

## Early Missionaries in Japan 5

### Alessandro Valignano: Pioneer in Adaptation

HUBERT CIESLIK, S.J.

(An article from Francis Britto's *All about Francis Xavier*)

So important for the early Jesuit missions in Japan was Father Alessandro Valignano, S. J. (1539-1606) that he might well be called their "second founder."<sup>1</sup>

A native of Chieti in Italy, he studied law in Padua and Rome before entering the Society of Jesus. Ordained in 1570, the talented young man was named Director of the Jesuit College at Macerata two years later when he was only 33 years old. Like all young Jesuits in those days, he was enthusiastic about the "Missions of India" which had been established by St. Francis Xavier and volunteered for service there. His request was granted in a most unusual way when Father Mercurian, the Jesuit General, called him to Rome in August 1573 and named him Visitor<sup>1</sup> General for all the Jesuit missions from Africa to Japan. He set out from Italy in September and embarked from Lisbon with forty-one other Jesuits in March, 1574.

#### (1) VISITATOR IN INDIA

The Jesuit missions in India had been established at a time when the Constitutions of the Society had not yet been definitely fixed. There was, therefore, considerable confusion as well as a certain number of abuses to be corrected in that area. This was Valignano's first task. A second was to provide more effective organization, while a third was to develop suitable



##### 1. Valignano

mission methods. Valignano's natural talents, his genuine piety, his good judgment, which was aided by his legal studies, and a certain plasticity which enabled him to adapt himself and his policies to a given set of circumstances, fitted him very well indeed to the task that confronted him. The one drawback in his character was a fiery temper which sometimes involved him in heated disputes, but fortunately, he was not inclined to hold grudges and his genuine piety prompted him to show more than ordinary kindness to an opponent after any kind of 'incident.'

After arriving in Goa, Valignano immediately undertook a visitation of the missions in India, and his reports give a good picture of their situation at that time. He was, of course, unfamiliar with Indian art and culture and could do little to adapt mission methods to the local needs or to adopt new methods, but he did make a real contribution in the matter of better organization.

For our present purpose it can be said also that the three years Valignano spent in India were important because of the practical experience he gained there and also because the reports he received from Japan prepared him to some extent for the work he was to undertake there. It was while he was still in India that he became aware of the financial problems confronting the missionaries in Japan and ordered the establishment of a language school for them.

Setting out for Malacca in 1577, Father Valignano arrived in Macao in the following year and was able to make an agreement with the Portuguese merchants there, which enabled the Japan mission to share in some of their profits, though not engaging directly in any commercial venture, a plan which was approved by Pope Gregory XIII himself. In Macao, he also established the house of studies where Father Michael Ruggieri and Father Ricci, the founders of the modern missions in China, were enabled to equip themselves and make the final preparations for their great work.

## **(2) First Mission Visitation in Japan (1579-1582)**

Valignano set out from Macao in 1579 and arrived in Kuchinotsu in western Kyushu on July 25. The next two and one half years were to bring him many struggles and disappointments. While in Macao he had organized a great religious festival in thanksgiving for the splendid developments of the Church in Japan, but once he arrived here, he found the conditions were not nearly as good as the reports had indicated. During these first two and one half years, he was able not only to sense the special national and racial traits of the Japanese people, but he also found real abuses in the mission work itself which constituted a real danger for that work in the future. In addition to this Valignano found that he was at odds in matters of basic principle with Fr. Francisco Cabral, the superior of the Japanese mission. These differences of opinion left definite tension which was relieved only when Cabral on his own initiative resigned from his office as Mission Superior.

As has happened so often in the history of the Church, there was malice on neither side in the conflict. Both men had the purest of intentions and were zealous for God's glory and the progress of the mission. The difficulty lay in the difference of their character and outlook, and in these they were diametrically opposed to each other. In the light of later developments it was clearly providential that Valignano's position was vindicated and his ideas adopted.

Cabral was a member of the Portuguese nobility and had served originally as an officer with the colonial troops in India. He joined the Society of Jesus in 1554 and was quickly entrusted with various important missions. He was deeply religious, was animated with a supernatural spirit, and was zealous for the conversion of souls. This fine spirit however was conditioned by his aristocratic military bearing which often made him appear stern and rigorous and made it difficult for him to understand and appreciate the mind and culture of a foreign people.

It is true that the Japanese mission had made appreciable progress under Cabral's leadership. It was while he was superior that the first Daimyos were converted in Kyushu and brought about the mass conversion of their followers. In Miyako (Kyoto) also, the first

members of the nobility had been converted, and the Church enjoyed the favor of the mighty Oda Nobunaga (Fig. 2) and his generals.

Cabral was unremitting in his zeal for the maintenance of a religious spirit among his confreres but in spite of all his efforts to understand the Japanese, his attitude toward them was decidedly negative. Some excuse for this pessimism can perhaps be seen in the endless wars and in the demoralized political, cultural, and ethical conditions then prevailing. The net result of all this was that Cabral could see none of the finer potentialities of the Japanese, took a domineering attitude towards both Christians and non-Christians (as did a number of the other missionaries also), was reluctant to encourage Japanese to go on for the priesthood or the religious life and was intolerant towards any policy of adaptation. This domineering attitude on the part of the missionaries, their lack of appreciation of things Japanese, their consequent lack of tact, and their foreign ways which were regarded as barbarous by the Japanese, led to real antipathy even between the priests and the lay Catholics. The mass conversions of Kyushu were largely due to orders received from the Daimyos, whose conversion was itself prompted in some cases merely by the desire for a share in the profitable Portuguese trade. As a consequence of this situation, a single command on the part of the Daimyo could bring on a mass conversion, and another command could bring about a mass desertion. Valignano recognized the danger of this situation, and in attempting to remedy it quickly found himself in conflict with Cabral, who constantly reminded the newly arrived visitor of the long years he had spent in the missions. This tension proved to be a severe trial for both of these good men, and the visitor almost despaired of success while Cabral finally asked that his resignation be accepted.

