MY VOYAGE AROUND THE WORLD
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A 16th CENTURY FLORENTINE MERCHANT
FIRST CHRONICLE OF THE EAST INDIES

In which is told the voyage from the Philippine Islands to those of Japan, and other notable things of that region

In the first, Western account, made to Your Serene Highness in six chronicles, I have recounted all the voyages that we made upon leaving Italy for Spain, and thence by way of the new Indies until our arrival in those Philippine Islands, the farthest boundary of the acquisitions made by the Castilians, who always reached the East by way of the West. And in them I also have made mention of every other detail remaining in a memory now aged by the passing of so many years in the abyss and confusion of so many things seen and done by me, one of which confuses the other.

Well, it may be that in this second account, in which my memory will be fresher, I can proceed with better recall of everything I did, saw, underwent, and observed during the voyages made through East India until I reached Europe again. And there will be more to tell of those voyages and regions because the Castilians had not imposed their yoke there, they being changers, not to say destroyers, of everything. And there, further, the natives of the region live and wholly maintain their ancient and indigenous customs and most of the rites and ceremonies of their human laws and superstitions. In dealing with them, then, I shall be speaking at length
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of everything that my memory of things seen will return to me—for the copious writing about them that I put together was lost, to my misfortune, together with all my goods of fortune. And if I had them now, they would be very dear to me because with them I could much better delight Your Serene Highness.

But as there is no remedy, I therefore shall begin to tell you of the voyage that we made from the Philippine Islands to those of Japan, for which place we embarked in the month of May in the year 1597 on a vessel of the sort that the Japanese call somme and which differ from ours in all respects. They carry sails made from the leaves of trees and other substances woven together in the manner of mats and then reinforced with stalks of split cane arranged in such a way that when they want to fur the sails, these fold up like a fan. They carry these attached to the mast in the manner of a flag, navigating with them as the Flemings in their boats navigate in the low countries of Holland and Zeeland. When they wish to unfurl the sails, they do so in the same way, heading the prow into the wind and letting the sail unfurl in a burst, violently, from the other direction, it being held by a single sheet attached to the ends of the sail in more than one place.

And they do the same with the foresail, which, however, is much smaller in proportion to that which we use on our ships. And by that rigging, without other sails, they navigate, but in much danger of being submerged because of their rudder, which in the slightest heavy sea is in danger of being broken, though so as to protect it from the waves and keep it from being damaged, they usually carry two large thick beams in the style of oars from one side to the other of the abovementioned rigging. In good weather, they lower these deep into the water, thus breaking up the waves of the sea.

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And these at the same time also sustain the vessel, which does not quiver so much. But often not even that suffices, and as soon as the rudder breaks, they must trim the mainsail, which has no shrouds and therefore cannot be left unfurled because of the great agitation of the craft.

And the mast also is in danger of being broken, as it is made very weakly and not tarred. Instead, they use a certain bitumen made of lime and oil with beaten oakum which, when it is all mixed together, they call seincui, and which is known throughout the Indies as galagala.* With it they smear the planking on the outside, and it makes a very hard and tenacious covering that protects the ships from the water and from the worms that the sea generates, which then cannot nibble at the planking. The anchors of these vessels are wooden, and the hawser are made of a very strong sort of witha that the Japanese call zii, the Manila people nescioco, and those of East India botta. These withes grow to great lengths on the trees and have nodes like those of cane every so often. They have a very hard skin, into which, when it is dry, it is very difficult to plunge a knife. Also, these withes being smooth, things slide over them and nothing clings to them any more than it can to a vitrified iling.

These withes, on the other hand, have a very tender pith, so that when they are broken open they split into four sections, like osiers, so that they can be stripped in this fashion and only the skin used, just as we use it to bind the staves of barrels. And they use these for fastening together whatever they wish. And when twisted together whole they make ropes of incredible strength that last a long time and do not rot even when always in the water—in which, like osiers, they turn green again and become stronger and easier to manipulate.

* Translator's note. Galagala actually is a Tagalog term for the Ambon pine and its resin.
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they make their voyages and navigations, as we did. Having navigated with great trouble because of the continuous calms that we met with for thirty days through that eastern gulf which stretches about one thousand miles from the Philippine Islands to those of Japan, we attained salvation and made port in the month of June of that same year 1597, in the place at which lies the city of Nagasaki, situated at a latitude of from thirty to thirty-two degrees toward the north.

When we were some distance off shore, it being toward evening and with no breath of wind stirring, from that port came out a large number of boats, of the sort that they call jumee, to carry us ashore. Those boats are entirely different from ours. And where we, when rowing, move the oar toward the prow, hold it there, and then dip it back into the water, and face the poop when sitting down, they do not, while rowing, otherwise move the oar or even dip it into the water or sit down. But with their faces toward the sea, standing up on the edge of the boat, their backs toward one another, the oars always in the water and looking like so many feet attached to the two sides of the boat as it comes over the sea boundingly, they come, pushing along swiftly. And while they row, they sing happy sailors' songs, to the sound of which we entered into the aforementioned port of Nagasaki.

