

寵臣

”CHŌSHIN,
A Samurai General”

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Translated by: Ryoko Popjoy

Translator's Notes:

(1) The abundant footnotes in the story are provided by the translator.

(2) The translator suggests that the non-Japanese readers view the 4-page
<Brief Background of 'Chōshin'> doc., provided at the end of the story.

The following is a letter Father Baltazar de Torres, a Jesuit missionary priest from Spain, sent from Nagasaki, Japan to his home monastery in Toledo, Spain, in 1615.

Father Torres is a Spaniard, born of a noble family of Granada. He joined the Jesuits at the monastery of Okana, Spain, when he was sixteen. He completed his training at Navalcarnero, a training facility of the Toledo Province. He was then sent to preach in India and Macao. After several years of missionary work in those countries, he came to Japan in 1600, the year of the Battle of Sekigahara¹. He managed the affairs of the missionaries at the missionary posts in Kyoto and Osaka, while traveling to the remote Hokuetsu Territory, endeavoring to propagate Christian faith.

During the Siege of Osaka², Summer Campaign, Father Torres was in Osaka Castle. After the fall of the Castle, he escaped the enemy and found his way to Sakai. There he was tended to by a man called Hayashi Yasaburō. The story Yasaburō told him takes up most of Father Torres' letter sent to his home monastery in Spain.

Chapter 1

"To the Reverend Antonio de Morales, the Monastery of St. Catalina, Toledo.

At the missionary post in Nagasaki, on the Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception, in the month of December, 1615.

Dear Reverend Morales:

There was a showdown six months ago between the young prince³ at Osaka and the Shōgun, both of whom had long been pitted against each other. The old Shōgun came out the victor. I believe the details of this battle are known to you from Reverend Francisco's report. Many a

¹ The great battle fought on October 21, 1600, on the Sekigahara Plains of Mino Province, between the East Army of Tokugawa Ieyasu (virtual ruler of Japan at the time) and the allied forces of anti-Tokugawa Daimyō (feudal lords), the West Army. Ishida Mitsunari, e.i. Lord Jibu, or Jibu-sama in the story, was the leading Daimyō of the West Army. Some 200,000 men participated in the Battle of Sekigahara. Ref. → http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Sekigahara

² In May of 1615, Tokugawa Ieyasu and his son, Hidetada, launched an attack (known as "the Summer Campaign") on the bastion (Osaka Castle) of the young heir to Toyotomi Hideyoshi and his widow. The mother and son committed suicide, and most of their faithful retainers/vassals, who had been besieged in Osaka Castle since the Winter Campaign of the previously year, either died in the battle or committed harakiri.' The Toyotomi family ceased to exist. Ref. → http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Osaka

³ This is Prince Hideyori, the only son of, and heir to, the late Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who ruled Japan before Tokugawa Ieyasu. Ref. → http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toyotomi_Hideyoshi
Ref. → http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tokugawa_Ieyasu

Christian daimyō (warlords) made an ally of the young Prince Hideyori-sama and fought a brave battle for him. One of the most devoted Christian daimyo, John Akashi Kamon⁴, was the highest-ranking general of Hideyori-sama, along with the pagan Sanada Saemon-no-Suke⁵ and the apostate Gotō Matabei⁶. In addition to John Kamon and his men, former retainers of Jūsto Takayama Ukon⁷ and many other Christian warlords, who had been condemned to exile due to the recent religious persecution, came to the aid of young Hideyori-sama.

The Rev. Diego Baptista and I went to Osaka Castle prior to the opening of the battle, in order to supply spiritual support to these people. Rev. Elnando de St. Joseph of the Augustinian Order, Rev. Apornalio Franco of the Franciscan Order, and Rev. Francisco, who is the son of Murayama Tōan⁸, Magistrate of Nagasaki, were all in the Castle for the same purpose. Our mission, while preparations were being made for the showdown, was to provide comfort and encouragement to those who were soon to render their souls to God.

This showdown took place between the sixth and eighth day of June.

When the entire castle was enveloped in raging flames, the Rev. Baptista and I fled the mansion of John Kamon. The soldiers of the Shōgun were in hot pursuit, and Father Baptista was wounded in the shoulder and the back. I was also wounded in several places.

The victorious army of the Shōgun was plundering the town at will, setting everything on fire. There was carnage everywhere; the streets were covered with bodies. Father Baptista and I ran with the fire and the swords close at our heels, and unexpectedly ran into a young Christian whose name was Simon Hikozō, and he offered us refuge. Helped by Simon Hikozō, we

⁴ One of the generals of the young prince Hideyori. He was a Christian, and therefore, was given the Christian name, John.

⁵ Sanada Yukimura. Warlord who hailed from a small Daimyō family in the province of Shinano. He was an outstanding general known for his valor, and was widely admired by the public throughout the history of Japan. He is a hero of numerous historical novels, plays, and movies of Japan. Ref. → http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanada_Yukimura

⁶ A powerful warrior who used to serve Lord Kuroda. After a dispute with his master, he became a "rōnin," a masterless samurai, and later fought for Prince Hideyori during the Siege of Osaka. Like Sanada Yukimura, he is one of the well-liked historical figures of Japan, and is the hero in numerous books, plays, and movies. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Got%C5%8D_Matabei

⁷ Well-known Christian daimyō. He was exiled to Manila by the Tokugawa Shōgun, who feared his power, prior to the Siege of Osaka. He died in Manila in 1615. Ref. → http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Takayama_Ukon

⁸ Lord Hideyoshi appointed him magistrate of Nagasaki. He was a Christian. He later became an apostate and served under Ieyasu.

reached Sakai two days later. We were received by a Thomas Shin-emon, a Christian, and also a relative of Hikozaō, in whose mansion we were asked to stay as guests. The wounds of Father Baptista were rotting from lack of care and presented a dangerous condition. I, too, was running a high fever from my injuries and from exhaustion, and I needed to rest.

The City of Sakai⁹ had been burned and plundered about two weeks earlier, as a punishment for disobeying the orders of young Hideyori-sama. As a result, many people were killed or injured, and their properties were taken away. The Shin-emon residence was spared by a special favor.

One of the friends of Shin-emon treated our wounds. His name was Hayashi Yasaburō (also known as Seian). He claimed that he was not a physician by profession, but he was far from being unskilled. Thanks to his treatment, I recovered from my relatively minor injuries before long. Father Baptista managed to leave his bed after two months. Yasaburō was a painter by profession. He was also a hand-drum performer and an *improvisatore* of sorts. He was under the patronage of the wealthy merchant of the City of Sakai, Aburaya Sōsuke, and was living in his mansion. When Yasaburō's patron and his family evacuated the city because of the recent fire and rampage, Yasaburō stayed and helped the sick and the injured. Though he was not a Christian, he was very kind to both Father Baptista and me. If there is such a thing as a good heathen, Yasaburō was one.

Yasaburō looked close to forty. His soft and delicate features suggested a very handsome face in his youth. His bearing was quiet, and his choice of words polite. He appeared friendly. He was slightly lame in the right leg, and the way he walked added further gentleness to his overall quiet demeanor.

Before long, as they learned we were staying at the Thomas Shin-emon residence, people started to come to see us. The Shōgun and his generals were busy with punishments and rewards, and their persecution against us had slackened a little. Father Baptista was still in serious condition, but I was able to sit up by then. I prayed with these people, delivered sermons, and heard confessions.

⁹ Venice of Japan. It was a wealthy and virtually autonomous city, where a number of influential merchants of the time resided.

It appeared that the people entertained a considerable trust and respect for Yasaburō. According to Shin-emon, during the great persecution three years prior, Yasaburō, who was in the favor of the magistrate, and who also had friends among the men of influence in Sakai, took advantage of his position and made great efforts toward alleviating dire persecution. Additionally, I was told by one of the Christians that Yasaburō used to serve Ishida Jibu-sama¹⁰.

My dear Rev. Morales, as you may know from the various reports made by other missionaries, Ishida Jibu-sama was the most trusted and favored daimyō of the late Taikō-sama¹¹, and also the best friend to our noble-minded Christian friend, Augustino Konishi Settsunokami¹². Fifteen years ago, driven by the desire to return the favor to Taikō-sama, and not in the least to fulfill their own ambitions, Jibu-sama and Augustino-sama challenged the cunning Shōgun. They were defeated and decapitated. That battle took place in the year I arrived in this country, 1600, and I witnessed their executions with my own eyes, which left me with an indelible impression. Jibu-sama was known by many as a very wise man. The aged and now ruthless Taikō-sama would deliver insane orders concerning missionaries, and Jibu-sama would exhibit mercy to us, using his discretion with those orders. When I saw Jibu-sama's execution 15 years ago, there was something to excite a suspicion within me that Jibu-sama might have been drawn to the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. This suspicion stayed lodged in me, like an unanswered question, for a long time.

¹⁰ Ishida Mitsunari. "Jibu" or "Jibu-Shōyū" is the title he was given by the Emperor. It was customary in those days for the Emperor to bestow titles for honorary posts on high-ranking Samurai daimyō, who were the lords of the manor. These titles stemmed from the ancient court decorum. When referring to a daimyō, this honorary title was used, rather than his given name. 'Daimyō' is a generic term referring to the most powerful territorial ruler, from the tenth century to the mid-19th century Japan.

Ishida Mitsunari was the lord of Sawayama Castle in the province of Ōmi. A medium-sized daimyō, he received the stipend of about 200,000-goku. In comparison, Tokugawa Ieyasu's stipend, prior to the Battle of Sekigahara, was 2,500,000-goku, which jumped to 4,000,000-goku after the war, with the addition of the confiscated properties of the enemy daimyō.

"Goku" or "koku" is a unit to measure the landholder's fiefs (stipends). One Koku equals approximately 5 bushels of rice.

¹¹ "Taikō" is Toyotomi Hideyoshi who was earlier given the title of "Kampaku" by the Emperor. When he retired and gave his "Kampaku" title to his nephew, he became a "Taikō." See earlier Footnote No. 3 on page 1 for Toyotomi Hideyoshi.