After studying mission conditions for a few months (only in Kyushu, it is true), Valignano raised the question in December 1579 whether this policy of mass conversions which were often not based on purely religious motives was right or not. He also questioned the advisability of further expansion while missionaries were still so few. With regard to the first question, after careful consideration of all the pros and cons, he agreed that the mass conversion method was neither bad nor forbidden in spite of all its shortcomings, and he felt



**2. Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582)**

that intensive instruction after Baptism might make up for what was lacking in motives or instructions before Baptism. To the second question also he gave an affirmative answer, and while he admitted that expansion could involve real dangers because of the lack of personnel, he felt that the splendid chance of the moment should not be allowed to pass unheeded. He felt too that it would be a great advantage for the neophytes if a whole province were received into the Church at one time since each of the new converts would receive moral support from the whole community. In order to increase the mission personnel, Valignano urged even at that time that Japanese assistants should be trained to help in the mission work.

Valignano began his work by correcting a number of merely administrative problems. He remembered that he himself had been led astray by erroneous reports from the mission. At a later date he made the remark to which all missionary veterans will probably agree, viz., "The longer I am in Japan the less confident I am in writing about this country and judging its problems." Most of the early reports, which had been widely published in Europe, had been written by young men who had only a superficial knowledge of the country and who wrote with glowing enthusiasm about the conversion of several Japanese "kingdoms." Valignano now gave orders that all mission reports should be collected by the superior and that the superior or some experienced missionary delegated by him should draw up an official report which could then be released to the press in Europe as *Litterae aedificantes* 'edifying literature.' Thus it came about that a detailed report was sent to Europe every year concerning mission conditions in Japan, and these reports also gave a brief survey of the political situation as it affected the several missions. Such "official" reporting was not without its drawbacks, but all the missionaries were still free to write whatever they wished in their personal correspondence with the superiors in Europe.

In the matter of organization, the Roman authorities had already given Valignano complete authority to decide whether the Far Eastern missions should be organized independently of the religious authorities in India or not. The superiors in India had indeed been opposed to a complete separation, but they did agree that it might be well to set up a Vice-Province "beyond the Ganges" which would be centered in Malacca. In Japan, however, Valignano quickly realized that with communications such as they were it would be impossible to direct the Japanese missions from Malacca. This was the period known in Japan as "Sengoku-Jidai" and the many sudden upheavals in the political order made decisions on the spot without recourse to Malacca imperatively necessary. Valignano, therefore, asked for extensive powers for the Japan Superior and felt that the man chosen for this position should be at least as well qualified as the Provincial in India. In point of fact, the Japan mission was raised to the rank of a Vice-Province in 1581 with Father Caspar Coelho as its Vice-Provincial. Within Japan itself further organization was necessary since even Cabral had found it difficult to direct all the missions from one central point or to keep in personal contact with all the missionaries through frequent visits. Cabral had asked that two "coadjutors" should be appointed for the superior, and he himself had already nominated Father Organtino as head of the Kyoto district while Father Coelho was to direct the missions in western Kyushu and Cabral himself resided in Bungo. Valignano accepted this plan of having three districts in West Kyushu (Shimo), Bungo, and Miyako, each with its own district superior who would be required to make the visitation of his district every year. The superior for all Japan (later the Vice-Provincial) was expected to visit all the missions at least once every three years. Each district was to have its own center house, a kind of "college" where the full religious life could be carried out and which would serve as the center of the district both spiritually and administratively.

The question of ecclesiastical organization was also considered. Valignano did not think that the time was ripe for the establishment of a diocese in Japan. In this connection it must be remembered that the system of Vicars and Prefects Apostolic had not yet been

inaugurated, and that the establishment of dioceses involved the erection of cathedrals, cathedral chapters, etc. It was to be feared also that if a diocese were erected, the Portuguese king would insist on obtaining the same rights of patronage as he had in India. For these and similar reasons Valignano felt that the erection of a diocese was premature. On the other hand, he felt that the Japanese Christians should not be left without the Sacrament of Confirmation, and he felt too that candidates for the priesthood could not always be sent to Macao for the reception of Orders. Valignano, therefore, suggested that one of the Jesuit priests should be consecrated, not as Bishop of Japan, but simply as a titular bishop. According to Valignano's plan, such a bishop should simply have the "onus" without the "bonus" of the episcopate and aside from the pontifical ceremonies should live like an ordinary missionary in a Jesuit residence.

A source of considerable worry for Valignano was the matter of mission finances. The support promised by the Portuguese crown came very irregularly and sometimes not at all while the mission's share of the profits from the silk trade was subject to many a risk. Meanwhile the financial demands on the mission were constantly increasing as new Churches and colleges were built and as the mission personnel increased in number. (At times, the personnel, including those who received part or full time salaries, totaled nine hundred persons.) Not much could be expected as yet from the native Christians. This question of finances was indeed a thorny one, and Valignano with his usual practical realism took a realistic view towards it.