In the morning, before we set foot on the land, ministers of justice came by command of the governor of that region, so as to search among all the sailors, passengers, and merchants for certain earthenware vases that often are brought there from the Philippine Islands and other places in that sea. By order of Japan, these must, under pain of death, be showed by anyone who has them, as the King wishes to buy them all. Who ever would believe it? And it is the truth nonetheless, and had I not seen it on my arrival there, I should not dare to recount it to Your Serene Highness. Those vases

into whatever shape one may wish. And when they are green and in the water, it never is possible for them to break, neither as the result of twisting nor from pulling. And because they are so strong and flexible, the Christians are forbidden, under pain of excommunication, to use them for beating or whipping their slaves.

In navigating, those people do not make use of either maps or astrolabes. They have the science of the winds, and they use the magnet and the compass differently than we do, though making use of the two chief materials—that is, the magnet and the iron. They place these in an earthenware bowl full of salt water, which they change often. Then they put the bowl into a round wooden box, on the top of which certain characters are written in a circle as denoting all the principal winds. In order to determine these and thus be able to direct their course as they need, they place in the bowl, when it is full of water, a very thin leaf of iron just about the size of a fly's wing, sharp at one side and blunt at the other. One of the parts being touched with the stone as it floats upon the surface, the leaf turns about and faces toward that part which, by natural secret and virtue, God has permitted—that is, toward the north.

In that way they distinguish among the winds and guide their navigations without other instruments, making use only of knowledge of the earth. And, taking soundings, they make observations by them and by the writings that other pilots have left behind as to the place where they can be according to the quality of the sand or gravel or any other sort of bottom that they bring up with the lead that they have let down. They know nothing of astrolabes for determining the height of the sun, nor of Jacob's staff for the sun and for the stars, nor of degrees, nor of the equinocial line, nor of charts for putting down the ship's course day by day. Nonetheless,
often are worth five, six, or ten thousand scudi each, though ordinarily one would not say that they were worth a guilio, and the reason is that they have the property of preserving unspoiled—and for nine, ten, and twenty years—a certain leaf that they call cha.*

This leaf is produced by a plant that grows almost like that of the box tree except that its leaves are three times as large and it remains green throughout the year. And it has a fragrant flower in the shape of a damask rose. From its leaves they make a powder that they then mix with hot water—which they continually have on the fire for this purpose, in an iron cauldron—and then drink it daily, more as a medicine than for its taste. It has a somewhat bitter flavor, so that one then washes out the mouth. Upon those who take it good and favorosome, it produces a very good effect and relieves the stomach weakness because of its warmth. It marvelously assists digestion and is especially excellent for lightening and impeding the fumes that rise to the head. And for that reason it customarily is drunk immediately after the midday meal, when one feels full of too much wine; and drinking it after supper brings on sleep. In sum, the uses of drinking this cha are so many that one never enters a house without being offered it in a friendly way, out of good manners, as a matter of custom to honor the guests, as they do with wine in the regions of Flanders and Germany.

These people also have abundant wine made of rice, and they drink it and offer it to be drunk after first heating it at a fire until it is more than tepid. And with it they honor their friends, giving them each a cup, then one after the other making toasts, the head of the household beginning with the most honored stranger who has come to visit him. And in this matter they are most particular. The wine is made of rice, which is cooked in the steam from water being boiled in a cauldron. After it is cooked, they mix into it flowers of ashes and let it stand that way until it becomes musty. This, the winery part, so to speak, they add to other rice cooked in the same way, but without the addition of ashes and not musty, and then place the entire mixture in a vat with water, where it ferments for some days. And then they filter it through certain cloth bags. In that way they make a strong and tasteful wine. And so as to give it more flavor, they add another sort of herb of great value. But that is not common to all, and is done only for the wine of the rich, who keep its secret for themselves. It is so volatile that it intoxicates very easily, and the wine can be kept for a long time. They also distill this same decoction in an alembic and produce a wine like aqua vitae, very good to taste.

But, to return to the abovementioned cha, besides the many special properties that they attribute to it, they say that the older the leaf is, the better it is. But they have great difficulty in preserving it for a long period and keeping it in its prime condition, as they do not find containers, not even of gold or silver or other metals, which are good for this purpose. It seems a superstition, and yet it is true, that it is preserved well only in the aforesaid vases made simply of a clay that has this virtue. But they are few and very well known to those people, who recognize them by certain signs and characters in antique lettering, which show them to be of ancient manufacture. They are not to be found today except as they were made many hundreds of years ago and are brought from the kingdoms of Cambay, and of Siam and Cochin China and from the islands, Philippine and other, of that sea. These vases generally are found among those which they have made at a value of three or four soldi each, and many merchants have become rich on them, especially those who have profited

* Translator's note. Tea.
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from carrying some of the ones that have the virtue, or it may be a superstition, of preserving the chia. And it is the truth that the king of this Japan and all the other princes of the region have an infinite number of these vases, which they regard as their principal treasure, esteeming them more than anything else of value. And out of vainglory and for grandeur they make a contest of who possesses the larger quantity of them, displaying them to one another with the greatest satisfaction.