¹² Konishi Yukinaga. Ishida Mitsunari's best friend and Lord of Udo Castle in the province of Higo. He was a 200,000-goku Christian daimyō. Ref. → http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konishi_Yukinaga

One day I directed this question to Yasaburō, who came to see us on his usual rounds.

I had for some time been trying to make him a convert. It seemed to be our supreme duty to this doctor, to whom we both owed our lives, to help his dear soul out of eternal ruin. Further, from my own observations and also from what I heard, Yasaburō's soul was a rich, well-cultivated soil. I was convinced that a seed planted in that soil would turn out a rich harvest. It was with extreme enthusiasm then, that I attempted to convert him.

But Yasaburō would not easily bend. He said he once lived in a Zen temple in Kyoto, that he had attained spiritual enlightenment and peace thanks to the Zen teachings, and that he did not need any other religion. Zen is a sect of Buddhism, and it is not as ignorant and unintelligent as other various idol-worshipping sects. It is a philosophical denomination, as far as I know, with a belief somewhat resembling the Stoa creed. Among the aristocrats of this country, many embrace the Zen creed. It is not, of course, the way to true salvation.

I was not disappointed with his reply, and continued my efforts to convert Yasaburō. When I found out that he used to serve Jibu-sama, I wanted to clear the suspicion I had harbored for years and, at the same time, to pave the way to persuade Yasaburō to change his mind.

To my question, Yasaburō stated that his master was not a Christian. But, there was something like hesitancy in the way he said it, and I repeated my question. With eyes cast down, Yasaburō seemed to ponder a while. He raised his face slowly, and said:

"Dear Reverend Padre. I hear you have a tradition in your religion called confession. You have just told me that you saw my master's execution. We may have been brought together by fate. Well, I am thinking of doing the make-believe confession and tell you what I saw and heard while I was serving the late Lordship. What do you say? Would you listen to me...? Whether or not my master was attracted by Christianity might become clear after you have heard my story."

I said I would happily listen to his story.

"Well, dear Reverend Padre, then listen. When I am done, please pray for the soul of a young woman, because, dear Padre, this young woman embraced the same religion that you teach."

Dear Rev. Morales, I will now relate Yasaburō's story as faithfully as it was narrated to me. It is a very interesting story. It reminded me of the fall of Babylon. You will see in his story God's will at its loftiest.

Chapter 2

< Here follows Yasaburō's tale > :

"Dear Reverend Padre: It was in the 18th year of Tenshō¹³, when I was eleven, that I first took service under my Lordship.

My father is Hayashi Samanosuke, who was in the service of Lord Hōjō Ujinori of Tatebayashi Castle of the Bushū Province¹⁴. My father was killed in action when I was young, and my mother died of illness soon thereafter. I was raised by Tagaya Uneme-sama, who was serving Lord Ujinori, and I later became his page.

Lord Hideyoshi dispatched the Kantō punitive expedition about that time, and Tatebayashi Castle was surrounded by his army, so we soon surrendered. When we gave up the Castle to Lord Hideyoshi's army, their leader Lord Jibu-sama saw that I had been struck by a stray bullet and was moaning in pain. He took pity on me, and had me carried to a nearby temple for medical care. He proceeded to take his expedition to the Northern Territories. On his way back, he stopped at Tatebayashi, and asked Uneme-sama to relinquish me so that I might serve him. He then brought me with him to Osaka.

¹³ This is A.D. 1590, which is a landmark year in the history of Japan, because Toyotomi Hideyoshi conquered the Hōjō family, ruler of the entire South Kantō area, and then brought all other feudal lords in northern Japan under his power, thus completing the unification of Japan.

¹⁴ Bushū is the same as the Province of Musashi. Modern Tokyo is located in the Province of Musashi (though the name itself is defunct today). *Hōjō Ujinori* was one of the prominent warriors of the Hōjō family.

Lord Jibu-sama was 31 years of age at that time. He had been appointed the Jibu-Shōyū five years earlier, at the young age of 26, thus commanding the highest position of the five magistrates. His power and authority became stronger daily; he was known far and wide as the one and only "Chōshin," that is, the general most favored by Lord Hideyoshi.

He invited the jealousy and hostility of others because of his power. He was particularly criticized for basking in Lord Hideyoshi's favor, and for riding the high horse and, in my opinion, these criticisms were not necessarily unfounded. However, I must add that he exhibited his haughtiness only to his peers and his superiors. To men and women who served under him, my Lordship was a divinely thoughtful and kind master. He took kindly consideration of a lowly servant like me.

In spite of the thorough medical care given me, my right leg did not heal completely, and I was now a cripple, and I could not live up to the expectations of my Lordship as a samurai. My Lordship was touched by pity all the more for me, I suspect, because it appeared that he showed me favor in many ways over my fellow servants. One day, he heard some of my fellow pages making fun of my foot. My Lordship, who seldom lost his temper, became exceedingly angry and reprimanded the young men. To pay back my master's kindness to me, I pledged myself to serve him even more faithfully.

Five years had passed since I came to serve my Lordship. It was the 4th year of Bunroku¹⁵, and I was now sixteen years old.

In the spring of the previous year, Fushimi Castle¹⁶ was completed, and Lord Hideyoshi took residence. My Lordship, Jibu-sama, was given a mansion in the Nishinomaru Quarters of the Castle, and he then spent most of his time there.

The fad of Noh plays was sweeping Fushimi Castle at that time. Two years earlier, while being encamped at the town of Nagoya, Lord Hideyoshi learned the Komparu School dancing from

¹⁵ This is 1595.

¹⁶ With the birth of his heir, Hideyori, Lord Hideyoshi wanted to give him Osaka Castle, and he built Fushimi Castle for himself to live there after retirement.

*Kurematsu Shinkurō*¹⁷, and it captured his fancy. He would give lavish stipends to the headmasters of the Four Theaters of Noh¹⁸. He had commissioned Ōmura Yūko to write ten new pieces. He frequently gave shows at the Osaka and Fushimi Castles, and he himself was absorbed in the practice of Noh dancing, day and night.

Thus, Noh was extremely popular among not only Lord Hideyoshi's trusted generals who served him, but also among various other feudal lords of the Osaka and Fushimi area. I was unable to perform because of my crippled foot, but I was better than average in singing and in the hand-drum playing. I had private lessons for a couple of years from Shundō Kuemon¹⁹ in singing and from Konparu Matajirō²⁰ in hand-drum. Shimozuma Hōin-sama²¹ once complimented me on my performance of the hand-drum.

When there was an unexpected Noh play in the Honmaru or the Nishinomaru²², I would be called in to play the hand-drum. Lord Hideyoshi and Nishinomaru-sama (Lady Yodo)²³ would honor me with kind words on such an occasion. Because of these opportunities, and also because I closely served my Lordship, I became aware of the affairs of the Castle.

Lord Hideyoshi was planning to strip his nephew of the title of the "Kampaku"²⁴ at the time. Out of great grief at the loss of his first son Prince Tsurumaru²⁵, Lord Hideyoshi had relinquished the position of the "Kampaku," giving it to his nephew, Lord Hidetsugu. When Nishinomaru-sama gave birth to a new prince two years later, Lord Hideyoshi regretted his rash action. What further spurred his regret was Lord Hidetsugu's unintelligent and imprudent behavior.

¹⁷ A distinguished Noh playwright and performer of the era.

¹⁸ Ref.→ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noh>

¹⁹ -ditto-

²⁰ -ditto-

²¹ -ditto-

²² "Honmaru" is the central area of a castle; "Nishinomaru" is the western wing of a castle, where usually the daimyō's heir lived.

²³ The Lady Yodo, or Nishinomaru-sama, is the beloved concubine of Lord Hideyoshi, and the mother of his two sons. Her given name is "Chacha," and she is the niece of Oda Nobunaga. She was given Yodo Castle as her residence, and was called "Lady Yodo." In Fushimi Castle, she lived in the western wing, or Nishinomaru, of the castle, and thus people called her "Nishinomaru-sama."

²⁴ See earlier Footnote No. 11 in Chapter 1.

²⁵ Lord Hideyoshi and Lady Yodo's first-born son, who died at age two.

Dear Padre, what kind of a tragedy resulted from this is probably known to you. It must also be known to you that my Lordship played an evil part in this tragedy. But that was much later. At the inception of this dark tragedy, my Lordship made a conscientious effort to settle the matter by peaceful measures. It was not out of kindness to Lord Hidetsugu, however. It was out of a desire to satisfy his own pride.

My lordship disliked stupidity more than anything else. If a man who attends to his affairs is wise enough, he does not need to be cruel. Unnecessary cruelty proves nothing but a man's stupidity, and political fatuousness is a crime worse than the most heinous offense. That was how he felt. In other words, my Lordship was confident, I suspect, of his talent to solve problems neatly, no matter how they may be tangled.

Thus, it was obviously with the height of stupidity that Lord Hideyoshi, carried away by his passing spell of emotion, turned over the power to Lord Hidetsugu, his nephew. My Lordship, however, was not in the least inclined to bring the act to an end with cruelty, which started with his master's foolishness.

It appeared the parents of the new young prince, who were blind with love, particularly Lady Yodo, were a little more than dissatisfied with my Lordship's attitude. If I may confess the truth, though, the hidden reason why my Lordship tried to shield Lord Hidetsugu may have been the secret ill feeling he harbored toward the mother of the young prince.

Lady Yodo was a woman not only beautiful but talented. She was apprehensive for the safety of herself and her young son after the death of Lord Hideyoshi. In order to compete with Kitano Mandokoro-sama²⁶ who had many allies like Lord Kato²⁷ and Lord Fukushima²⁸ around her, Lady Yodo attempted to make my Lordship side with her. My Lordship was in a feud with Lord Kato and Lord Fukushima. Lady Yodo, however, resorted to an unscrupulous means to achieve

²⁶ Lord Hideyoshi's legally wedded wife, Nene. "Kitano Mandokoro" is the title she received from the Emperor when her husband was given the Court title "Kampaku." She was naturally not on good terms with Lady Yodo, her husband's beloved concubine.