When the Daimyo of Omura made the Jesuits a present of the districts of Nagasaki and Mogi, Valignano welcomed these gifts as a means of securing support for the missions in Japan itself. The Daimyo, of course, was not as altruistic as his gifts might lead one to suspect but sought distinct political and economic advantages for himself. A very detailed contract was drawn up according to which the Daimyo was to have a share in the economic profits and was, of course, to exert full political jurisdiction over the areas in question since the Jesuits were forbidden both by Canon Law and their own constitutions to exercise such jurisdiction. The matter was then reported by Valignano to Rome and was approved both by the Jesuit superiors and the Pope.

This mixture of business with religion obviously entailed certain dangers, especially in the case of Nagasaki where the



3. Four Japanese Nobles and guide

population rose quickly from 1,500 to 40,000. Valignano himself seems to have been aware of this danger and regarded the whole matter simply as an emergency measure. In point of fact, the entire arrangement collapsed a few years later when Toyotomi Hideyoshi (**Fig. 7**) issued his famous decree of 1587 proscribing Christianity. As a result of that decree, Nagasaki was confiscated and was placed under the direct administration of the central government.

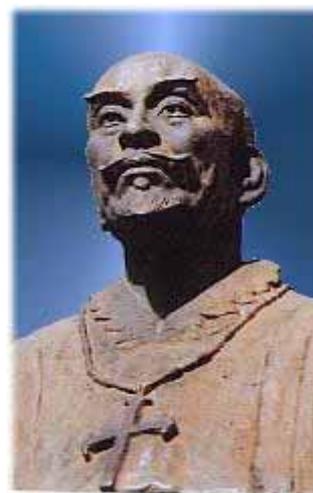
More important than the external organization was the thorough training of the mission personnel. Valignano realized that a mere increase in the number of missionaries would be of little avail if they were not thoroughly trained in Japanese language and culture. It was for this reason that he had sent orders from Malacca long before his own arrival in Japan that the missionaries he was sending from India should get a thorough training in the language. Unfortunately, Cabral had considered this not only unnecessary but also impossible.

Valignano's first concern, therefore, upon arriving in Japan was the better training of the missionaries. He insisted on the organization of systematic language study and himself called in no less than fifteen suitable persons for the college he was to establish at Usuki (Bungo). A regular language school was established there, and Valignano gave orders for the preparation of a grammar textbook and a dictionary. Touching upon this point, he wrote in 1595 in a report as follows:

When I sent seventeen Jesuits from India as a first contingent and nine other excellent men in the following year, I wrote to Father Cabral and asked him to see that they got a thorough training in the language. I asked also that he should get the best possible language teacher and that the priests should spend two hours a day in class work and should spend a good deal of time in repetition and in writing. I wished that when I should arrive in the following year all of them should have made good progress and would be able to undertake the work I planned for them. But Father Cabral just laughed. He gave them neither teachers nor a school room and declared in his answer to me that I had written in such a manner simply because I knew nothing about the Japanese language. That language, he said, simply could not be studied according to a grammar and could hardly be learned by practice. He said it took very great ability for a man to learn enough language to hear confessions in six years or enough in fifteen years to give a public address to the Christians. It was sheer foolishness to even think of giving a good sermon to the un-baptized. When I came to Japan, for the first time, therefore, the men I had sent had learned so little that they were hardly able to do anything. Some of them complained bitterly, for being good Latinists, they recognized immediately that a grammar of Japanese could be created. This affected me deeply, and the first thing I did upon arrival was to give orders that our European confreres should study the language with great care and that both a grammar and a dictionary should be prepared. By the grace of God, it has happened that up to the present time (1595), our Fathers have not only prepared a grammar and a dictionary but also printed many other books. In this way, language study has become so easy that even men with less than average ability know enough in one year to hear confessions and can talk to the Japanese, and men with more than average ability are even able to preach at the end of the first year.

For effective mission work it was necessary to have not only a good knowledge of the language but also a thorough understanding of the customs and the mentality of the Japanese people. Valignano heard many complaints about the failure of the foreign missionaries to understand the people and about faults on their part which tended to alienate the Japanese. Shortly after his arrival, he became keenly aware of the great differences between Japanese and European culture, and he tried for years to cultivate an understanding and appreciation of things Japanese. In his reports to Rome, he repeatedly stressed the great differences that existed not only in externals but also in the spiritual and psychological reactions and evaluations even of such sense impressions as color, sounds, smell, taste, etc. He himself quoted many examples, and at a later date had Father Frois, who was well acquainted with things Japanese, write a booklet on the cultural contrast between East and West for the information of the superiors in Rome.

It was in this respect that he became a real pioneer in the matter of adaptation. At the suggestion of Ōtomo Sōrin (**Fig 4**), he made a special study of the customs and rules of politeness observed by the Buddhist Zen-bonzes who were highly esteemed in Japan. On the basis of these studies, he drew up, before he left the mission in 1582, a kind of ceremonial containing the rules of politeness to be observed in Japan. Even in the matter of organization, Valignano followed the example of the Zen Buddhists and divided the mission personnel into six separate grades, paralleling the Zen organization as follows:



4. Otomo Sorin

- (1) A Vice-Provincial (corresponding to the superior of the Nanzenji Temple)
- (2) District superiors of Shimo, Bungo, Miyako (corresponding to the five *Chōrō* of the *Gozan*),
- (3) Priests (corresponding to the *Chōrō* or *Todo*)
- (4) Brothers (corresponding to *Shusa*)
- (5) Novices (corresponding to the *Zosu*)
- (6) *Dojuku* (corresponding to the *Jisha*)

Valignano wished that the Catholic mission personnel of the various grades should adapt themselves in clothing, etiquette, etc. to their counterparts in the Zen sect, and he made concrete suggestions also with regard to the building of houses, guest rooms, gardens, the reception of visitors, gifts, tea ceremony, etc.