After those ministers of justice had made their search for these vases, we were immediately given a license permitting us to land. And we found a difference in reckoning the days between us, who had come from the city of Manila, and the Portuguese who had come from that of Macao, an island of China. Those Portuguese, having left Lisbon and navigated constantly eastward, had reached Japan as the farthest point of their journeying. During their voyage, the sun having risen for them constantly earlier, they had gained twelve hours of a natural day. We, on the contrary, having left the port of Sanlúcar de Barrameda in Spain and navigated steadily westward and having lost daylight constantly because the sun kept rising later, had lost twelve hours. So when we discussed it with them, we found that we had reached a difference of one day. And when they said that it was Sunday, we counted up to Saturday. I had pursued my voyage around the entire world without having met those Portuguese, by the time of my arrival in Europe, whence I first had departed, I should have lost exactly a whole day of twenty-four hours.

For I, having moved constantly from the east toward the west, changing meridians and therefore making the day later for myself, would have encountered this difference of one day as caused, as I have said, by the later or earlier rising and setting of the sun in the diverse meridians, which continue changing daily for those who navigate toward the east and toward the west. And it is true that in the Philippine Islands on that same day when the Spaniards and their Church are celebrating Holy Saturday, those who are in Japan—that is, the Portuguese and their Church—are eating meat, because for them it is the Day of the Resurrection. So that if they were moving swiftly enough to reach Manila the next day, as is said to have happened to some navigators, they would celebrate the same Easter or other solemnity twice. And if they were to arrive on the day when those people celebrate the feast, it would befall them to return on Holy Saturday. On the other hand, if those from Manila should set out on the day when they solemnize Christmas and reach the island of Macao, where the Portuguese are, they would find those others at the second feast of Saint Stephen, and thus would celebrate one and another solemnity on the same day. And if they were able to arrive on the day before Christmas by their count, they would be able to eat meat without having fasted on that preceding day.

And this suffices for knowledge of that occurrence, perhaps not better understood earlier because the world had not been circumnavigated in olden times as it now is traveled around by value and virtue of the two crowns of Castile and Portugal, who have showed the way, the former navigating toward the east and reaching China and Japan, the other toward the west and reaching these Philippine Islands, about one thousand miles from the island of Macao in China, the residence of the Portuguese. Together, those two crowns have come to make a circle around the whole world, a thing that certainly is worthy of being much exalted and praised in those two nations, with the languages of which, and by means of whose navigations, anyone can enter into that magnificent
enterprise and in less than four years go around the entire universe both by way of the East Indies and by way of the West, as I should have done had I not been held up in one place for a year and elsewhere for much more, in spite of which I did not use up more time than from the year 1594, when I left Spain, to that of 1602, when I reached Zeeland. But whoever wishes to make this voyage more easily and safely should depart from Spain, embarking with the fleet that goes to the West Indies in the month of July. Thus he will reach the City of Mexico and thence go that same year to embark at the port of Acapulco on the ships that depart for the Philippine Islands in the month of March, having consumed nine months up to that time. Thence, if he has reached the aforesaid islands, he will be enabled in the May of the next year to embark for Japan, fourteen months of time having elapsed by then. Then, in October of that same year—or, at the latest, in the following March—he will be able to find passage for the island of Macao, Chinese land, on the ships of the Portuguese. And that will be five months or, at the most, ten. From Macao, by means of the same or other ships, one passes to East India in the month of November or December after the aforementioned October, and one arrives at Goa in the month of March of the next year, which would be five months more. Thence, in that same year, it is possible to go to Lisbon on the ships that come out from Portugal, which leave Goa in the month of December or January and arrive six months after their departure. So that will in total be fifteen or sixteen months, which, if put together with the others—nine, fourteen, five, five, and sixteen—will make up the abovementioned four years. This is always supposing that the traveler finds the aforesaid accommodations of passage, as ordinarily he will. However, anyone wanting to wait for a ship that will navigate the entire distance, passing through the Strait of Magellan, located in fifty-two degrees of the Antarctic part, will be able to make the voyage and circle the entire world in less than eighteen months. For from Spain to the Indies of Mexico one goes in three months, from Acapulco to the Philippines in another three months, from the Philippines to Japan in one month, from Japan to Macao in half a month, from Macao in China to Goa in three months, and from this Goa of the Indies to Lisbon in six months. So that in making this entire circle voyage, one does not put in more than sixteen and one-half months of sailing. And so much the less if one sets out to make the voyage direct—that is, from Spain by passing through the abovementioned Strait of Magellan and directing one's way toward the Moluccas, and from there navigating toward the Cape of Good Hope and thence to Spain, as was done by the ship Victoria of Ferdinand Magellan when he discovered that Strait in the year 1520.

But to return to the matter of our debarking at the city of Nagasaki, we went immediately to see the spectacle of those poor (as regards this world) six monks of Saint Francis, of the discaled Spanish order, who had been crucified with twenty other Japanese Christians—among them three who had donned the habit of the Jesuits—on the fifth of the month of February of that same year, 1597. They all remained whole up on the crosses placed on the top of a mountain that is an arquebus shot from the city. The crosses were made like that one on which our Redeemer was crucified, but each additionally had a piece of wood in the middle of the shaft or trunk and emerging from the back; the suffering one was placed astride this, which thus helped to hold up the body. At the feet, furthermore, there was a piece of wood across, resembling the crosspiece above, but not so large. And to it
the feet were fastened, with the legs apart. And instead of
nails they used iron straps hammered into the wood and hold-
ing the wrists, the neck, and the legs close to the feet.