²⁷ Kato Kiyomasa. One of Lord Hideyoshi's top generals. Ref.→ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kat%C5%8D_Kiyomasa

²⁸ Fukushima Masanori. One of Lord Hideyoshi's top generals. Ref.→ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E7%A6%8F%E5%B3%B6%E6%AD%A3%E5%89%87>

her end. Making a mistake that many a beautiful woman would, she attempted to make my Lordship kneel down to her beauty.

It was the poorest, most bungling effort on her part. My Lordship intensely disliked ladies who are arrogant and, because of their beauty, would force themselves on others. For him, women must be gentle, obedient, and graceful.

Thus, Lady Yodo's intentions ended up going in the opposite direction. The proud woman, whose pride was crushed, I'm afraid, must have bitten her scarlet lip in secret and vowed vengeance. My Lordship would bear the brunt of her cruel revenge later."

< Here, Father Torres addresses Rev. Morales > :

"Dear Reverend Morales, Yasaburō merely alluded to this, using the most equivocal words, but from the various rumors I heard, it seems that this favorite mistress of Taikō-sama had acted like the wife of Potiphar²⁹. It is a well-known fact that she was not faithful to Taikō-sama after his death. There was a rumor steadfastly repeated that the young prince Hideyori-sama was not fathered by Taikō-sama. The mother of Lady Yodo is the sister of Lord Oda³⁰, who was the ruler of this country immediately before Taikō-sama. She was known for bringing ruin upon the families of her successive husbands, as if she were Lucrezia Borgia³¹. It would be small wonder if Lady Yodo had inherited not only the beauty of her mother, but also the propensity for immorality."

< Yasaburō's tale resumes > :

"Despite the efforts of my Lordship, the situation threatened to assume increasingly ugly proportions. Lord Hideyoshi who was now old and intolerant, could not relax for one second

²⁹ Ref. → <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potiphar>

³⁰ Oda Nobunaga. Ref. → http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oda_Nobunaga

³¹ Ref. → http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucrezia_Borgia

until the obstacle placed in front of his beloved son could be removed. His nephew, on the other hand, continued his injudicious ways, and would not change his conduct. Thus, my Lordship finally decided that he would have to visit Lord Hidetsugu himself to give him advice, and to persuade him to use good judgment in his conduct. Obviously, Lord Hideyoshi had given my Lordship a secret order to do so, but my Lordship was motivated by his own good will as well.

Thus, one day in early May, my Lordship proceeded to Lord Hidetsugu's mansion. He took me along as far as Jurakudai. During their meeting, I was waiting in the distant servants' area. After about two hours, an attendant samurai appeared and called my name, saying I was being sent for by Lord Hidetsugu.

I was led to the great drawing room facing the inner garden. White sand spread from corner to corner of the inner garden. Odd-shaped ancient pine trees cast shadows of emerald green.

On the pond, which was modeled after the Seiko Lake of China, the never-ceasing soft breeze from the surrounding young greenery was making light ripples dance on its surface, reflecting the azure firmament above us. The same soft breeze was carried into the great drawing room.

In the central alcove, on the upper tier, there was the great painting of the hawk and the pine tree, by Eitoku³². The sliding doors and the side-alcove shelves were also adorned with the grandeur of the magnificent paintings of pine trees. The lower tier boasted the work of Yūshō³³, brightly colorful peonies and golden pheasants. Lord Hidetsugu was seated at the head on the lower tier, with the alcove behind him. My Lordship was seated to his left, about the distance of a 'tatami' mattress away. They had just moved to this room, it appeared, after having completed their session.

³² Kanō Eitoku (1543 ~ 1590) is a renowned painter of the era. Ref. → http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kano_Eitoku

³³ Kaihō Yūshō (1533 ~ 1615) is a renowned painter of the era.
Ref. → http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaih%C5%8D_Y%C5%ABsh%C5%8D

To the right of Lord Hidetsugu, seated in waiting, were a few of his pages, young and good-looking, bedecked in flowery garments. I recognized some of them. In front of Lord Hidetsugu and my Lordship were individual tables with food and drinks. They were being waited upon by Chamberlains Yamada Sanjūrō and Kamiya Kōichirō.

As soon as I knelt down at the threshold of the anteroom, Lord Hidetsugu spoke, good-naturedly,

"There, Yasaburō, good to see you. Relax, and come closer. Have a drink. Come to me."

I approached Lord Hidetsugu and received a cup from his hand. I drank the saké and, as required by custom, wrapped the cup in the pocket paper and placed it in my sleeve. As I was about to step back, Lord Hidetsugu, who was surveying me all this time, spoke again.

"Yasaburō, I was turned down by your master here some time ago, but...", and he glanced at my master sideways.

"How about it, Yasaburō? Wouldn't you care to serve under me? You will receive as much stipend as you wish."

About two months earlier, there was a dance by the women in waiting at the Nishinomaru quarters, and I was called to play the hand-drum, as usual. Lord Hidetsugu was also there to please his uncle. After the dance, he was said to have asked my Lordship if he would release me to serve him. My Lordship of course turned down the request.

I had a hard time trying to see what Lord Hidetsugu could have intended by bringing up a subject that was of no use now. I was nonplused, but replied flatly,

"I owe my life to my Lordship. I have no desire to serve anyone but my Lordship."

"Well, well, well, we have a loyal spirit here, don't we?"

Lord Hidetsugu broke into a raucous laugh.

"No wonder his master hates to let him go. Though crippled, he is quite good-looking. He isn't second to my Sanjūrō, either."

He gave another roar of laughter. There was a grating sound at the bottom of his boisterous laughter, a tone of suppressed irritation, from which I gathered that their meeting had been unsuccessful. Perhaps Lord Hidetsugu, who had grown desperate, must have given no ear to my Lordship's advice. The dark monsters within him must have convinced him that the favorite general of his uncle was trying to entrap him with his sweet talk. He may even have suspected that the fact that my Lordship took me along on that day was itself proof of his contempt. I knew, though, that my Lordship did not harbor such an evil thought.

Before long, two of Lord Hidetsugu's young pages got up and started the Tsuremai Noh dance, which was a contemporary version of the "Iris." I was told to play the hand-drum, and another page of Lord Hidetsugu joined in with his flute. As might be expected of select young men who wait on Lord Hidetsugu as his favored pages, they danced beautifully, moving to and fro, like fairies dancing on the brush of the soft breeze that came into the room. I tried to concentrate on my hand-drum, but I could not help watching Lord Hidetsugu and my Lordship.

Lord Hidetsugu was watching his pages dance, with a saké cup in his hand. He was feigning high spirits, but was casting a stealthy glance at my Lordship every few seconds. He was afraid of his uncle's 'chōshin,' his most trusted general. He wanted to win the friendship of his uncle's 'chōshin,' but at the same time, he desired to insult him, and square accounts with him.

Whether or not he was aware of his host's contradicting emotions, my Lordship was watching the two dancers peacefully. Seeing this cool composure on the part of his guest, Lord Hidetsugu's hatred got the better of his fear. Turning his face abruptly towards my Lordship, Lord Hidetsugu broke out.

"What's the matter with you, Jibu. I have not seen you drink or eat anything at all! None of your worries, please. I have not put poison in your dish. But I hear Lord Gamoh was poisoned the other day, and you might as well be on guard."

He screeched a raspy laughter. I knew that in February of that year, Lord Gamoh passed away. He died of a stomach malady, but there was a rumor that my Lordship was responsible for his death. Lord Hidetsugu was alluding to that rumor, of course. My Lordship responded without so much as moving his eye-brows,

"Pardon me, if I have offended you. But, I was too charmed by your wonderful dancers. I will gladly have your saké."

Saying so with great civility, he picked up a cup. Kōichirō-sama waited upon him. Lord Hidetsugu's lips quivered convulsively, but he was silent.

The two dancers kept on dancing. They were just about to finish their performance when, a screechy cry from Lord Hidetsugu rang through the room.

"What do you mean by that, Jibu? What did you do just now?"

I stopped my hand on the drum. My Lordship was putting a small folded paper into his sleeve. He must have placed something in the paper.

"Forgive me if I did something wrong. It is nothing but a small stone I happened to see in my soup," my Lordship explained as politely as before.

"What? A stone in your soup?!"

Lord Hidetsugu lost his temper.

"Sanjūrō, get all my cooks out here. Bring them to the courtyard," he charged violently. Sanjūrō-sama rushed out, obeying his master's command.

All the music had stopped, and there was not a sound in the room. Lord Hidetsugu drank glass after glass, with his hand trembling. My Lordship's fine eye was cast upon him with both pity and contempt.

Presently, Sanjūrō-sama came back, followed by a few young, strong swordsmen, who pushed forward in front of them six poorly-clad kitchen hands, all tied up with a rope. They were forced to kneel on the white sand of the courtyard. Lord Hidetsugu stepped forward to the edge of the verandah, and glared at the six.

"Who do you think I have today as my guest? It is Ishida Jibu, the highest ranking of all the subjects of my uncle, who can put an end to the life of the most powerful lord of our time just by saying so. You dogs had a nerve to displease him, the most respectable guest of all. Your blunder will cost me another disgrace from my uncle. You wretched disloyal dogs! I could tear you all apart! Go ahead, Sanjūrō, cut off their right arms, those which committed a blunder today!"

"Yes, my Lord," responded Sanjūrō-sama, and he walked up to the six men on the ground. He removed his shoulder piece, and at the same time drew his sword. He appeared to be accustomed to such a thing. The six men moaned desperately. They pressed their foreheads against the dirt and begged for mercy fervently. The young swordsmen tried to raise them. But the desperation gave the poor men uncanny strength. They were about to be raised upright, and then they went down clinging to the ground for life. Sanjūrō-sama was unable to bring down his sword.

Lord Hidetsugu looked down, with immeasurable hatred, upon the six wretched figures lying flat on the ground. Suddenly, there was a dangerous grin on his face.

"You want to live that much?" said he, in an animated tone. The six looked up, clinging to his words, hoping desperately. Lord Hidetsugu became even more cheerful, and said,

"All right, I will spare you. But, you served my most esteemed guest here a stone. Well, why don't you eat stones, as well. We have plenty of stones and pebbles in this courtyard. Six of you could not eat them all. Don't be polite. Eat all you like. If you eat them until you can't eat any more, I will let you go. Come on, dogs, eat, eat!"