With the exception of Cabral, the priests agreed with Valignano's ideas after they had discussed the matter repeatedly. The Visitor sent his manuscript to Rome with various explanations, and after his second visit to Japan in February 1592, it was decided at a meeting of the missionaries in Katsusa that the "ceremonial" which had meanwhile been somewhat improved upon should be accepted as the standard of behavior. For the consolidation and expansion of the mission work it was extremely necessary that Japanese collaborators should

be trained. In this Valignano was of the same opinion as Cabral, but he did not share the pessimistic outlook of the latter with regard to the Japanese character. After making the visitation of the Miyako district Valignano was convinced not only of the necessity but also of the possibility of higher studies for the Japanese. He felt that advanced spiritual and intellectual training were necessary not only for the creation of a native clergy but also for the formation of the elite among the laity.

Valignano, therefore, worked out a detailed plan for these higher studies. He desired that each of the three mission districts should have a "seminary" for talented boys of the better families. In these "minor seminaries" the boys were to be taught the humanities and given a general training in both Japanese and European culture. Valignano also called for two "major seminaries," in one of which both philosophy and theology should be taught while the other would provide advanced training for the various professions.

Since the Daimyo of Arima had presented the mission with the grounds and buildings of a former Buddhist monastery, the first of these seminaries could be inaugurated as early as 1580. Ground for a second seminary to be erected in Nobunaga's city of Azuchi on Lake Biwa was received by Father Organtino from Nobunaga himself on the Feast of Pentecost 1580, and building operations were undertaken there in that same year. A third seminary had been planned for Bungo but could never be established because of the political troubles that had broken out there. At the time of Valignano's departure in 1582, each of the existing seminaries had an enrollment of about twenty-six students for whom the visitor himself had outlined the curriculum and rules of conduct.

For the training of Japanese members of the Society, a novitiate was opened at Usuki in Bungo on Christmas Eve with six Japanese novices and an equal number of Portuguese. Classes in philosophy were also begun for them in 1583 and 1584 in the college at Funai, while the first course of theology was begun there in 1585.

Unfortunately, Valignano's elaborate educational project was seriously hampered by Hideyoshi's decree of 1587 proscribing Christianity. It was impossible to establish the two *seminaria majora*, and the other schools had often to be transferred from place to place on account of the political upheavals. In spite of the difficulties, these schools did render splendid services to the Church in Japan and provided many capable collaborators until the final suppression of the Japanese mission in 1614.

During the early days of his visitation, Fr. Valignano had received a very unfavorable impression of the Japanese mission, and this impression was accentuated still more by the pessimistic outlook of the mission superior, Fr. Cabral. Happily, Valignano was able gradually to see things in a brighter light especially after the conversion of the Daimyo of Arima, Arima Harunobu, in March 1580, which was followed by a rapid development of the Church in his province. This change of attitude on the part of Valignano increased the tension between him and Cabral, with the result that an open clash became more or less inevitable. When the letters received from India in 1500 reported disturbing conditions in the missions there, Cabral together with Coelho urged Valignano to go back to India immediately without even seeing Bungo or Miyako.

Organtino, however, realizing how tragic it would be for Valignano to leave prematurely, urged him repeatedly and finally by a special messenger to be sure to visit Miyako. After mature deliberation, Valignano decided to remain in Japan to complete the work he had started, and Cabral asked the Roman authorities to accept his resignation.

So it happened that Valignano went to Bungo in September 1580, where he presided at a meeting of the missionaries at Usuki, discussed the mission problems with them and outlined the general policy for the future. Since it was impossible to bring all the priests together from all parts of Japan, similar meetings were held for the same purpose in the other two districts. From Bungo, Valignano set out for central Japan and was most cordially received by the Christians in Sakai on March 28. His visitation in the Miyako area proved to be a veritable triumph and completed the transformation in Valignano from his original pessimism concerning the mission in Japan to an optimism for which he became famous. In the Miyako area, he not only had an opportunity to study Japanese culture and meet Japan's political and intellectual leaders, but also was able to see the young Christian elite who had embraced the Faith not for any material advantage or because of orders from a feudal lord, but from genuinely religious conviction.

Valignano spent the Holy Week and the Feast of Easter in the castle of Takayama Ukon in Takatsuki. News of his arrival had preceded him, and Christians from all over the area assembled there to meet him. The solemnity of the Holy Week ceremonies and of the great Easter procession in which fifteen thousand Catholics participated were such that they reminded Valignano of the ceremonies which he had witnessed in Rome.

After Easter, Valignano set out for Kyoto where he was received in solemn audience by Oda Nobunaga. He later visited the great warlord repeatedly in the new city of Azuchi, where the Jesuits already had a seminary. Valignano's impressive figure, his broad culture,



5. A *byobu* (folding screen)

and the gracious bearing he had as a son of the Italian Renaissance seemed to have made quite an impression on Nobunaga. The latter invited him repeatedly to take part in court festivities, singled him out for special honors and gave him a magnificent wall screen (*byobu*) which was admired by everybody who saw it (**Fig. 5**).

