

Early Missionaries in Japan 4

Father Louis Frois: Historian of the Mission

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One of the best known of the early missionaries in Japan was Father Louis Frois. His detailed and graphic descriptions of East Asia and especially of the Japanese mission field were a real contribution not only to the history of missions but also to the Geography, Ethnography and the Cultural History of the Far East, a contribution that is becoming more and more recognized in the world of scholarship today.

(1) EN ROUTE TO INDIA



1. Stamp honoring Frois,SJ

Louis Frois was born about 1532, most probably in Lisbon though some of the sources would have it that Baja in the Archdiocese of Evora was his birthplace. While still in his early teens he found employment in the Royal Secretariat from which it would seem that his flair for writing was even then apparent. He may possibly have seen St. Francis Xavier during the Saint's stay in Lisbon in 1540 and he must surely have read some of the letters in which Xavier later appealed to the conscience of Europe in favor of the Eastern missions.

Frois joined the Society of Jesus in Lisbon in 1548 when he was only about 16 years old, and it was only a month later that he set out for the Portuguese colony of Goa in India where Xavier had already established St. Paul's College for the

training of native recruits for the mission work. It was in Goa where he landed on October 9, 1548, that Frois made his novitiate and pursued his higher studies.

Even as a student, Frois had a fine opportunity to study the peoples and cultures of many lands since his fellow students at St. Paul's College in Goa included Blacks, Abyssinians, Malays and Chinese as well as natives of India. It was during this period, too, that the first Japanese who was ever baptized was sent by St. Francis Xavier to St. Paul's College to deepen his knowledge of Christianity.

At the time of Frois' arrival, St. Francis Xavier, the founder and Superior of the Jesuit mission in India was staying in the southern part of India, and it was not until November that he went up to Goa in order to prepare for his trip to Japan. It was with the

highest expectations that the Saint set out for Japan in June of the following year, and though these expectations were not completely fulfilled during his two years there, he often spoke to the younger Jesuits of the wonderful possibilities in that country after his return to India in 1551.

When the new Provincial, Father Melchior Nunez Barreto, set out for Japan in 1554, two years after Xavier's death, he was accompanied by Father Gaspar Vilela and four scholastics and Lay Brothers, including Louis Frois, then a Scholastic.

Frois, however, was left behind in Malacca. Soon he returned to India to continue his studies and was ordained there. He then spent some time in parochial work but his special talent for writing was already apparent and the Jesuit *Catalogus* for 1559 describes him as "skillful in writing and endowed with very good judgment. Will probably be a good preacher since he is naturally gifted with a rich vocabulary".

It is not surprising therefore that he was named Secretary to both the Rector and the Provincial and was completely occupied with letter writing especially at the times when ships were getting ready to leave for various countries. In December 1560 he said in a letter to Brother Gaspar Tavares in Coimbra: "I could write much more to you, but for the moment I still have to get off the letters for seven ships, four of which are sailing for Portugal, one for Kafferland, one for Malacca, one for Maluko, and one for Japan.

At least 32 of the letters he wrote in his secretarial capacity during the years from 1554 to 1661 are still extant. These letters, as well as the ones he wrote later from Japan, are for the most part, lengthy and detailed accounts concerning the work of the missionaries, their difficulties and successes, in various countries of the Orient and not a few of them are long enough to make up a small booklet even in print. Many of them also give gripping details about geographical and historical matters, the plants and animals of the South Sea area, volcanoes, wars between the native princes and Sultans, local customs, and the religious beliefs of people in the newly discovered regions.

(2) MISSION WORK IN JAPAN

It was in 1662 when Father Frois was 30 years of age that his great hopes were fulfilled, and he was sent to Japan in company with the Italian Father John Baptist de Fonte. They landed at Yokoseura in Kyushu on July 6 of the following year. Frois himself tells us the story in his *History to Japan*:

In this year of 1563, Dom Perda Guerra arrived on July 6 in the harbor of Yokoseura. Travelling with him were Father Louis Frois, a Portuguese, and Father John Baptist de Monte, an Italian. They brought with them Michael Vaz who was later received into the Society here as a Brother, was ordained, and dies in Nagasaki in 1582. At that time there were only two priests in Japan, Father Cosme de Torres in Yokoseura, a place which was just coming into prominence then, and Father Gaspar Vilela in Miyako. There were also five or six Brothers. Under the circumstances, the arrival of the new priests was the source of extraordinarily great consolation to Father Torres and this was proven not only by the tears of joy he shed on that occasion but also by his

remark that now he could die peacefully since God had sent new workers at a time when they were so badly needed. He also remarked on the fact that he was very old, worn out and sick and had to use a crutch until a few days before. He added that in order to say Mass as required by the devotion of the people he had to support his diseased foot on a little stool since he could not stand otherwise.

When the Christians heard that two new priests had arrived, about two hundred of them assembled and were so enthused that it almost seemed that they wanted to carry the priests aloft in procession.

The newcomers found that Brother John Fernandez, a man of great virtue and perfection, was so worn and emaciated that he seemed at first sight to be a man risen from the dead.

The mission in Yokoseura had just experienced a remarkable development. The Daimyo of the district, Omura Sumitada, had been baptized a short time previously and this naturally had made a great impression on the people. Father Torres allowed Frois to baptize 60 converts only nine days after his arrival, and later Frois was allowed to baptize many others including not a few members of the nobility. This was a fine example of how Torres stirred the enthusiasm of the young men and their love for the apostolate from the very beginning, and it shows that the old veteran had a very fine gift of human understanding.

The mission work in Yokoseura which had seemed so promising was rudely interrupted when rioting and civil war broke out a few months later. Father Frois and Brother Fernandez were sent to the island of Takushima near Hirado, where all the 350 inhabitants were Catholics and were under the direction of Anthony Koteda. Frois, whose health was rather delicate, was sick on arrival there and during the following four months suffered a number of attacks of intermittent fever.

More trouble came a little later when both the house and the church were destroyed by fire, and since both the priest and Brother were sick abed at the time, they were able to save practically none of their belongings. All the books, vestment, and gifts that Frois had brought along from India were also destroyed, and Brother Fernandez lost the text of the sermons and catechetical instructions on which he had worked for many years.

Frois spent all his spare time learning the language and customs of the people from Fernandez and together they managed during the next eight months to compose a brief Japanese grammar and two dictionaries, Japanese-Portuguese and Portuguese-Japanese.

When a number of Portuguese ships arrived in Hirado in August, 1554, both of the missionaries established themselves there for the time being, and towards the end of November, Frois was called to Kuchinotsu by Father Torres and then assigned to the mission in Miyako (Kyoto) which had been established by Father Vilela five years before.

He set out in mid-winter with Brother Louis d'Almeida. They went overland to Bungo and then sailed for Sakai where they were warmly received by Diogo Hibiya. Both



2. Stamp honoring Frois,S.J.

suffered much from the cold en route and were sick when they reached Sakai on January 27. Brother d'Almeida remained with Hibiya for some time, but Frois was so anxious to see his old friend Father Vilela that he set out for Kyoto on the very next day, which was a Sunday.

In Osaka he had another adventure which nearly cost him his life. It had been difficult for him to find a shelter in this stronghold of Buddhism, and to make matters worse, a great fire broke out during the night after his arrival with the result that Osaka Castle, the principal temple of the city, and 900 houses were destroyed. The priest's belongings escaped unharmed, but a search was made throughout the city for suspicious strangers and all exits were blocked. It was only with the help of his friendly Buddhist host that he was able to escape in the disguise of a merchant and to continue his journey.

A heavy snowstorm made travel difficult. When they rented a boat to negotiate the last two miles, they ran aground in the darkness and had to spend the whole night out in the bitter cold before the boat could proceed. It was thus that they arrived in Kyoto on the morning of February 1, which happened to be the Japanese New Year's Day.

Father Vilela and the Kyoto Christians gave him a rousing welcome. Vilela promptly took Frois along on his New Year's visit to the Shogun, where Frois had an opportunity to admire the elegance of court life and the refinement of Japanese culture. On the following day, Vilela made a trip to Imori to visit the mighty Miyoshi Chokei and the Christians of that place, while Frois remained alone in Kyoto and began his mission work there.