The scene that unfolded in front of our eyes is present in my mind, even today. The soft breeze that swayed the new leaves was still ruffling the surface of the water gently, and the bright blue of the early summer sky was above us. And in front of us was the bloody torture of living hell.

As if possessed by an unknown evil force, the pitiful victims gnawed at the pebbles and sand in the front garden, just so their lives would be spared. There was a young man, about 25 or 26, who would not obey the Lord Hidetsugu's order. Sanjūrō-sama's sword cut off both his arms then and there. The finishing blow was not given for Lord Hidetsugu so ordered.

At the horrible sight of their colleague, the other five were stricken with enormous fear and they started to cram the rocks and sand into their mouths. There was the sound of teeth crushing. There was a hideous groaning of the injured. Their teeth were smashed; their gums were torn; their lips were split; and the blood running down their jaws painted the white sand scarlet.

The poor souls kept biting at the rocks, with their faces hideously contorted, simply mad in their desire to live. Their jaws were covered with the bright fresh crimson color of blood. They were trying in vain to swallow the rocks. They did not appear to be in pain. They looked like worms being trampled. It was unsightly; but somehow comic. The punishment Lord Hidetsugu invented was cruel and clever beyond imagination.

Lord Hidetsugu stood on the verandah, staring at the nightmare-like scene. He appeared deeply and avidly interested. He was enraptured, and the same look of ecstasy was seen on the countenance of young Sanjūrō-sama in the garden. With cheeks flushed from excitement,

Sanjūrō-sama's handsome face was even more beautiful. The body of the man without arms was twitching at his feet.

Not everyone was like Sanjūrō-sama, though. Some of the young pages turned pale and looked away, and I was one of them. I could not bear to look at the gruesome scene, but the grisly moaning forced its way into my ears. I thought I was going to faint, but I did not want to disgrace my Lordship by having the subjects of this cursed house call me a coward.

My Lordship kept silent while this atrocious game was played out. He did not try to intervene for the wretched offenders. With his face as white as a sheet, expressionless, and his body completely motionless, he gazed at the dreadful spectacle in the garden.

Lord Hidetsugu appeared to have interpreted my Lordship's silence as cowardliness. He may have thought, mistakenly, that he was successful in intimidating my Lordship; in making him tremble and suffer in silence. He turned around, saw my Lordship's ashen face, and said scornfully,

"How about it, my friend? Did you like this punishment?"

There was poison in his tone. He then burst into a triumphant roar of laughter, and he laughed for a long time.

My Lordship did not say a word. Lord Hidetsugu may have thought that my Lordship was frightened. I was watching both. I was far more terrified by what could have been concealed under my Lordship's icy silence, than by the frenzied roar of laughter of Lord Hidetsugu. I even felt pity for Lord Hidetsugu who was self-satisfied, without realizing the true danger.

Lord Hidetsugu continued to laugh like a mad man.

Suddenly, my Lordship turned his head. His sagacious gaze was directly upon the profile of Lord Hidetsugu. I saw no kindness, not even a shadow of sympathy. There was no anger or

hostility, either. What I saw there was the unspeakable detestation toward a stupid and contemptible human being. Every drop of my blood chilled at seeing this, and I trembled. The fate of Lord Hidetsugu was decided in that instant."

< Here, Father Torres addresses Rev. Morales > :

"Dear Rev. Morales, the fate of the Kampaku Hidetsugu after that is as reported in the 1595 newsletter sent to you by the late Rev. Luís Fróis³⁴.

In an effort to clear the suspicion entertained by the Taikō-sama, the Kampaku Hidetsugu submitted to him a written oath, pledging that he harbored no ill will against his respected uncle. However, the aging Taikō-sama was filled with jealousy and suspicion toward his young nephew, and he could no longer find peace of mind until he saw his nephew's head cut off. It is easy to figure that Lord Jibu, who was totally repulsed by the Kampaku-sama, made every effort to fan Taikō-sama's hatred.

Two months later, the Kampaku-sama was ordered to go to the Kōya Temple and confine himself there. He was then ordered to commit "hara-kiri" for planning treason. Several of his subjects, at a young and blossoming age, killed themselves, following their master to the grave. Yamada Sanjūrō was one of them.

My dear Rev. Morales, I should exhibit certain compassion as a man of religion, but I don't feel like grieving the fate that befell Kampaku-sama. Who would mourn the deaths of Caligula and Domitian³⁵? Kampaku-sama used to find great joy in wielding his sword and cutting up his enemies and subjects alike in bloodcurdling fashion. Divine Providence guided us in such a way that Kampaku-sama had to cut open his stomach with his own skilled hand.

³⁴ Jesuit missionary from Portugal (1532 ~ 1597) who came to Japan in 1563. While in Japan, he wrote more than 140 letters to his home country. He also wrote the "History of Japan." He died in Nagasaki, Japan.
Ref. → http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luis_Frois

³⁵ Roman emperors known for their atrocity. Caligula (AD 12 ~ AD 41); Domitian (AD 51 ~ AD 96).

The taste of blood now made Taikō-sama even more frenzied. It looked like he was determined to slaughter everyone who had anything to do with his nephew. Many a subject including Lord Hosokawa, the husband of the eminently virtuous Lady Donna Grazia, was punished, just because they were friends of Kampaku-sama. In addition, thirty-some women and young children, who were Kampaku-sama's mistresses and their offspring, were sentenced to death. Jibu-sama, along with two of his colleagues, supervised their executions. The bodies of these hapless women and children were thrown into a hole in the ground hastily dug out for that purpose. An obelisk was built atop the grave site, with the writing, "The Beasts' Tomb."

Yasaburō insisted that his Lordship did not participate in this atrocity willingly, but that he was simply being faithful to his master Taikō-sama's instructions. He added, however, that the inner quarters of Lord Hidetsugu's castle was a snake pit, as far as Jibu-sama was concerned, where a mother and daughter were concubines to the same man, and that he thought it was appropriate to incinerate this nefarious snake pit. It was true, Yasaburō acceded, that Jibu-sama did not make any particular attempt to save his master's victims.

I feel sorry for these ill-fated ladies, but I wonder if they were less sinful than those who fell victim to Lord Hidetsugu's degraded sense of pleasure?"

Chapter 3

< Back to Yasaburō's tale > :

About two months after Lord Hidetsugu had brought destruction upon himself, and after the punishments had been dealt out to everyone else, there was a new accusation brought to my Lordship's attention by an informant against a woman who had a connection with Lord Hidetsugu.

The accused was the illegitimate daughter of Lord Hibino, the governor of Shimotsuke and one of the key vassals of Lord Hidetsugu. Her name was Yuri-sama, and she was a half sister of Lady Ako, one of Lord Hidetsugu's concubines who had been executed on the bank of the Sanjō

River³⁶. Since her father, the Lord Hibino, had committed hara-kiri, and the entire family was torn asunder, Yuri-sama, accompanied by her nursemaid, took refuge in the nursemaid's relative's house in Kitanobe. It appeared that the son of that household, angry with unrequited love for Yuri-sama, made the charge against her.

Upon investigation, my Lordship found that Yuri-sama was a Christian with the baptismal name "Donna Lucia." Lord Hideyoshi had already changed his attitude towards Christians, and he had issued a peremptory decree forbidding the Christian faith. My Lordship, as Lord Hideyoshi's magistrate, was in a position to enforce this decree. However, after finding that Yuri-sama was a Christian, my Lordship did not even attempt to hand her over to the authorities, but continued to have her stay in his residence within Fushimi Castle.

My Lordship seemed to regret that he so profoundly detested Lord Hidetsugu and his conduct that he was generally apathetic toward the fate of his wife and the mistresses soon after he was condemned to 'hara-kiri.' Besides, my Lordship had seen his secret enemy, Lady Nishinomaru, thrive in power, when all the other ladies of the court had to succumb to a horrible death. I suspect that he gave refuge to Yuri-sama to make up for his indifference or lack of sympathy toward those ill-fated ladies. Of course, the helpless and forlorn Yuri-sama must have roused my Lordship's sympathy.

At any rate, my Lordship acted as though he was against the Christian faith in public, but the truth was he did not particularly dislike Christians. As long as they were not conspicuous, he tolerated Christians among his own vassals. I knew some of his female domestics were Christians. As long as Yuri-sama remained in my Lordship's residence, she could keep her Christian faith. She was absolutely safe there. However, my Lordship took further precautions. He was going to send Yuri-sama, when the time was right, to Sawayama Castle, so that she would become one of the ladies in waiting for his wife. If ever Lord Hideyoshi found out about Yuri-sama, her life would be threatened. But there was a greater danger than that. My dear Padre, you must have heard that one of the reasons why Lord Hideyoshi issued a ban on the Christian faith was the refusal by Christians to present the women whom he fancied for his

³⁶ Sanjō River bank in Kyoto was a notorious execution location at the time.

concubines. I myself heard Lord Hideyoshi say rather seriously that he would not be disinterested to possess a Christian woman.

However, my Lordship did not send Yuri-sama to Sawayama Castle after all because, before long, she found herself to be the object of her master's deep love.

There was no concubine to speak of in my Lordship's life at that time, and the entire household was delighted that he found one. Other than the few, including me, who closely served my Lordship, no one knew Yuri-sama's identity, either.

Thus, the soft fragrance of a flower hung in the air around my Lordship. It was obvious in anybody's eye that my Lordship thought tenderly of this young girl and held her dearly beyond measure. Also, there was no doubt that Yuri-sama adored and idolized my Lordship. But, it was also true that Yuri-sama kept her eyes cast down at all times, as does her namesake, the Yuri flower in the field. A cluster of sprinkling stars were about to fall off the ends of her long eyelashes at any moment. Even when she would smile at my Lordship, there was a shadow of lingering sorrow. It was not without reason, I should say, for Yuri-sama loved a man, after all, who was responsible for the deaths of her own father and sister.

There was something else that tormented young Yuri-sama.