From Azuchi, Valignano visited the other churches of central Japan, spent the Feast of Corpus Christi at Takatsuki, where he baptized two large groups of five hundred and fifteen hundred

respectively, and later presided at a meeting of missionaries at Azuchi, where he repeated the directives already given at Usuki. Valignano's return journey was again a triumphant

procession. The honors bestowed upon him by Nobunaga had been widely heralded and had also increased the prestige of the Church in the various provinces.

For Valignano personally, the Kyoto visitation was an unforgettable experience, which filled him with optimism, did away with all doubts as to the feasibility of rapid expansion and strengthened him in his policy of adaptation. By October 3, he was back in Bungo, where he blessed a church in Usuki and outlined his plan for the future of the Church in Japan for the first time. After finishing his visitation, he planned to go to Rome to report in person to the Pope and to the Superior General of the Jesuits and to ask for more help as well as for the necessary personnel for Japan. At the same time, he planned to take along a group of young Japanese Christian nobles to present them to the Pope as the first fruits of the Far East and to give these young men a chance to see European culture for themselves and to see the universality of the Catholic Church.



**6. A Church in Goa**

For this purpose Valignano chose four young nobles, all of them under sixteen years of age, and set out with them from Nagasaki on February 25, 1582 (**Fig. 3**). After arriving in Goa, the group was given a solemn reception by the Viceroy, the Archbishop and all the people. In Goa, however, he was informed that he had been named Provincial of India, and since he could not himself go on to Europe, he appointed Fr. Rodriguez to lead the youthful Japanese "ambassadors" to Rome.

Valignano had not planned any great festivities for the Japanese nobles in Europe, but their arrival was hailed everywhere as one of the greatest events of the year. European rulers vied with one another in giving them the most solemn receptions, and the boys were received in audience by Pope Gregory XIII himself on March 23, 1585. Since the Pope died shortly afterwards, the boys were also able to take part in the coronation ceremonies of his successor, Pope Sixtus V. On their return journey, the young nobles again visited the principal political and cultural centers in Italy, Spain, and Portugal. From there they set sail for Japan on April 13, 1586.

### **(3) Valignano, Ambassador to Hideyoshi (1590-1592)**

When the youthful Japanese Ambassadors reached Goa on their return journey from Rome, they were welcomed by Father Valignano who prepared immediately to accompany them on their way to Japan. On this occasion, however, Valignano went as an official Ambassador of the Viceroy of India to the court of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (**Fig. 7**), who had taken control in

Japan after the suicide of Nobunaga, and by a series of campaigns made himself undisputed master of the country.

This embassy was suggested by Father Coelho, Jesuit Vice-Provincial in Japan, who thought it would be the best way of thanking Hideyoshi for his many favors and also a means of securing his good will for the future. The viceroy, Duarte Menezes, approved the plan, named Father Valignano as his ambassador and gave him a letter of thanks to Hideyoshi. Thus equipped, Valignano set sail from Goa on April 13, 1588, in company with the four Japanese ambassadors and their entourage and landed in Macao on July 28.

It was in Macao that Valignano first learned of Hideyoshi's change of sentiment and of his proclamation of 1587 proscribing the Christian religion. Undismayed, Valignano decided to go on with his project in the hope that he might be able to get this proclamation revoked. He did, however, send a letter ahead with a Chinese ship to ask whether Hideyoshi would be willing to receive him in his capacity as Ambassador of the Viceroy. A favorable answer was received during the same year, but since no Portuguese ship was able to go to Japan in 1589, Valignano had to wait in Macao until June, 1590. He was not idle, however, during the two years he spent in Macao. His principal concern was for the training of a native clergy and other native helpers, a problem which was made all the more urgent by Hideyoshi's proclamation. Suitable textbooks were needed for the schools and seminaries in Japan, and while he was still in India Fr. Valignano had made various attempts to get such books prepared. For philosophy and theology, he wanted books which would simply give a positive presentation of the subject matter and would not be encumbered with controversial subjects that were pertinent only in Europe. He was thus able to get three textbooks for philosophy and theology prepared by Father Pedro Gomez, a former associate of the famous philosopher, Pedro Fonseca of Coimbra. These books came off the press between 1592 and 1595 and proved to be very popular.

For Latin and the humanities, Valignano had had many books sent from Europe. During his enforced stay in Macao, he therefore went through these books to pick out what might be suitable for Japan. Finally, he selected the *Christiani Puer Institutio* by Father John Bonifacio, S.J., which could serve not only as a Latin reader but also as a textbook of ethics. He did, however, make many changes by inserting stories and examples from the ecclesiastical history of Japan in place of the European stories.

In Macao he also prepared a second Latin textbook for the seminary which was entitled *De Missione Legatorum Japonensium* and was rendered in classical Latin by Duarte de Sande. As its title indicated, the book simply told the story of the Japanese Embassy to Europe, but it was written in dialogue form with the youthful ambassadors of Arima and Omura telling all they had heard and seen in Europe to their brothers in Japan. To make use of such eye-witnesses for the purpose of informing the Japanese at home about European and Christian civilization was certainly a stroke of genius on the part of Father Valignano.

At Valignano's request, a printing press with movable type had been sent from Europe. Since a trained printer had also been sent in the person of the Italian, Brother John Baptist Pesce, Fr. Valignano had the printing press set up in Macao and had both of his books printed there before leaving for Japan.