Or they bind the entire body with ropes and keep the
cross on the ground while attaching the body to it in one
manner or another, stretching the victim out over it. And
once he has been settled there, they at once raise the cross,
putting its foot into a specially dug hole, which they fill with
earth and stones so that the cross will stand firm and solid.
When that has been done, the judge—who in that country
is by custom present at the carrying out of justice—orders
the executioner to pierce the crucified victim. And the lance,
being inserted through the right side and passing out through
the left, transfixes the heart and emerges through the back of
the left shoulder, passing through the entire body from side
to side. Many times there are two executioners, each with a
lance, one operating from one side, the other from the other.
And their lances, crossing, emerge at the two shoulders simulta-
neously, and thus take away life instantly. But if, as some-
times happens, the victim does not die from those two first
lancings, they return to wound him in the throat or, from be-
hind, in the left side corresponding to the heart. And then
he dies quickly.

That is the manner of crucifixion in Japan. But they also
leave some alive on the crosses, to die by themselves of pri-
vation or hunger, and they do this according to the crimes.
Also, they similarly crucify women with babies still nursing
at their breasts, so that both the one and the other die of
privation. A form of justice no less cruel than barbarian, it
being their custom to punish for the misdeeds of one per-
son all of the family in his house, and often also all of his
relatives. And in some cases, such as that of a fire that de-
struys houses or other things or that of abominations, they

punish and inflict suffering upon the neighbors of whoever
has committed the evil, these together with him. In my time
they crucified many for the smallest things—for merely hav-
ing stolen a root or some other like trifle certainly not worth
the death of men—to which, in this case, they give no more
thought than we give to killing flies. And along all the streets
and roads in that country one sees nothing, on one side or the
other, but crosses full of men, of women, or of children or
even babies, not to mention those whose heads have been
cut off, who make up an infinite number.

And upon the bodies, once they are dead, they test their
scimitars, which they call catane. These they hold in such
account and esteem that when they are discovered—as often
happens—to be of the kind that can cut a man in two at
one stroke or slice cleanly through a thigh or leg or arm, they
have a high money value. To make these tests, those men go
where justice has been visited upon someone. And as soon as
the executioner has cut off the victim's head, they take the
body and, undressing it, place it on a mound of heaped-up
earth which is long and wide enough to accommodate the
body, which they there stretch out on its side. And so that
it will stay in place and not roll over, they put stakes around
it on one side and the other, to hold it. And then the leader
of those men, often the very one who has carried out the
justice, having quickly drawn his sword from its sheath and
grasped it in both hands, tests to discover whether or not in
one blow—which he adjusts and arranges to deliver with
all his force—he can cut right through that body. He suc-
sceeds in doing that only on the rarest occasions. Then,
quickly examining the sword, they see whether or not it re-
 mains intact. And those scimitars are upbraided or praised
according to the one condition or the other. And conse-
quently many of them bring twenty or thirty thousand scudos
apiece. And many other men try them out, some on a thigh, some on a shin, some on an arm. So that in minutes the entire body has become shreds. And these are left there as food for dogs and birds. And thus that entertainment is over, which among us would be a cruelty to make one's hairs bristle. And yet they do it all for amusement without its seeming to them anything repugnant or at all debasing.

But to return to the monks and other Christians who were crucified in the way already described, for a better understanding of this deed it is necessary that I tell Your Serene Highness how those islands of Japan are the most easterly that are to be found on this globe of the world, being situated at the farthest end of Asia between the equinoctial line and the Arctic pole, in from thirty to thirty-six degrees of latitude. And it is said of them that in longitude they are more or less 900 miles across. The largest of all those islands has a length of 750 miles and a width of 180 miles, and it is said to be divided into fifty-five kingdoms or lordships. The other two islands contain eleven of these lordships, though all of them together have the name of kingdoms and are full of very large cities and unnumbered people.

It is a country pleasant to the sight and very fertile in rice, and also in wheat and every other sort of grain, and in vegetables and fruit native both to that region and to ours. Among these things are, in particular, citrus fruits like oranges, including those which are eaten with the whole skin like our lemons and are called cunches; there is also another sort, so tiny that one can eat them in one mouthful, as one eats cherries, and these seem rather to be small lemons and are eaten similarly, with the rind, and they are delicious when prepared as sweetmeats. We, being in that country and writing to this one, sent hither seeds of those, as well as of others, so that they might be given to Your Serene Highness,
as was done. But later I learned that from among them only one has grown, the one planted by Francesco Capponi, and that from it other plants have been made, but that up to now no one has seen them produce any fruit. That is because the seed of citrus fruit is born wild and must be grafted with those of plants already producing.