Because I closely served my Lordship, I would often run errands to the Ladies' Quarters at the back of the Castle, or I would accompany him on his visit there. I would also be called to take part in the musical entertainment there. I saw Yuri-sama just about every day. Though she was three years my senior, I secretly adored her. Yuri-sama, who was nice to everyone by nature, after finding that I was an orphan, had come to treat me as kindly as if she had been my blood sister. Though she would carefully conceal her sorrow and troubles from my Lordship, she would carelessly show her otherwise hidden emotions to me, probably because she thought I was still a child.

My Lordship did not forbid her Christian belief. He even told her that he would bring a Padre surreptitiously to the Castle for her, if she so wished, because going outside the Castle was dangerous. Not only did she resolutely decline his offer, Yuri-sama also refrained from praying with the other ladies in waiting who were Christians. She would confine herself in her room and pray in private. The reason for that, dear Padre, was that she firmly believed that she had fallen out of the Lord's grace, having committed a hellish crime. You see, Yuri-sama had taken a vow of virginity (as it is practiced among you) at an early age, following her very religious mother's wishes."

< Again, Father Torres addresses Rev. Morales > :

My Dear Rev. Morales, the Japanese word "Yuri" means "lily," the sign of virginity of our Holy Mother. From what Yasaburō described, Donna Lucia was just like a lily with her comely features and kind disposition.

Sadly, Donna Lucia, of her own accord, defiled her own blessed name. But I am not inclined to subject this young lady to sharp reproof.

The women in this country, in much the same way as the women of other Oriental nations, adhere to the old custom of blind obedience and subordination to men. Above all, they must absolutely obey the iron will of a man of importance. Therefore, it is hugely difficult for women, who take service under feudal lords and noblemen, particularly if they are blessed with good looks, to defend their chastity. Even those who converted to Christianity, often succumbed to their master's seduction. An extremely rare example was one Donna Julia. She was a lady in waiting for a young nobleman in Edo, who was told that she would be pardoned if she bent to his wishes. She refused and was exiled to Kōzu Island off Izu Peninsula. One cannot expect the courage of Donna Julia from all women.

Thus, if Donna Lucia accepted Jibu-sama's advances, breaking her own vow, I don't think it is right to denounce her. How could a helpless young woman reject the affection of a nobleman, who not only saved her life but was kind to her in every way?

According to Yasaburō, though she firmly believed that she had fallen out of the Lord's grace, Donna Lucia did not bear a grudge against Jibu-sama, who was responsible for her perceived damnation. On the contrary, she blamed herself intensely for being so weak and irresolute as to have caused Jibu-sama's own damnation. She thought that if she had refused to accept him, Jibu-sama would not have committed the sin against the Seventh Commandment. What a noble and beautiful soul! Didn't our Florentine poet³⁷, the most pious of all the poets, give a seat in Paradise for Piccarda Donati³⁸, who broke her oath of chastity? Thus, I pray earnestly for this unfortunate young woman of the Orient, so that the same divine light may pour on her soul.

< Yasaburō resumes his account: >

"It was toward the end of Autumn when Yuri-sama first came to the Castle to serve my Lordship. It was now the Spring of the first year of Keichō.

It had been about six months since the self-destruction of Lord Hidetsugu. People are forgetful, and there was not a soul who would even mention his name. Instead, it was now Lady Nishinomaru-sama who attracted public attention: Her unsurpassed power, her pomp and glory at Fushimi Castle. Every common man was absorbed in her blazing life style. This inspired relief in my Lordship, it appears, for up until then he would tell Yuri-sama not to leave the compound of his residence for fear of her safety, but now he was telling her to go out every now and then and relax.

Now, in the middle of March of that year, a grand-scale Noh performance took place at Fushimi Castle. The wives and the concubines of the officers and other men, as well as the prominent merchants of Fushimi and Kyoto, were invited by Lord Hideyoshi.

The show was to run three days. Lord Hideyoshi's enthusiasm, as usual, was such that he participated in the performance every day. He played No. 5 on the first day, No. 4 on the second,

³⁷ Medieval Italian poet, Dante.

³⁸ Female character appearing in Dante's "The Divine Comedy."

and again No. 4 on the last day. In addition, Ukita Chūnagon-sama, Gifu Chūnagon-sama, and Maeda Dainagon-sama, all performed a number in the show. Yuri-sama went to see the performance on the second day. It was at the advice of my Lordship that she went. He had to go to Osaka for a few days to attend to a business matter, and before departure he encouraged her earnestly to go and see the play. YDaiuri-sama decided to go, not so much because she needed entertainment, but because she wanted to show appreciation for his thoughtfulness. My Lordship had ordered me to accompany her.

In the front seats of the Noh stage set up in the Honmaru³⁹ of the Castle were Lady Kitano Mandokoro-sama, Lady Kagano Tsubone-sama, the wives of distinguished Daimyō such as Lord Hideiye and Lord Nagamasa, along with the resplendently clad ladies in waiting. On the eastern side of the stage as well, there was an overflowing splendor of the beautiful colors of women's attire. Lady Nishinomaru-sama⁴⁰ and her confidant Lady Matsunomaru-sama were not to be seen. Obviously, Lady Kitano Mandokoro-sama chose the day that they would not make an appearance.

The white sanded area between the stage and the first row of seats was laid with a carpet, where the wives of low-ranking officers and the town merchants took their seats. Yuri-sama and I found empty seats there. Since my Lordship had cautioned us against being conspicuous in the crowd, Yuri-sama had only two chamber-maids and me accompanying her. I am sure she appeared to be one of the wives of Lord Hideyoshi's subjects. No one could have guessed that she was my Lordship's beloved mistress.

Though she appeared somewhat forlorn and helpless, Yuri-sama was a young girl after all. Enraptured by the exquisitely ornate splendor of her surroundings, she was casting a dreamy eye at the stage. Seeing her in a happy frame of mind, I, too, was enormously happy. However, she became indisposed a while later from sitting among the crowd, I suspected, to which she was not accustomed. The "Yūya" had just ended, and an interlude Kyōgen was about to start. I quickly

³⁹ See earlier Footnote No. 21 on page 9.

⁴⁰ See earlier Footnote No. 22 on page 9.

got up with Yuri-sama and guided her away from the audience. Yuri-sama told the two chamber-maids to stay and continue to enjoy the show.

We went out through Sarugaku Gate, walked by the Treasury House, and were just approaching the back gate of the Nishinomaru, when we came upon a senior lady-in-waiting coming out of the gate, accompanied by several of her own chamber-maids. It was Okurano Tsubone-sama, who was Lady Nishinomaru-sama's favorite court lady. It appeared that they were on their way to the Honmaru area of the Castle. Yuri-sama and I stepped aside, standing against the roofed fence, so that they could pass first.

"--- Well, isn't this Yasaburō?"

The high-ranking lady-in-waiting recognized me, stopped right in front of us, and cast a searching eye on Yuri-sama.

"Who is this, if I may ask?"

"This is my --- sister. I am escorting my sister to the Noh play."

The answer came out of my mouth quicker than I thought. I knew instinctively that I should not tell the truth to this woman. But I knew my false statement was to no avail.

"Your sister? Well, isn't it strange, for I heard that you had no kith or kin."

She grinned, jeeringly, and continued,

"Rumor has it that Lord Jibu-sama has found a young mistress recently, and that he protects her from harm's way so much that not even the softest breeze should blow into her face."

While saying so, she continued to gaze at the figure of Yuri-sama, with a more piercing, more sordid look than a man would, as if sizing her up on a balance scale. I wished to be a shield for

Yuri-sama against that shameless pimp's stare at her. Other maids stared at Yuri-sama inquisitively. Yuri-sama cast down her eyes deeply, looking as though she wished to disappear.

"Indeed, she is beautiful. No wonder Lord Jibu-sama keeps her under lock and key."

Satisfied with her inspection, Okurano Tsubone-sama turned her eye from Yuri-sama and looked at me once more, jeeringly.

"I understand Jibu-sama's new mistress is a forbidden Christian. How whimsical of him!"

She gave a screech of laughter, nodded at Yuri-sama haughtily, and left. I felt a great relief at her departure, and looked up at Yuri-sama. She was deathly white.

My lordship did not necessarily attempt to conceal it, so it was no wonder that the presence of Yuri-sama was known to people in the inner sanctum of the palace. As to her being Christian, well, there are Magdalena-sama (the mother of Magistrate Konishi Settsunokami-sama), and Catalina-sama (the Magistrate's sister), both of whom serve Kitano Mandokoro-sama. Yuri-sama was by no means in danger, just because she was Christian - so I tried to console Yuri-sama, who looked out of spirits and apprehensive even after she returned to my Lordship's residence. Nonetheless, I could not suppress the ominous premonition that sprang from deep within me.

My Lordship returned from his trip on the following day. When I reported the incident to him, he gave nothing but a casual nod. He did not look concerned at all, which made me feel reassured. No matter how hard Okurano Tsubone-sama may try to give herself airs under her mistress's shelter, she was in no position to point her finger at my Lordship's beloved mistress. Several days passed quietly. However, my premonition turned out to be right.

One evening, about ten days after our outing to the Noh play, my Lordship returned home late, and I was helping him change his clothes as I always did. As my Lordship started to walk away towards the back room, he suddenly turned around and looked at me, saying:

"Yasaburō, Lord Hideyoshi ordered today that I submit Yuri to serve him.... It was on the suggestion of Nishinomaru-sama."

There was a peculiar, twisted smile about his lips as he spoke. Then, he walked away. That was all. He did not say anything further, but it was more than sufficient for me.

I am sure that Okurano Tsubone-sama reported to Nishinomaru-sama her encounter with Yuri-sama in great detail. Yuri-sama was a young girl favored by a man who once spurned Nishinomaru-sama. She must have felt enormous jealousy when she was told that Yuri-sama was not only young but beautiful, so she thought up a very woman-like ruse. If Yuri-sama was brought in to serve Lord Hideyoshi, it would inflict a wound on my Lordship, and at the same time she could recompense herself for the dirt she had to eat. Her own position was not going to be imperiled, because Yuri-sama would be just a flower to be enjoyed and then thrown away after a short time. Nishinomaru-sama had nothing to worry about. Lord Hideyoshi, on the other hand, was eager to do what she suggested, prompted by curiosity about a Christian woman, and also by the wicked desire to tease his own faithful pet dog.

