues, *Nihon Kyokai Shi*, vol. 1, p. 31.
- 25 Michael Cooper, *Tzuji Rodoriges*, p. 4.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Mateus de Couros, Nagasaki, 6.x.1603, in Biblioteca da Ajuda (BA), Lisbon, Cod. 49-IV-59, f. 120v.
- 28 Macao, 30.10.1622, in ARSI, *Japonica-Sinica* 18, f. 9v.
- 29 Michael Cooper, *Tzuji Rodoriges*, p. 5.
- 30 Ibid., p. 6.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid., p. 7.
- 33 Ibid., p. 8.
- 34 Charles R. Boxer, *The Tragic History of the Sea, 1589-1622*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959, pp. 24-25; Francis M. Rogers (ed.), *Europe Informed: An Exhibition on Early Books, which Acquainted Europe with the East*. Cambridge, Mass. and New York, 1999, pp. 131-140.
- 35 Michael Cooper, *Tzuji Rodoriges*, p. 9.
- 36 Charles R. Boxer, *The Tragic History of the Sea*, p. 25; Francis M. Rogers (ed.), *Europe Informed*, pp. 131-140.
- 37 Luís Fróis, *Nihon Shi* 日本史 (*History of Japan*). Trans. Yanagiya Takeo 柳谷武夫. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1987, vol. 5, pp. 11-13.
- 38 Michael Cooper, *Tzuji Rodoriges*, p. 10.
- 39 Ibid., p. 11.
- 40 Ibid., p. 13.
- 41 Contemporary Japanese screen paintings clearly show the presence of such serving boys on board the carracks anchored at Nagasaki, which is preserved in the Nanban Bunkakan at Osaka.
- 42 João Rodrigues, *Nihon Kyokai Shi*, vol. 1, p. 223.
- 43 Johannes Laures, *Die Anfänge der Mission von Miyako*. Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1951; J. F. Schütte, *Introductio ad Historiam Societatis Iesu in Japonia, 1549-1560*. Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1968, pp. 603-609.
- 44 Michael Cooper, *Tzuji Rodoriges*, p. 16.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 João Rodrigues, *Nihon Kyokai Shi*, vol. 1, p. 223.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 It was also Ōgimachi who, in 1569, at the prompting of Buddhist monks issued a decree condemning Christianity and prohibiting further missionary work in the capital.
- 49 Luís Fróis, Miyako, 12.vii.1569, in *Cartas do Japão nas quaes se trata da chegada daquellas partes dos fidalgos lapões que ca vierão, da muita Christandade que se fez no tempo da perseguição do tyrano, das guerras que ouue, & de como Quambacudono se acabou de fazer senhor absoluto dos 66 Reynos que ha no Iapão, & de outras cousa tocantes às partes da India & do Grão Mogor*. Lisboa, 1593, 1: 273v, and Miyako, 1.vi.1569, *ibid.*, 1:265v; Michael Cooper, *They Came to Japan: An Anthology of European Reports on Japan, 1543-1620*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965, p. 98.
- 50 Matsuda Kiichi 松田毅, *Nanban shiryō no Kenkyū* 南蛮史料の研究 (*Study of Nanban History*). Tokyo: Kazama Shobō, 1967, p. 416.
- 51 The church was built, dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady. It has passed into Japanese history as the Nanban-ji.
- 52 Luís Fróis, *Nihon Shi*, p. 13.
- 53 Michael Cooper, *Tzuji Rodoriges*, p. 22.
- 54 Doi Tadao, *Kirishitan Ronko*, p. 64.
- 55 Cabral was born in the Azores in 1533 and, as in the case of Rodrigues, sailed to the Indies while still a young boy. He became a Jesuit at Goa in 1554, and his administrative ability soon became evident; in due course he was sent to Japan to take over the running of the mission from the ailing Torres.
- 56 When Xavier departed from Japan in 1551, he left one of his companions, Cosme de Torres, in charge of the Jesuit expedition. A native of Valencia, Torres may rightly be called the cofounder of the mission; not only did he arrive in the country together with Xavier, but he also shouldered the burden of administrating the expanding work for twenty precarious years until, broken in health, he was replaced by Francisco Cabral in 1570 and died within a matter of months.
- 57 Despite his European name, Juan de Torres was a native of Yamaguchi.
- 58 Doi Tadao, *Kirishitan Ronko*, p. 64.
- 59 João Rodrigues, *Nihon Kyokai Shi*, vol. 1, pp. 260-261.
- 60 More than thirty years later the apostate Fabian would cite the Mimikawa disaster in his refutation of Christianity. (Fabian Fucan, *Ha-Deusu* (*Refutation of Deus*). Transl. Esther Lowell Hibbard. Tokyo: International Institute for the Study of Religions, 1963, p. 7.