They also have pears, almost all of one species, very good and heavy and juicy and having a skin so thin that to peel them is very difficult. And these too are prepared in conserve with sugar and are very good, as also are the peaches and apricots. The grape is seen but little, except for those seen as decoration on trellises or as the religious sometimes make a bit of wine for the service of their Masses. They also have melons, which have seeds like ours, but in all other ways are very different, both in shape and in skin, both in flavor and in quality. They almost can be eaten with their rind, which, when they are ripe, cracks open and is so thin that they can be cleaned and skinned like an onion. Instead of cutting them lengthwise in slices, they cut them across in small disks, as we cut cucumbers. And in that way they eat them with the seed and the flower, holding that otherwise they have no flavor, the taste being in the flower, which is of a sourness that tempers the rest of the melon, which in itself is insipid and tasteless.

All the other fruits—melons, cucumbers, and grapes excepted—they eat more willingly unripe than mature. And they prepare many of the green ones with salt, as we prepare olives, and they last throughout the year. That country entirely lacks olives, but has nearly all the sorts of vegetables that our country has, especially turnips and radishes of such marvelous size that three or four of them weigh a man down (and I have seen displayed, and have taken into my hands, some of them that were as thick as a man's thigh), and those
are of a very sweet flavor and tender. They make salads by breaking them up and by cutting them lengthwise very carefully. And they are very tasteful to eat. The leaves, put into salt and then taken out and dried, are used throughout the year, and particularly in winter, for making soups as mixed with many other kinds of vegetables which are also salted and dried. With these they prepare both fresh and dried fish, their common and usual food. And fish are so abundant as to be worth almost nothing, and they often eat them raw, passing them through vinegar first. They have certain large and very bloody fish, which are very good to eat but which cause many people in those countries to be sick with Saint Lazarus's Evil.*

They prepare various sorts of dishes from fish, which they flavor with a certain sauce of theirs which they call mish. It is made of a sort of bean that abounds in various localities, and which—cooked and mashed and mixed with a little of that rice from which they make the wine already mentioned, and then left to stand as packed into a tub—turns sour and all but decays, taking on a very sharp, piquant flavor. Using this a little at a time, they give flavor to their foods, and they call shiso what we would call a potage or gravy. They make this as I have said, of vegetables and fruit and fish all mixed together, and even of some game, and then eat it with rice, which serves them as bread and is cooked simply in water and served in certain wooden bowls lacquered with red lacquer, eating it very cleanly and never touching it with their hands.

For they eat everything by using two small sticks, made in a round shape and blunted, the length of a man's hand and as thick as a feather for writing. These are made of wood or silver or gold, and they call them fasbe. They take them in their hands between the thumb and the index finger, getting a grip first on one of the sticks with the end of the fourth or the middle finger, on the other stick with the aforesaid fingers. Then, by moving the latter, they adjust and put together the ends of the two sticks, with which they can pick up anything, no matter how tiny it is, very cleanly and without soiling their hands. For that reason they do not use tablecloths or napkins or even knives, as everything comes to the table minutely cut up and brought to them in certain square lacquered trays on which they put the plates and bowls full of food and of rice—which they call mesbi when it is cooked and come when it is raw.

When they want to eat it, they bring the bowl it is in close to their mouth and then, with those two sticks, are able to fill their mouth with marvelous agility and swiftness. They always drink the wine hot, whether in summer or in winter, taking it in small sips and enjoying it much more than we enjoy drinking a bowl of broth. And that wine often intoxicates them. They also have cattle, but among both the gentiles and the Christians they eat meat very little because of a certain superstition of theirs. Nor do they drink milk, feeling for it some of the disgust that we should feel upon drinking fresh blood. And they make use of cattle only for carrying loads of wood and other things. They have chickens like ours, and very cheap, they not being worth more than one or two centes each. They also have both domesticated and wild swine, and the largest boar is worth no more than one scudo. The same value is put upon a goat, but neither the boar nor the goat is very good for eating. I think that this is because of the abundance of them and from not knowing how to take care of them. And there I also saw thrushes, which I ate at one quadrinpo* each, but which I had neither
seen nor eaten earlier in other parts of the Indies. Similarly, I found very good pheasants. But their low price and the abundance of them made it seem to me that they were not as well esteemed as among us, they not being worth more than one cruzia each. And often I bought seven or eight of them for a little piece of silver (of which they have very rich mines) of the weight and value of one giulio.

With this silver, without otherwise making it into money, but just by cutting it into pieces that they weigh out on certain scales made like steelyards, they buy whatever they need. True, they also have certain copper moneys, which they call cach and which are carried threaded onto a cord so that they can be spent with greater ease and comfort. And they give ten of these for a piece of silver weighing one condorino, of which it takes ten to make one mais. And ten mais make one tael, which about corresponds in value to eleven Spanish reales—let us say one Florentine scudo, or a little more. That same method of counting also serves them for measures, which they divide into cach, condorino, mais, and tael. Finally, those islands are very fertile in everything and have great quantities of domesticated and wild waterfowl and of every other kind of game bird, especially turtledoves like ours and of exquisite goodness. They also have a variety with yellow feathers, but these are not as good because of having flesh that is somewhat bitter in flavor. And they kill all these with the arquebus, getting each of them with a single ball, so that in this they can be called good marksmen.