I could not sleep that night, pondering over all this. I listened for the sound and movement in the back of the house with strained ears.

As the dawn approached, someone came for me from the back of the house.

Before noon that day, a palanquin left the house through the back gate. I was the only one who accompanied it as it headed for the Sanrimaru Gardens.

In the enormous garden of the Sanrimaru Residence, there are thick groves of pine and oak trees, a gentle streamlet lined by lush bushes of Hagi and Yamabuki, several ponds, waterfalls, bamboo bushes, and a number of elegant tea-ceremony cottages and summer houses.

My Lordship was waiting for us at a tea house in front of the waterfall. He stopped the palanquin and ordered the two bearers to leave. We were in front of a small garden wicket on the brushwood fence. On the other side of the fence, there was the waterfall tea house.

My Lordship put his hand on the sliding door of the palanquin and opened it quietly, and the soft mauve of a kimono sleeve fluttered to the ground.

I stepped up and opened the garden wicket.

Lord Hideyoshi was seated at the front verandah of the tea house, awaiting our arrival. Lady Nishinomaru was seated next to him. There were several ladies in waiting seated to the right, a little distance from the verandah, in the shade of the pine trees. I recognized the Lady Okurano Tsubone-sama. In front of the tea house was a green lawn, with a small hill of pine trees to the left. The roof of the lonesome and austere two-storied pagoda, which Lord Hideyoshi had moved all the way from the Mountain of Yamato Tamon, was visible from where we were. One solitary wild cherry tree was pouring the snowflakes of soft white petals onto the bright green of the pine trees. Looking very much like one of the white petals of the cherry blossoms was a pale moon about seven days old floating in the misty blue sky. Mixed with the wind in the pine trees was the sound of the waterfall behind the teahouse.

At a signal from my Lordship, I seated myself inside the garden wicket. My Lordship held in his arms the slender frame of the person whom he helped out of the palanquin, and proceeded to walk until he came about ten feet from the verandah. There he stopped and knelt down. The fragile body wrapped in soft mauve kimono stooped forward in that instance. My Lordship lifted her upper body, so her face would be in full view of Lord Hideyoshi who was seated straight ahead. The face of Yuri-sama, though elaborately made up, showed no sign of life; both eyes closed tight, and the long eyelashes cast deathly shadows onto her ashen countenance.

Everyone gasped for a moment, and then, a deep silence fell on us all. The next moment, we saw Lord Hideyoshi's face transform into one enshrouded with the most menacing dark clouds.

"The woman is dead. What is this?" He said violently. "Don't tell me she succumbed to a sudden illness?"

My Lordship replied, as cool as a cucumber.

"Your Excellency is correct. She did not die of illness. I finished her off with my own hands."

"Well, indeed. I see you hated to let her go, by all means."

A sudden lightening flashed in the fierce eyes of Lord Hideyoshi, whose thin and wrinkled face betrayed his age. It was a violently intense lightening, which would have burnt to death any ordinary subject who served him. But my Lordship continued his words, his face frozen, completely expressionless.

"That is not so. I felt myself honored to have Your Excellency request my own servant – but I had to take every precaution before submitting her to Your Excellency. I had her family record re-checked, and it turned out that what she had told me was fabricated, and she was in truth the daughter of Hibino Shimotsuke. I could not face the disgrace of having a daughter of our traitor serve in Your Excellency's household. I also wanted to apologize for my lack of insight in not knowing her true identity, keeping her among my servants. That's why I brought her to justice with my own hands."

So saying, my Lordship looked up and looked into the eyes of Lord Hideyoshi. It looked as though he was challenging him. Lord Hideyoshi returned his gaze, undauntedly. Their swords of eyes clashed for a few moments, and then the dark clouds over Lord Hideyoshi's face started to dissipate, and there appeared a cheerful smile instead. It was a somewhat cynical but open smile, as if he were amused with what was unfolding before him. Then, the face of my Lordship, which did not flinch in front of the fierce lightening, seemed to falter. He cast down his eyes and dropped his head, first a little, and then completely.

"Well, well. Jibu is the winner, I should say." Lord Hideyoshi had regained his good humor. "But I am sorry I could not have her. Looks like I and Christian women are indeed strangers."

So saying, he roared with open laughter. Lord Hideyoshi was not going to choose a woman over his "Chōshin." He saw my Lordship was brought to his knees, and he could afford to laugh about it and forget. Besides, Lord Hideyoshi had experienced but slight disappointment; yet my Lordship had paid dearly. Lord Hideyoshi's sovereign vanity was indeed satisfied.

However, the Lady Nishinomaru looked quite differently. She had been staring, without ever blinking her beautiful eyes, at my Lordship's face. Not only did her scheme turn out to be futile, but she had to witness with what profound love my Lordship had held Yuri-sama in his heart. On a woman's beautiful face, violent emotion is becoming. Raising her shapely eyebrows in great anger, and biting her crimson lips until they were about to bleed, Lady Nishinomaru looked more strikingly beautiful and radiant than ever. Looking at his wife sideways, Lord Hideyoshi laughed and exclaimed, quite teasingly:

"Well, looks like you, too, are a loser here."

Lord Hideyoshi never failed to enjoy the clandestine war between my Lordship and Nishinomaru-sama. Lady Okurano Tsubone-sama's cunning eye darted hastily from Nishinomaru-sama's face to my Lordship's face.

Oblivious to the emotions of the persons around her, Yuri-sama rested in the arms of my Lordship, sleeping peacefully, her face pure white like the flower of her namesake. My Lordship gazed at her face, his body immobile, his face as white as Yuri-sama's. The white petals of the cherry tree were falling like a dream on the lifeless body of Yuri-sama, and the motionless figure of my Lordship."

< Again, Father Torres addresses Rev. Morales > :

Alas! The fate of those who must serve an earthly king because of their ambition and desire for fame! Above their heads hangs the Sword of Damocles⁴¹ forever. Their souls are always torn and bleeding from the thorns of atrocity and cruel insults inflicted by their tyrannical king. We are free from such anguish and anxiety because we leave our souls in the hands of our Lord. We are as meek and joyful as small children, and we simply do our best in this life as we follow the Lord's guidance. What a blessing! What a peace!

Dear Rev. Morales, strange as it may seem, according to Yasaburō, Jibu-sama never bore a grudge against Taikō-sama after that incident, but continued to give him devoted service. Yasaburō told me that Jibu-sama did not forgive the evil of a lowly person such as Kampaku-sama, but a wrongdoing perpetrated by a great man such as Taikō-sama must be regarded as pardonable, because evil itself is a part of his greatness. Even if the victim of such a great man's wrongdoing is Jibu-sama himself, he must accept it and bear it.

To me, this is a distorted philosophy of a man who does not know how to seek salvation in God; who tries to deceive himself in order to alleviate pain. In other words, Jibu-sama regarded Taikō-sama as his own God, like Baal of the Philistines, who was cruel and who loved to see other's blood shed.

Chapter 4

< Back to Yasaburō's account: >

Dear Padre, the following four years or so, I was away from my Lordship.

For one thing, the fate of Lord Hidetsugu, and the tragedy that befell on Yuri-sama soon afterwards, horrified me. I was young and inexperienced. Serving my Lordship appeared rather shameful and meaningless. On top of that, I could not help feeling secretly bitter against my Lordship for murdering Yuri-sama, even though I knew there was no other way out for him.

⁴¹ Ref. → <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Damocles>

My Lordship must have known how I felt. He told me that because of my crippled foot I should not hope to rise to eminence as a Samurai and, rather, I should train myself to become accomplished in some art. I took his advice and became apprenticed to the master painter Kaihō Yūshō⁴². I was rather hesitant to pursue the art of the hand-drum, because the profession of a hand-drummer seemed to bring me into the private lives of noblemen. Yūshō-sama, who was an acclaimed painter of that time, enjoyed my Lordship's patronage for some time.

While I was spending quiet days as a private pupil of Yūshō-sama, Lord Hideyoshi passed away in the third year of Keichō⁴³, and then in March of the following year, Lord Toshiie⁴⁴ passed away. Gradually, there arose in the air a sense of unrest, something threatening. Particularly, the position of my Lordship became extremely precarious after Lord Toshiie passed away. He had to relinquish the position of magistrate, and took refuge in Sawayama Castle in his home town .

I used to visit my Lordship every now and then, but since his retirement into Sawayama, I was unable to do so. I only heard painful rumors about him. Then, in the Fall of the fifth year of Keichō, my Lordship rose in arms against Lord Ieyasu.

Towards the end of August that year, Mozuya Sōan-sama came to Kyoto to visit Yūshō-sama. Sōan-sama was a master of ceremonial tea and was also a good friend of my Lordship. My Lordship was encamped at Ōgaki Castle at the time, and Sōan-sama told me that he was going to visit him there. I asked Yūshō-sama for permission to go with him.

My Lordship was very pleased to see us. Though he was extremely busy, we were granted an audience right away. We were later invited in the evening to his living quarters to have a private conversation with him.

⁴² Ref. → http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaih%C5%8D_Y%C5%ABsh%C5%8D

⁴³ 1598. Lord Hideyoshi was 62 years old.

⁴⁴ Toyotomi Hideyoshi appointed five of his trusted generals guardians for his young heir, Prince Hideyori. Lord Toshiie, or Maeda Toshiie, was Hideyoshi's close friend and he was the most trusted of the five guardians. However, he died within six months of his master Toyotomi Hideyoshi's death. Ref. → http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maeda_Toshiie

Not only my Lordship's own soldiers but also the troops of Lord Shimazu and Lord Konishi were gathered at Ōgaki Castle at the time, and it was uncommonly crowded inside the fortress. The drawing room and the surrounding area of the inner citadel were quiet, though. We could hear crickets in the hedge singing in chorus.

My Lordship, though a little aged, looked the same as before. But his face looked somewhat thin and his shoulders were pointed. I thought he was very tired.