It was not until the summer of 1590 that Valignano was able to leave Macao. After arriving in Nagasaki on July 21, he lay prostrate for a month because of illness. There he discovered how much things had changed in Japan since the proscription of Christianity by Hideyoshi in 1587. It is true that the priests were still able to work "in secret" (Hideyoshi knew about it), but they had to be extremely careful so as not to arouse his anger to a new pitch. The opponents of the Church had also spread the rumor that the Vice-Regal embassy was merely a trick planned by the priests in order to regain the confidence of Hideyoshi, and the latter had therefore grown suspicious again.

In view of the circumstances, the Christian Daimyos recommended that Valignano should take very few priests along with him but should, on the contrary, be accompanied by the greatest possible number of Portuguese civilians. One reason for this was that an ambassador had come from Korea a short time previously with an entourage of 300 persons and the Daimyos felt that if Valignano's entourage were not large, it would prove to be an anticlimax. The Portuguese were more than willing to appear before the warlord in formal garb, but no more than 26 of them were available for the purpose.



**7. Toyotomi Hiedyoshi (1536-1598)**

Failure threatened again when the embassy arrived in central Japan, since Hideyoshi sent word that he would not receive it and even forbade people to speak about the priests in his presence. Fortunately, Kuroda Yoshitaka was able to prevail upon Hideyoshi to receive the embassy but only on condition that Valignano would speak only as a representative of the Viceroy of India and would make no attempt to have the edict of proscription revoked.

After a long delay therefore, Valignano was enabled finally to proceed from Muro to Kyoto, where he made his solemn entry towards the end of February, 1591. The streets of the city were filled with people anxious to see the foreigners, dressed as they were in gala attire.

The audience took place on the first Sunday of Lent in the traditional atmosphere of rigid formality. Valignano presented various precious gifts from the Viceroy including a tall and richly caparisoned Arabian steed which was greatly admired by all. He then read the Viceroy's letter which was written on highly decorated parchment. Since this letter had been written before the outbreak of the persecution, it was filled with expressions of thanks for Hideyoshi's kindness towards the missionaries and also contained a petition that he would continue to be their protector. In this way Valignano was still able, at least indirectly, to touch upon the thing that was nearest to his heart, the abrogation of the edict of proscription.

The formal audience was followed by a dinner for Valignano and all the members of his entourage. Towards the end of the meal, Hideyoshi himself appeared clad in his ordinary garb and treated everyone with the greatest kindness. He was particularly interested in hearing what the four young Japanese ambassadors had to say of their trip to Europe, and in the evening of that day talked until midnight with the young Portuguese cleric, John Rodriguez. Since this young man had come to Japan at the age of fifteen, had a splendid command of the Japanese language, and knew how to present himself very well, he quickly won the

confidence of Hideyoshi and was often invited later to visit him. Due to his special position at court, therefore, Rodriguez was able to render extremely valuable services to the Church in the trying years that were still to come.

In bidding farewell to Valignano, Hideyoshi had granted him permission to travel anywhere and everywhere in Japan until the official reply to the Viceroy of India could be drafted. Both he and the priests who accompanied him, therefore, made full use of this permission to visit the Christians throughout central Japan and to carry on an intensive apostolate everywhere. During the 22 days Valignano then spent in Kyoto itself, there was an almost continuous procession of visitors, both Christian and non-Christian, who came to see him at the residence of the priests. Happily, Hideyoshi himself had left the city for the time being.

From Osaka, Valignano went by ship to Hirado and thence to Nagasaki where he stayed only two days before going on to the college at Atsusa. After a Solemn High Mass in Atsusa, while still standing at the altar, he presented the Pope's gifts—a letter, a hat, a sword, and a particle of the True Cross—to the Daimyo, Arima Harunobu, who is referred to in the mission letters simply by his baptismal name “Don Protasio.” Especially the presentation of the relic, acted out according to the Roman ceremonial, made a deep impression on the by-standers, some of whom were moved to tears.

A similar ceremony took place some time later at Omura, but since Omura Sumitada (Don Bartholomeo) was dead, the gifts were accepted by his son Omura Yoshiaki (Sancho).

Meanwhile the four youthful Ambassadors made a retreat, and on July 25, 1591, all of them were received into the Society of Jesus.

In Kyoto, the opponents of the Church were by no means idle. The rumor they had spread, to the effect that Valignano's embassy was simply a trick on the part of the priests, continued to fan the suspicions of Hideyoshi. As a matter of prudence, therefore, Valignano decided to remove the Seminary from the port city of Atsusa to the remote island of Amakusa, had the churches of Omura and Arima changed into ordinary houses, and warned the missionaries to be extremely prudent.

The first draft of Hideyoshi's reply to the Viceroy of India was extremely sharp and critical of both the missionaries and of the Christian religion. Thanks, however, to the influence of Maeda Geni Hōin, Governor of Kyoto, Father Organtino was able, after several futile attempts, to secure a new and more favorable reply. Maeda thought it might be possible also to get permission for a number of missionaries to remain in Japan on condition that they should abstain for the time being from all public efforts to win converts and should attract as little attention to themselves as possible. In point of fact, Hideyoshi did give permission for the priests to stay in Nagasaki.



#### **8. 400th Anniv. Stamp of Mission**

Before his departure, Valignano presided at another conference of the missionaries at Katsusa on February 13 and 14, 1592. Two of the principal topics discussed; were the practical procedures to be followed in view of Hideyoshi's hostility and the course of studies

to be followed in the several colleges. A third problem was the advisability, under the circumstances, of having a Bishop come to Japan, while a fourth problem was the question whether other religions should be admitted. In both of the latter cases the answer was negative because of the great danger of the moment.