One could pass one's life very happily and with very little expenditure in those islands, and he who has a thousand scudos there is better off than he can be in these regions with ten thousand. And if that land were cultivated as ours is, with

olives—a few of which the Jesuit Fathers have introduced, and which do well there—and if they would do the same with vines, which they have only as decoration on their trellises, life would be much more abundant there. But those people, given over wholly to war, leave everything else to one side and provide themselves only with rice, which is their sustenance. And even though they have wheat, they do not make bread, though they eat it cooked into little cakes among the ashes and embers, as well as in various other ways. But most of it, made into flour by small wheels that they themselves turn with one hand, is sent out of the country, mostly being taken to be sold in the Philippine Islands, in the city of Manila, where Spaniards live who buy it to make it into bread.

At the time when I reached that kingdom, the universal overlord was Taiao Sama,* who also was called Quan, Bacco, Dono, and—earlier, when he had been a soldier and a private—Fashiba. Later he became the tyrant of all that region, though he was not a born king or even of royal blood. He reached that position by violence of arms and by his own valor, having at another period been in a rustic state and a vile, poor condition. Then, having become a soldier, he reached a captaincy. Then, in the army of King Nobunanga,† he became the King's general. And when had fortune and ruin befall his King, he took the remnants of the army and, guided by better fortune, turned his back upon those of the opposition party, who had seemed to be winning, and conquered them all. He alone remained as conqueror, and made

* Translator's note. A quadririo, so called because looked upon as equal to four denari or piccioli, was one-sixtieth of a Tuscan lira.
† Translator's note. Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582) was the acting shogun during the last fourteen years of his life. He destroyed the Buddhist power and was himself assassinated.
himself monarch of seventy-six kingdoms, all of which he reduced to his devotion and command, to obedience under his scepter. And he governed and stabilized them by employing various sorts of prudent tyranny.

First he ordered slain all those of the royal blood who could lay any claim to that monarchy. Also, he transferred almost all those lordships and kingdoms reciprocally, giving dominion over some to other lords, depriving some of their territories altogether in order to give the dominion to other men dependent upon him. But what was most helpful to him in benefiting and claiming the kingdom at the same time was that, using those very armaments and forces which had helped him to take over the King's empire, he sent them out of the kingdom to provoke a war—unjust and lacking any other cause or reason—in a peninsula that some say is joined to the mainland of China (others say that it is separated from China by a little arm of the sea which surrounds it entirely, passing between terra firma and this island). It is commonly called Korea, and the Chinese call it Chosen or even Fowshem. And it meets the mainland in the northwest, where lies the province of Peckin. The ocean is to the east of it, and on the south the islands of Japan are so near that from the last of them, called Coto, near which are also Ishu and Tsushima, one can reach it in little boats in a few hours.

At the war they always had an army of more than 300,000 men, partly on foot and partly on horseback. They mount their horses from the right side, placing the foot in a stirrup of strange shape on which they put the weight of the heel. And they hold the bridle with both hands in the manner of a halter, pulling first on one side and then on the other, the reins being made of a silk or cotton cord, with a very simple iron bit in the horse's mouth. When they are in com-

bat, they tie or attach the bridle to the breastband, and when they want to direct the horse, steer it here and there with their body, managing their weapons with their hands. The weapons are arquebuses, lances, bows and arrows, and scimitars, of which last they carry two or three at their belt, one of them larger and one smaller, in the manner of daggers.

And as in Japan it is the custom that the lords of the lands are obliged to the supreme king, to carry out his every command, to be ready and prepared with their vassals for every occurrence or need of war—the vassals in turn being obliged to these lords or, as we might say, rulers—he sent nearly all of them to the undertaking in Korea. They were given to understand that as soon as they had taken the first seacoast places and forced a free entry, he would come there in person with the rest of his people to drive ahead in victory and conquer by that route all the Great Kingdom of China. And through this invented story, which was believed, he destroyed that foreign land, entirely innocent of having offended him, and assured that his own country should remain pacified.

The region of Korea is divided into nine provinces. They are Chosen, capital of that kingdom and the name of the royal city, Kienki, Conlun, Honhel, Chitaba, Hlentsion, Tionchian, Hankien, and the last, called Plankin. Out of these provinces—that is, of the more maritime ones—they brought an infinite number of men and women, boys and girls, of every age, and they all were sold as slaves at the very lowest prices. I bought five of them for little more than twelve scudos. Having had them baptized, I took them with me to Goa in India, and there set them free. I brought one of them with me to Florence, and I think that today he is to be found in Rome, where he is known as Antonio.

In that war, which lasted for many years, the Koreans did badly unless they were helped by the Chinese, to whom the
Koreans—though they have their own king—pay some tribute each year. Besides the uncounted numbers of people who were destroyed in one place or another, most of the Japanese lords and rulers were ruined. Many of them dying without children and without heirs, that king or tyrant confiscated their lands and estates. And from many others he confiscated their goods because of the smallest errors that they had committed in the war—for which reason he never would grant them the license that would enable them to return home, under pain of offense against his prerogative. And thus, as both the war and the lords of the land were outside the kingdom, the tyrant did what he wished, without any hindrance.