With a smile on his tired, thin face, my Lordship asked us about the state of things in Kyoto and Osaka, and in the City of Sakai. He also asked me how Yūshō-sama was faring. He did not mention the impending war; it appeared he did not want to talk about it. But Sōan-sama, who came to the encampment for this reason, nonchalantly brought the subject around to the war at hand, and set forth what he had in mind.

Though he was hiding behind the shield of master of ceremonial tea, Sōan-sama was originally a wealthy merchant of the City of Sakai. While my Lordship was the magistrate of that city, Sōan-sama was his advisor. He was far more knowledgeable about the world situation than any country daimyo. He knew early on how each warlord was situated in the upcoming battle, and he wanted to give my Lordship advice, so that he would not, because of his amour propre, take a wrong course. That is why he came to Ōgaki Castle.

"Your Excellency is powerful enough to be a chieftain. But I do not think you have the caliber of true leadership. You might gain a victory or two, but that will not bring peace to the entire nation. There will be a second and a third war. Repaying the late Lord Hideyoshi for his kindness is one thing, but bringing destruction to yourself and to your family is quite another."

Sōan-sama exhorted with passion. At first, my Lordship tried to ignore his exhortations, but as Sōan-sama continued to speak with great sincerity, my Lordship's countenance eventually became serious.

"My good Sōan, you are indeed right. I have no capacity to be the leader of a nation. Nor do I desire to be one. If I were given such a title, I would not know what to do."

"Why is it, then? Why is Your Excellency starting a war? Are you saying that it is not because of your ambition, but because you simply want to repay the late Lord Hideyoshi?"

"No, that is not so. I may be disloyal to my Lordship. Starting a war like this may actually be looked upon as being disloyal to my late Lordship. Listen, it's like this. I have been all my life a tool for my Lordship. He could use this tool as he pleased. I have no objections to that, mind you. It was a great honor to be a tool for a man of such high caliber as my late Lordship. There is a talent to be able to use other men, and there is a talent that shines only when it is used by others. I know I am the latter, but...."

He stopped suddenly. He was silent for a while, looking alternately at Sōan-sama's and my face, his eyes smiling.

"I don't care if others think I am a fool. I don't care if they laugh at me. Once in my life, I want to see what I can do for myself. Whether I come out a winner or a loser is of no concern to me. I am tired of holding a banquet for someone else. Once in my life, I want to be intoxicated at the banquet that I hold for myself. This craving is stronger than the desire to have peace and security for myself and my family.... Therefore, Sōan, I agree with what you say, but I cannot accept it. A fool I am. Laugh at me. I have a reputation of being a wise man, but what I am going to do is not worthy of that reputation, I suppose."

So saying, my Lordship laughed quietly.

Sōan-sama sighed and said, "No, only a fool would attempt to live long. They say a wise man sometimes is caught in his own wisdom. Your Excellency must not be an exception." He then looked into my Lordship's eye for a long time. They did not talk further.

In the silence that prevailed, the singing of the crickets in the bush rose above us all.

When Sōan-sama was about to bid farewell, my Lordship picked up a pouch of gold brocade from a little table at his side. A tea canister imported from China, that the late Lord Hideyoshi had given him, was inside. "Keep this as a gift from me. If you hear I died in battle, make tea with this and say a prayer for me. Should fortune prove to be in my favor, I will make sure to take it back. Don't think I won't," said my Lordship, laughing.

After Sōan-sama left with the keepsake from my Lordship, I asked him to please let me serve him again. I had come to Ōgaki with that intention. I may not fell an enemy soldier, but I will become a shield for my Lordship against the arrows and bullets in the battlefield. "Please take me with you," I begged and begged.

But my Lordship would not hear of it. I thought he simply turned his back upon me. I was in tears in spite of myself, but I again entreated. My Lordship gazed at my face momentarily, his eyes smiling. He then said,

"Well, Yasaburō, your intention is most charming. I am pleased. But going to the battlefield is not the only way of serving your master. I have a different favor to ask you. My dear Yasaburō, I know I said to Sōan that the outcome of this war was of no concern to me, but I would not engage in a great undertaking such as this without knowing for sure that I would come out victorious. No matter what the outcome of this war, I am the winner. If the victory is mine, I am the winner, of course. However, even if I am defeated, I am not the loser. Listen, Yasaburō! Every one of the powerful lords on earth who has a reason to defend Osaka is with me to fight this battle. If we should lose, they will all go. There'll be no one left except the cowards who affect loyalty to Daifu (Lord Ieyasu) and the miserable opportunists. What would become of the young Prince and his mother at Osaka? Ha, ha! They'll be completely helpless. There'll be nothing for them to do but wait and perish."

My Lordship chuckled, and continued:

"The whole world might think that I am starting this war for the sake of Osaka, but would I render my good service to please the young prince's mother? You know, Yasaburō, the reason why... On that day, Yuri was with child, and I killed her. What noble reasons would I have to place myself in the service of my Lordship's wife and his offspring? Of course, I would not harm them myself. Whatever it is, what may or may not happen is the divine wisdom. Heaven will pass the best judgment on us all."

His voice, so soft that it was almost inaudible, sounded peculiarly urgent and menacing. The light was hitting his expressionless face at an angle, with only the eyes burning dark phosphorous flame. I was in a daze, seeing the deepest abyss of his mind. My Lordship continued.

"That is why I want you to stay. I want you to see what will become of Osaka after all this. That is the service you can do for me. I entrust you to do that."

< Back to Father Torres' Letter to Rev. Morales > :

Dear Rev. Morales, the fate of Jibu-sama after the battle is known to you from our newsletter of 1600.

In September of that year, the army of Jibu-sama met Daifu-sama's (Tokugawa Ieyasu) army in Sekigahara of the Province of Mino, and Jibu-sama was defeated. Though Jibu-sama was winning at the beginning of the battle, because of a traitor, the table was turned.

On the strength of his victory, Daifu-sama attacked Sawayama Castle in the Province of Ōmi, which was Jibu-sama's domain. The traitor, Kohayakawa Chūnagon-sama⁴⁵, was at the head of the attacking force. The older brother of Jibu-sama, who had taken upon himself the charge of the Castle, saw that he was outnumbered, and set the Castle on fire. He, Jibu-sama's wife, and everybody else in the Castle, family members and vassals alike, killed themselves.

⁴⁵ Kohayakawa Hideaki Ref. → http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kobayakawa_Hideaki

In the meantime, Jibu-sama and Augustino-sama⁴⁶, after escaping the battle-ground, wandered through the mountains, and eventually were captured, separately, by soldiers of Daifu-sama (Lord Ieyasu). The Buddhist Priest Ankokuji, who was the counselor to Lord Mōri, and who from the beginning was implicated in Jibu-sama's plot, was also apprehended. The three were transported to Osaka, as part of Daifu-sama's victory procession, and then dragged through the cities of Osaka and Sakai. They were eventually paraded on the main thoroughfare of Kyoto, and were finally executed at the Hichijō-Gawara execution grounds.

On the day of the execution, I, along with Rev. Organtino and a few other Christians, repaired to Hichijō-Gawara. I had been in Japan for several months, and I was at a missionary post in upper Kyoto at that time. I wanted to witness the final moments of Augustino-sama, a Christian with a noble heart, and his friend Jibu-sama, who more than once showed sympathy toward us. The execution grounds and the surrounding areas were packed with people.

Jibu-sama, viewed as the main culprit, walked ahead of Buddhist Priest Ankokiji, followed by Augustino-sama.

Ankokuji was deathly white. His head bent, he was incessantly muttering what I thought was the incantation of a loathsome pagan. The other two were composed, and displayed that courage and remarkable self-possession which the noblemen of this country are known to show at the throes of death. I saw a difference, though, that is inherent in the character of each man.

Jibu-sama walked holding his head high, with a cool, defiant smile on his lips, returning the gaze of the crowd contemptuously. Augustino-sama's gentle countenance, on the other hand, displayed peace and the supreme bliss of a man who has completely given himself to the blessings of God. He held in his outstretched hands a holy picture of the Mother and Child, embossed on a copper plate, which used to belong to Her Royal Highness Catalina, the sister of our most benevolent Emperor Carlos the Fifth.

⁴⁶ Augustino Konishi Settsunokami. See earlier Footnote No. 12 on page 4.

As soon as they arrived at the execution grounds, a high-ranking Buddhist priest, who had been waiting, stepped forward and attempted to perform the final ritual for the three, in accordance with the pagan custom of this country. It was Yugyō Shōnin of the Jishū Konkōji Temple, a holy priest who was highly respected by the public.

But Jibu-sama refused to have Yugyō Shōnin perform the ritual. As if being afraid of soiling his ears at the last moment with the priest's recitative invocation, he sent away Yugyō Shōnin with a violent gesture. Then, he knelt in front of the executioner, quietly, as if nothing had happened.

Next was the Buddhist Priest Ankokuji. Though he was nearly dead when he knelt down, he was still able to refuse Yugyō Shōnin 's services. Ankokuji was a Zen priest, and his Buddhist sect was different from that of Yugyō Shōnin. People who have the same religion, but belong to different sects, often hate one another more than people who have completely different religions. Unfortunately, this does not happen only with Buddhist priests.

Now it was the turn for Augustino-sama. Of course, as a true Christian, he was not going to need the help of a Buddhist priest. Yugyō Shōnin, completely ignored and his dignity ruined, retreated in the midst of the jeering of the crowd. Then, Augustino-sama knelt down and said a final prayer. A flash of the sword of the executioner, and his lofty soul returned to our heavenly Father in jubilation.

Dear Rev. Morales, it was then that I first suspected that Jibu-sama may have been drawn to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Both Augustino-sama and the Priest Ankokuji had good reason for refusing the services of Yugyō Shōnin. Jibu-sama, who was the wise man of the secular world, was indifferent to the spiritual matter of this life. All the more, he should have adhered to the customary procedures. He had no reason to deny a ceremonial ritual at his last moments. If he had a reason, it was because secretly he was attracted to the teachings of our Christ.

Further, the fact that Jibu-sama did not commit suicide added to my doubts. Augustino-sama, of course, could not do that because he was a Christian, and the Buddhist Priest Ankokuji could not, because he was a coward. But why didn't Jibu-sama, who was proud to the extent of being

arrogant, choose suicide? Why did he submit to being caught alive by his enemies? There is only one answer.