Having received the second and more favorable reply of Hideyoshi to the Viceroy, Valignano set out from Nagasaki on October 9, 1592. During the following years he spent most of his time in Macao working for the development of the Central Mission College there. The Viceroy meanwhile wrote another letter to Hideyoshi, and this was delivered to him in 1596 by Bishop Martinez.

While Valignano failed to obtain a revocation of the Edict of Proscription, his ambassadorial visit to Hideyoshi did bring about appreciable results. Hideyoshi admitted a priest to his presence for the first time in four years, and the solemn reception given the Vice-Regal embassy did add to the prestige of the Church in spite of much opposition. During Valignano's stay, it was also possible for the priests to visit the Christians once more and to carry on a certain amount of evangelization. Hideyoshi himself had given permission for ten priests to stay in Nagasaki and there was reason to hope that he would take no further positive steps against the Church unless something special occurred to arouse his anger. Another hopeful sign was the fact that young Rodriguez had won the confidence of the mighty ruler, and this proved to be of real importance for the missions.

#### **(4) Third Visitation in Japan 1598-1603**

When Valignano went from Macao to Goa in 1594, he learned that he had been relieved of his duties as Visitor for India, but was still to function as Visitor for Japan. He, therefore, made preparations for what was to be his third and longest stay in this country. The trip, this time, was made in company with the newly appointed Bishop Luis Cerqueira, S.J. Landing in Nagasaki on August 5, 1598, Valignano found himself confronted with another difficult and extremely delicate task. It must have been an unpleasant surprise to him to find things changed again—changes that made it necessary for him to revise his strategy once more. It was fortunate, however, for the Japanese mission that a man of Valignano's caliber had returned to grasp the helm.

In another fit of temper, Hideyoshi had ordered the execution of the twenty-six sainted Christians, who were put to death in Nagasaki on Feb. 5, 1597, and in March of the following year, he had given orders that all of the Jesuits except John Rodriguez and two or three others should be exiled to Macao. Since the Portuguese ship was already on the point of departure, however, it was impossible to force the expulsion at the moment. Bishop Martinez alone set sail for India, only to die en route.

The seminary at Arie as well as the College in Amakusa had been closed down. Since the Governor of Nagasaki was insisting on the expulsion of the Jesuits, three sickly priests, a number of aged Brothers, and several seminarians, who were to complete their studies in Macao, were sent to that colony aboard a Chinese vessel. Under the circumstances, it would, of course, have been impossible to delay the departure of the missionaries indefinitely, had

not the whole situation changed completely with the death of Hideyoshi in Sept. 1598. Hideyori, his son and heir, was still a minor, and this circumstance led to other complications which resulted in bloody conflicts two years later.

With a view to playing off the various factions against one another, Hideyoshi had appointed a council of five, the *go-tairō*, to act as regents during the minority of his son. It soon became apparent, however, that wily Tokugawa Ieyasu aimed to rule himself, and this he achieved as a result of the battle of Sekigahara in September, 1600. Thus was laid the foundation of the military dictatorship of the Tokugawa which lasted for more than two and a half centuries until the restoration of real Imperial power in 1868.

Things improved to some extent during the illness of Hideyoshi since nobody spoke about expelling the missionaries. A number of the Daimyos even promised to help them, thinking perhaps of their own advantage in the conflicts to come. When Asano Nagamasa and Ishida Mitsunari were sent to Korea after the death of Hideyoshi to end the unfortunate Korean expedition and bring the troops home, Father Valignano sent a messenger to meet them in Hakata (now Fukuoka) to announce his arrival. Both of them knew Valignano and not only accepted his message very graciously but declared that the edict of proscription had been a mistake and promised him their help for the future. At the same time, they expressed the opinion that it would probably be best for him to remain in Nagasaki for the time being to see how things shaped up.

After Hideyoshi's death, Father Organtino had returned to Kyoto with two or three Brothers and had restored the missions both there and in Osaka. This, however, angered Terasawa Shima-no-Kami, the Governor of Nagasaki, since he feared that the missionaries would use their influence against him in the capital. Due to the worsened conditions in Nagasaki, therefore, Bishop Cerqueira, along with most of the Jesuits and their thirty seminarians, left the city to take refuge in Amakusa, which was under the jurisdiction of Augustin Konishi Yukinaga. Valignano also went there in August of the same year.

Before leaving Nagasaki, however, Valignano had sent John Rodriguez to Kyoto with commendatory letters from Konishi to pay his respects to Terasawa who was in Kyoto at the time, as well as to Ieyasu. The latter was then anxious to keep on good terms with the Christian daimyos. He therefore sent back word that though he could not immediately abrogate Hideyoshi's edict of expulsion immediately, he wished nevertheless to guarantee full religious freedom for the Christians. He likewise told Terasawa to place no more difficulties in the way of the Christians in Nagasaki.



**9. A hilly area of Japan**

Encouraged by the stand taken by Ieyasu, the Jesuits promptly resumed their regular mission work. Since the Christian daimyos could also breathe freely again the work of the missions developed with extraordinary rapidity especially in Kyushu where, according to Valignano's report, no less than 40,000 adults were baptized between February and October 1599; 30,000 of them in the domain of Konishi Yukinaga. Another 30,000 were baptized during the first half of the following year.

The work of the missions was aided also for political reasons perhaps, by a number of non-Christian daimyos who now invited the missionaries to work in their districts. Completely new districts could thus be opened, e.g. in the provinces of *Chugoku* (the Daimyo Mori and Ukita) while great advances were also made in central Japan. The future looked rosy indeed, and by the summer of 1600, no less than 67 of the churches which had been destroyed during the persecution had been rebuilt.