And at the time the conversion of new Christians advanced very slowly, this king having felt some vexation toward the Society of Jesus, members of which are found throughout all those kingdoms. From them especially he had taken the city of Nagasaki, which had been granted to them. And he had destroyed their church and taken its lumber, which was very well worked for use in a building of his own. And, finally, he had prohibited that their Rule be preached any longer, finding it not appropriate in that region, it being neither fitting nor good for his vassals. However, this king did not believe in any sect, and he often used to say that laws and religions had been founded only to regulate men and force them to live with modesty and civility, and for no other purpose, he believing firmly that after the body's death there is no other spirit or life that is immortal or eternal. By now he will have become aware, though very late and past all remedy, of his barbarian bestiality, there in the Inferno, where he is at present to be found, having died later in that error.

Returning again to the matter of the Christians crucified at Nagasaki, I say that while the abovementioned king reigned, at the very time of the war in Korea, there came from the Philippine Islands to that kingdom, in the year 1598, four monks of the order of Saint Francis, those who in Spain are called "discalced." They arrived as ambassadors that the city of Manila was sending to the King of Japan with letters from the governor of the Philippine Islands. This embassy having been brought to him and the aforementioned monks having presented to him what they had brought, they asked for permission to go elsewhere in the country, and especially to see the city of Miako,* the capital of all that kingdom. And that permission was granted to them. And, what was more, they were assigned a little house at court until they should depart, and provisions for living.

There they began to preach the Evangel and to baptize, giving no thought to returning to Manila, whence they had come for this purpose. Also, others of the same order came from the same place, having the same desire and zeal, and the will to establish their holy religion there and throughout the whole kingdom and to perpetuate there the name of the blessed Saint Francis. And when they had begun to preach, perhaps with more fervor than was fitting in that land, the people flocked to these new ministers of those Most Holy Mysteries and Sacraments, which they all celebrated with much charity and devotion. And they were prohibited from administering them under pain of excommunication, which the bishop of the Jesuit Fathers pronounced against them by virtue of a brief conceded to him by Pope Gregory XIII, which says that no one but the Jesuits can enter that kingdom to preach the Evangel, under the aforementioned pain of excommunication.

To that thing the good Fathers replied that they were not

*Translator's note. The ancient name of the imperial capital, later known as Kyōto.
subject, saying that they had another brief, from Sixtus V, which conceded to their religious the right to go anywhere throughout the world to preach Christ Crucified, and that it made no exception of one land or another. Therefore, and not feeling that their coming and going were subject to the aforesaid prohibition by Pope Gregory XIII, they went on with the prayers already begun and continued to teach that which Our Lord Jesus Christ taught and said with His mouth to His Apostles, who took it and taught it throughout the world. And though the King of Japan knew about all these travels by the monks, he nonetheless pretended not to. But the incident that occurred, involving the loss of a ship, made him do what, in the opinion of those whose passions are not involved in this, he would never have done otherwise.

The lost ship was coming from the Philippine Islands and going, as was usual, to New Spain loaded with rich merchandise from China and commanded and lorded over by Spaniards. Because of a contrary wind, and because, further, of having broken their rudder, they found themselves at the islands of Japan. And the ship was forced to save itself by approaching the land, having developed a list. And it came to shore on the island of Sicco, there where the famous city of Tosa is. As soon as King Taico Sama learned of this, he at once decided upon the way to take possession of it, which he did with the authority of his laws, which condemn as lost everything on any ship that, by fortune of the sea, wanting to save those aboard or out of some other necessity, comes to grief or arrives crippled on the shores or in the harbors of his kingdom. But that law seemed very strange and rigorous to the Spaniards who were traveling on that ship, so that they could not rest under its application or accommodate themselves to losing such riches.

They therefore began taking their case to the Franciscan monks who were at the King's court in the city of Miaco, thinking of them as a possible means for moderating such an impiety. The monks, who believed themselves to have some friendship with the King—as, in fact, they did appear to have—gladly intervened, moved by charity and by love of their country and their nation, then found in that misery. And they began to pray for them, not failing to perform any good office whatsoever so that their things should not be confiscated. This was the beginning of their being persecuted to death. The King much disclaimed their saying that the merchandise belonged mostly to their brethren who were in the city of Manila, which they had said so as the better to support the cause. And the King became angry because of that, the reason being that they were asking for what he already counted upon as his own. And he became enraged, saying:

"How does it come about, then, that these monks, who say that they are so poor, now say that the stuff from this ship is theirs? Certainly I say that they must be men of evil affairs, false and deceitful. Further, I have commanded and prohibited their impertinent religion. I know perfectly well that, despite that, they have taught it and have converted many to Christianity. And they have stayed at this court and in everything acted contrarily. For that reason, they having acted contrary to my will, I now will and command that they be taken prisoners and crucified, together with all who have accepted their religion, in the city of Nagasaki."

To that sentence, which the King gave out of his own mouth, no one answered. And what he had commanded was carried out. Thus were put up on crosses the aforementioned six monks, with twenty Japanese who were
familiaris of their House, among whom were three Brothers of the Society of Jesus (two of whom put on their habits at the hour when they were taken out to be crucified). And they all gave their lives together for love of Jesus Christ, in the first year of keiko on the twentieth of the eleventh moon, counting in the Japanese way. They divide the year into thirteen moons, beginning with the moon of March, so that this proved to be the fifth day of the month of February of the year 1597, when they were crucified. And though this event was accompanied by the occurrence of many other events and misfortunes that it would take too long to recount, nevertheless it was the most powerful cause of that persecution which almost extended to all that new Christianity of the Jesuits and to their own persons. But God later freed them from it in His Divine Wisdom, so that the fruits that they had created and were creating in that region might not be lost—the conversion of so many souls to Christ.