I told my friends what I thought, and Rev. Organtino, as well as all the others, said that my assumption might be correct. For one thing, Jibu-sama had always shown kindness to us missionaries.

From that time on until today, this thought has stayed with me. Now I have heard Yasaburō's story, and I am even more convinced that I was right. Jibu-sama, in his deep mourning over the death of his ill-fated love, was gradually drawn towards the teachings of the religion that Donna Lucia believed.

However, Yasaburō disagreed doggedly, saying:

"No, my Padre, I don't think so. I was there also. I saw how my Lordship died. You are right that he refused to receive the services of Yugyō Shōnin. He did so, I believe, not because he was a Christian, but because he detested all religions. My Lordship looked upon all religions, including Christianity, with a certain mocking generosity. He did not like the weakness and inanity of people who needed divine protection. Of course, he built temples and gave priests a great deal of money, but he was merely following the social customs as a man of his status. When he was to leave this world, he did not want to have any assistance; he wanted to travel to the unknown world all alone. Why did he not commit suicide? As I told you earlier, my Lordship's downfall was not a defeat in battle in its true sense. That's why he was not in a hurry to die. Besides, I think he regarded suicide as an act of cowardice. In other words, committing suicide is far easier than being captured by an enemy and executed."

My dear Rev. Morales, is there anything more arrogant and sinful in this world than to think that man does not need God's help? Not to believe in the spiritual power is a greater sin than the sin of a heathen. When Yasaburō told me that his master did not believe in God, he said it proudly; there was an air of triumph. I wanted to correct his wrong idea and said:

"You say you don't believe in the power of God. But, if what you have told me is all true, doesn't it prove the very power of God? God punished Kampaku-sama, who indulged in demon's acts, at the hands of his uncle. The old Taikō-sama, who was atrocious to the wife and mistresses of the slain Kampaku-sama, was punished also. His beloved son, whom he was determined to make the next ruler and for whom he murdered his own nephew, had to perish together with his mother in the burning fire of the fallen Osaka Castle. As for Jibu-sama, wasn't he after all a puppet who was made to dance at the hands of God? He may have thought that he was following his own will, but in reality, he was following God's will."

To this, Yasaburō responded as follows:

"My dear Padre, I thought about that very often. You call it God's will. We call it 'karma.' Some people call it 'Heaven's Will,' or 'Destiny.' I will not say that I don't believe in the power of 'karma' myself. I am sure that my late Lordship believed in it, also. He did not seek salvation in such a power, though. That's all.

For the last sixteen years after my Lordship was gone, I have seen God's will work just like my Lordship had said it would. Whenever I heard about the pomp and glory inside Osaka Castle, I thought of the dark fire that burned in my Lordship's eyes on that day, and I prayed for Prince Hideyori and his mother. My Lordship loved a young lady who was a distant relative to Lord Hidetsugu. My Lordship was responsible for the downfall of the mother and son, both of whom were the enemies of Lord Hidetsugu. I call that 'karma.'

But all of that is now gone. On the night of the fall of Osaka Castle, with all the townspeople of Osaka, I watched the great flames roar in the sky. Everything and every soul that had anything to do with my Lordship, his dreams and his vengeance, all were consumed in the great fire that raged above the Castle."



Rev. Baptista and I left the City of Sakai about two months ago. We headed for Kyūshū and arrived at this missionary post in Nagasaki about two weeks ago. In spite of my urgent words, Yasaburō would not convert. I feel deeply sorry for this good Samaritan doctor.

My dear Rev. Morales, in the above story that Yasaburō told me, I see God's justice and vengeance demonstrated to the greatest extent possible. The City of Osaka, which was built by the Buddhist priests of the Ikkō Sect, who preached detestable teachings to innocent people, was now burnt to complete destruction by God's fury. The woman who rode the scarlet beast met her death, quite deservedly, in the flames that destroyed Babylon.

Glory of God to us all. As I finish my story, I pray for the solitary white lily, which blossomed in the horrifying mire of the fires of hell and bloodshed."

- E N D -

~ Brief Background of the Historical Novel, "*Chōshin*" ~

< Age of Civil Strife in Japan (Mid-15th through End of 16th Century) >

Since the mid-15th century, Japan saw intermittent internal wars among its warrior lords or "daimyō" throughout the nation. "Daimyō" were landholders, and they fought to protect and expand their land. Each had an aspiration to unify Japan, and to eventually become its sole ruler. The 16th century, particularly, was a time of great upheaval and constant warfare among various feudal lords. The entire nation was torn asunder during this period. Toward the end of the century, however, substantial unification was achieved.

Three great daimyō are credited for ending the disorder of the era and unifying Japan. **Oda Nobunaga**, **Toyotomi Hideyoshi**, and **Tokugawa Ieyasu** were men of exceptional military and political abilities. They were responsible for ending the nationwide warfare which lasted for a century, and for creating a stable base for the Tokugawa shōgunate. The Tokugawa shōgunate, or dynasty, with Tokugawa Ieyasu as its founder, prospered for 264 years until 1868, the Meiji Restoration.

The first steps toward unification of the nation were taken by **Oda Nobunaga (1534 ~ 1582)**. The Oda family grew in power and influence in Owari Province. By the time he was 27, Nobunaga was known as one of the five most powerful daimyō of Japan. At the time of his death, Nobunaga had conquered 30 of Japan's 68 provinces, and Japan was well on its way to unification. Nobunaga received from the Emperor the title of Minister of Justice in 1577.

After Nobunaga's death, the leadership passed to **Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536 ~ 1598)**. Hideyoshi was a man of humble birth who had risen to become one of Nobunaga's most successful generals. By 1584, Hideyoshi had achieved unquestioned mastery of

Nobunaga's lieutenants, with Tokugawa Ieyasu acting as his principal ally. He established his headquarters in Osaka, and lived in the colossal Osaka Castle. He proceeded to complete Nobunaga's work of unification. Campaigns in Shikoku (1585), Kyushu (1587), and Odawara (1590) completed the unification of Japan.

Hideyoshi was considered ineligible for the title of "shōgun" because of his low birth, and instead he received the old rank of "kampaku" from the Emperor.

When Hideyoshi died at age 62, his heir, Hideyori, was only 6. Greatly concerned about his young son's future, Hideyoshi appointed a group of five generals as guardians. They quarreled, however, soon after Hideyoshi's death.

Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542 ~ 1616) in the meantime, rapidly increased his power, and many daimyō attempted to win his favor, while outwardly promising allegiance to the former ruler Toyotomi Hideyoshi's young heir.

The most trusted general, or "*Chōshin*," of Hideyoshi and the central figure of the Toyotomi administration, Ishida Mitsunari, declared war against Ieyasu, for violation of his oath to be faithful to the young heir. The Battle of Sekigahara was fought on October 21, 1600, resulting in the defeat of Ishida Mitsunari and his allies. Because the young heir was only 8 at the time, and he was an outsider as far as the battle was concerned, the victorious Ieyasu could not find justification to do away with the young prince. Thus, the ensuing 14 years saw co-existence of two political powers, Shōgun Ieyasu (he was appointed "shōgun" by the Emperor in 1603) in Edo (Tokyo), and the Toyotomi family at the Osaka Castle.

Finally, in 1614, Tokugawa Ieyasu found an excuse to start a war against Osaka ("Siege of Osaka – Winter Campaign). He again attacked Osaka Castle in 1615 ("Siege of Osaka – Summer Campaign"), completely destroying the Toyotomi family. The power of the Tokugawa Shōgun and his family was firmly established after these wars, and Tokugawa Ieyasu became the supreme ruler of Japan.

< Christianity in Japan >

St. Francis Xavier is the first Jesuit who came to Japan in 1549 to promulgate Roman Catholicism. The oppressed peasantry welcomed the gospel of salvation. But the new religion was a symbol of European civilization as well, and many ruling daimyō (feudal lords) who regarded it as an important link between themselves and the expanding European continent, particularly in trade, encouraged the Catholic missionary work. Some of the powerful daimyō became Christians themselves. Thus, the work of the Catholic missionaries and their teaching enjoyed considerable success at the beginning.

Oda Nobunaga favored the Jesuits. He is said to have used Christianity to counteract the political strength of the powerful Buddhist institutions. He granted missionaries permits to travel and preach anywhere in his provinces, welcomed them to his great Azuchi Castle, and showered them with his favors. It is said there were about 150,000 Japanese converts towards the end of the 16th century.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi at first continued Nobunaga's policies to favor the Jesuits. However, he later changed his policies, and in 1587, he ordered the missionaries to leave Japan. They did not leave, and connived with their daimyō converts to continue their work. Japanese Christians began to be persecuted in late 16th century.

Tokugawa Ieyasu was afraid of the Catholic nations, which were expanding rapidly in Asia, but he did not wish to lose trade with Europe. At the beginning of the Tokugawa feudal regime, prohibition edicts were issued repeatedly against Japanese Christians, but they were not thoroughly enforced. Gradually, however, fears of a Christian insurrection outweighed Tokugawa Ieyasu's desire for trade. After the Osaka campaigns of 1614 and 1615, Tokugawa Ieyasu's hostility toward Christianity intensified. In 1617 foreign priests were executed for the first time, and under the third shōgun, Iemitsu, Ieyasu's grandson, persecution was carried on with savage intensity. By this time, most of the missionaries had left, and many of their converts had emigrated to the Spanish colonies in Southeast Asia.

The story translated here from Japanese is about Ishida Mitsunari, the most trusted general of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who challenged Tokugawa Ieyasu after his master Toyotomi Hedeyoshi's death, and was defeated in the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600. The story is narrated in the form of a letter from a Spanish Jesuit priest to his friend back home. Father Baltazar de Torres happened to be at Osaka Castle during the "Siege of Osaka – Summer Campaign." He escaped the burning castle and received medical care from a Japanese doctor, who happened to have served Ishida Mitsunari as a young boy. What this middle-aged doctor tells Father Torres is a behind-the-scene story, as it were, of Lord Hideyoshi and his favorite general, or *Chōshin*, Ishida Mitsunari.

Ryoko Popjoy
Translator