New disturbances arose, however, as early as September 1600 as political tensions increased. As a result of the battle of Sekigahara (and of treason on the part of some), the Tokugawa party was able to get control of the country. Many of the Christian daimyos, including especially Konishi Yukinaga, had sided with Toyotomi Hideyori because they regarded him as the legitimate successor of Hideyoshi. Their defeat proved to be a great set-back for the Church, and the greatest loss perhaps was the execution of Konishi Yukinaga.

On the other hand, these political events also involved important gains for the Church. Kuroda, who had sided with Ieyasu, now promised to take the place of Konishi as the protector of the Christians. Other daimyos, who had been awarded large fiefs as a result of Sekigahara, also invited the missionaries to work in their districts, and a number of new places could be opened up, such as Hiroshima (Fukushima Masanori), Wakayama (Asano Yoshinaga) and the neighboring provinces. Even Ieyasu was friendly to the priests during these early years for political reasons since he did not want to make any enemies until he was firmly established in power. Once that power was established, things changed for the worse until 1614 when Iemitsu, the third of the Tokugawa rulers, issued another decree proscribing Christianity and established the Tokugawa policy of sealing off Japan from the outside world.

It is quite possible that Ieyasu's policy of befriending the Christians in the early days was a result of Valignano's prudent policy and the able intervention of John Rodriguez, who succeeded in winning the confidence of Ieyasu also. Missionaries in those trying days were often heard to remark that Valignano's leadership was a real God-send and, some of them are quoted as saying even after the persecution had broken out that if Valignano were still alive, things might have been different.

It is certain that Valignano's last years in Japan witnessed many splendid developments. With peace restored after the disturbances of 1600, the future of the Church seemed to be assured. Valignano, therefore, devoted himself particularly to the problem of solidifying past gains and in this connection his first concern was for the development of a native clergy. Since Ieyasu had issued new Letters Patent in favor of the mission in Nagasaki (as also in Kyoto and Osaka), Nagasaki had once more become the mainstay of the Japanese missions. Both the College and the Jesuit novitiate were now situated there, and since Amakusa was awarded to an opponent of the Christians (Kato Kiyomasa) after the death of

Konishi, the Seminary was also transferred from Shiki (Amakusa) to Nagasaki. Since a large part of that city was destroyed by fire in 1601, however, and since the buildings of the seminary and college barely escaped destruction at that time, Valignano thought it best to move the seminary to Arima in the latter part of that year.

A number of students for the secular clergy had been permitted by Bishop Cerqueira to take up their residence in his house in 1600 and in the following year the Bishop was able to ordain the first two Japanese Jesuit priests, Sebastian Kimura and Louis Niabara. This must certainly have been a great consolation to Valignano after his long and persevering labors in favor of a Japanese clergy.

Nagasaki, the "Rome of Japan," now witnessed a splendid development of the religious life. In its heyday, it had a population of 40,000, all of them Christians. It was in 1601 that the Bishop was able for the first time to carry out the Holy Week ceremonies with their full solemnity and was able, on Holy Thursday, to administer Holy Communion to about 1,000 Catholics during the Pontifical High Mass. Shortly afterwards, steps were taken to erect a beautiful church which was to be dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady and was to serve also as a Cathedral for the Bishop.



#### **10. Xavier's and Valignano's Dream Land**

Prospects were certainly good for the Church in Japan when Valignano set sail on January 15, 1603, for Macao after having worked for the Japanese mission for 23 years. The rest of his life was spent in Macao, where he labored especially for the missions in China and died there on January 20, 1606, before seeing any really important results from his efforts on behalf of China.

When Valignano was named Visitor for Japan, the mission in that country was staffed with only 20 priests. At the time of his death, it had 60 priests (including two Japanese), 59 Brothers and Scholastics (48 of them Japanese), and 16 novices. In addition to this there were about 800 Japanese lay assistants including the so-called *Dōjuku* and *Kambō* as well as other lay-workers who received part salaries. For the training of youth, he had established two seminaries after the persecution of 1587), a novitiate and college (in Nagasaki) for the training of Japanese Jesuits and the nucleus of a seminary for the secular clergy, also in Nagasaki. The mission had a printing press in Nagasaki as well as a school of art and music. On each of his three visitations, Valignano had found the mission seriously imperiled for various reasons, and in each case his wisdom and prudence found a happy solution for the difficulties. One of the greatest glories of Valignano, however, was the fact that he was the great pioneer of adaptation for all of the Far Eastern missions. As the real organizer of the mission in Japan he also deserves a prominent place among the most important missionaries in this country next to the founder of this mission St. Francis Xavier. In the words of the well-known historian, Tacchi-Venturi, he was indeed a "Giant in the army of apostolic workers."

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<sup>1</sup>The Latin word *Visitor* was used in ecclesiastical circles to refer to an official visitor who is appointed by Church or Mission authorities to investigate one or more regions, with a specific mandate and special administrative powers.

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Fr. Hubert Cieslik, S.J. was born in 1914 and died in 1988. One of the most respected historians of Japanese Christianity, he has written numerous books and articles on Japanese Church in German, English, and Japanese. He wrote the present article for an English journal—now defunct. Fr. Cieslik's printed articles were collected by Francis Mathy, S.J., Ph.D. The digital version was prepared, edited, and composed for PDF by Francis Britto, S.J., Ph.D. Stamp images courtesy of Peter Fennessy, S.J.

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