But in my time they all were fugitives and the churches all were closed. And with their habits exchanged for Japanese clothing, they were creeping around all the islands in an attempt to maintain and increase the number of Christians, who at that time numbered more than 300,000, with 25,000 or 30,000 more being baptized every year. Now that that region has been bathed in the blood of those religious and of other crucified Christians, that they will increase each day is not to be doubted. While I was in that city of Nagasaki, which was populated wholly by Japanese Christians and had a very few houses of Portuguese merchants, who were remaining there under the rule of that King, the sufferers were taken down from the crosses. And each of them was given a proper burial, even though from many of them—and especially from the religious—many of their members, and chiefly their heads, had been taken, this despite the fact that there had been guards and despite the fact that prohibitions by the King and by the Jesuit bishop of those Christians had forbidden their being touched under grave penalty. But devotion was able to accomplish much more than the excommunications and punishments of the royal justice that had condemned them to death, and which could have been carried out if it had been desired. But all pretended not to see—it being the case in Japan that very few things can be done that remain unknown to the exquisite vigilance that rules throughout those cities.

The ends of the streets all are closed by gates. These being shut at night, they also have guards who let no one pass who will not give his name and tell where he is going and who is not well known to them. Further, each street has its captain—or, as we should say, elder—who is obliged to keep track of all the others who live in it. And if some mischief is committed there, he must give the explanation and place any delinquent in the hands of justice. The nearest neighbors are required to do that also when some mischief takes place near their houses. And all the houses of this city of Nagasaki are made of wood worked with each artifice that, because all the materials have been worked out to the design and measure first, a house can be erected in two days.

To hold up the timbers, they secure them at the bottom with large stones as a base, half being left underground and the rest left uncovered, so that the wood will not rot. Then they place the crossbeams, which are fitted into the aforesaid timbers. And on them they build the scaffolding to which they attach the walls of the rooms, which they then cover with a certain sort of wood that, like pine, can be split into pieces. Then they put these together with small nails so that they may serve instead of tiles and roofing when they are placed one on top of the other so that they cover the
chinks and no water can enter in. Of these living quarters, in the space of a single hall or room, they make other apartments by partitioning off and erecting a sort of large variety of pictures. Depicting various things, these open and shut like a fan in relation to folds and to the corners that they have when they are stood upright on the earth and opened.

At the corners these stand up, making a most beautiful sight. And if there are several people in a room, they have the virtue that, besides the pleasure that they give with the sight of various paintings of different birds and flowers and animals and other fantasies all gallantly colored in fresco and all decorated with gold, they also keep you from being seen by the others, as the pictures rise to a man’s height. And these also are placed around the bed, where they have the same effect—that a man is not seen—and at the same time they ornament and delight, especially when the paintings are beautiful. Similarly, they can be used for ornamenting and decorating the walls of the rooms. And in that case they are pulled out and opened to their full expense, being leaned against the walls, where they make an admirable and happy sight. The Japanese call these pictures ibobus. They are made of many leaves compressed together, like cardboard, and are stuck together on wooden squares along the edges, so that the middles remain hollow. And the two sides are painted differently. And they may also be made of raw silk cloth, like veiling, so beautifully and richly worked that these often are each worth one hundred scudos, two hundred, and more. But the ordinary ones, which are very handsome as the common ornaments of their houses, are valued at from five to ten scudos each.

Because the houses are always in danger from fire, they have guards in all the streets. And these go about crying out all night: “Be careful with fire!” And when fire attacks one house, it often burns up the whole city, as happened in Nagasaki, which was burned up all at once. And that king, Taico Sama, ordered in many places that the owner of the first house to be attacked by fire should be crucified together with all of his family. But that law is not kept now. The people live in these houses in a very clean way, covering the floors in all their rooms with certain straw pads two fingers thick, four arms long, and two arms wide, and covering these with mats of grass the color of fine straw, resembling that we use for making hats. This grass grows in the water, like rushes, and they call it yo-yo. And they make use of these pads and mats as beds, placing many of them one on top of the other for sleeping, until they become more or less an arm high. They use no other bedclothing. And instead of feather cushions and pillows, they place under their head a piece of wood or something else no less solid. When the pads, which they call sutami, are of the best sort, they may be valued at as much as one hundred or one hundred and fifty scudos each. But the ordinary ones can be found at all prices, as can the grass mats, and for as little as two giulii each.

And on them they sit like the Turks, and always walk on them without shoes, but with cloth slippers or with half-boots of goatskin, which they wear like gloves, with an opening between the two largest fingers of each foot. And these are worn by both men and women to reach halfway up the leg. When they enter rooms, they always leave their shoes at the house door if they are strangers. And the owners of the house leave theirs at the exits from their rooms or bedrooms and in the passageways. Their shoes are made entirely of a single straw sole of strands twined together, or perhaps of leather, with a thong fastened to the ends of both sides of the sole, which