He himself gives us an analysis of the catechetical methods which he and the other missionaries generally used and which were traced back to St. Francis Xavier. Three stages are clearly distinguished as follows: (1) An explanation of the basic philosophic truths about God, man and the universe, which was followed by a discussion of questions and objections and a refutation of the pertinent Buddhist objections; (2) an explanation of the truths of salvation; and (3) Christian moral teaching. Frois himself gives us this report:

The methods used in accordance with the directions of Father Francis for the instruction of non-Christians are as follows: First of all, we prove that there is a Creator of the Universe, that the universe had a beginning and is not eternal as some people here believe and that the sun and the moon are not gods, and are not even endowed with life. We then prove that the soul lives on forever after its separation from the body and show the difference between the rational and the sensible soul, a distinction which is unknown to the people here. After that we discuss all kinds of objections and difficulties as they are brought forward and answer questions that are asked about various phenomena of nature. The next step is to discuss those Japanese sects to which each individual belongs in order that they can compare their old beliefs with what we have told them and can see the difference. Each of the objections must then be refuted with clear-cut proofs so that the people can understand that certain beliefs are false.

Once all these things have been understood, we seek according to the intellectual caliber of each to explain the Mystery of the Trinity, the creation of the world, the fall of Lucifer, and the sin of Adam, and from this point we lead up to the Incarnation, the holiness of Christ's life, His death, resurrection and

ascension, the power of the mystery of the Cross, the Last Judgment, the pains of Hell and the happiness of Heaven.

When all of these truths have been made clear to the people by means of the fixed and standardized sermons that have been prepared in Japanese, additional pre-baptismal instructions are given concerning the Ten Commandments, the necessity of avoiding their traditional superstitions, their obligation of persevering in the observance of God's Law, the meaning and the need for contrition etc. Baptism is then administered, but not before its meaning and necessity have also been explained.

In addition to the work of teaching their catechumens, both priests were also intent upon the work of intensifying the religious life of those who had already been baptized. Great importance was attached also to the greatest possible solemnity in the Church's ceremonial especially for the seasons of Christmas, Lent, Passiontide, Easter and Corpus Christi. In this matter Frois was a faithful disciple of Vilela, who went in for large-scale adaptation to local ceremonies and customs. Father Organtino, who later succeeded Father Frois as pastor of Kyoto, also followed this same policy with the result that the missionaries of the Kyoto area stood out as advocates of a far-reaching adaptation policy while those in the Kyushu area were more conservative. The adaptation policy was also approved at a later date by Father Valignano, the great Visitor of the Jesuit missions in Japan, after he had discussed the matter at length with many of the missionaries.

Frois was wide-awake to his surroundings and shortly after his arrival in Kyoto went around with Vilela or some of the Christians to see the sights. His graphic descriptions give us an excellent and realistic picture of Kyoto of his day, and his descriptions of such places as the Seigan-ji, Hyakumanben, Sembon, Kodo, Shinnyudo, Honganji, Keiga-in, Hokyo-in, Minami-no-gosho, Chion-in, Jokei-ji, Jizo-do, Hoo-ji, Chomei-ji, Myoren-ji, etc. are superior to those to be found in a standard guide-book. Similar accounts are given in his later letters concerning the art of Nara, the splendor of Azuchi and the magnificent buildings in Osaka castle. So detailed and so filled with admiration are these letters (as also those of Vilela and Almeida) that whole sections were omitted as 'not very edifying' for Christian readers when they were prepared for publication in Rome.

Frois' interests were not limited to external things for he had not come to Japan as a tourist but as a missionary. What interested him most was the *Weltanschauung*, the spiritual and religious background of this culture, which was so new to him. Even during his first trip through the city, he listened with great interest to a Buddhist sermon in the Chion-in, and though he did not understand much of what was said, he was intrigued by the manner of preaching from which, according to Vilela, much could be learned by the missionaries.

The preacher sat on an elevated platform with legs crossed so that he could be seen by everybody. In front of him was a small table on which he had placed a book of his scriptures and a bell. He was clad in loose silk gowns of which the inner was white and the outer of a violet color and over these he wore a stole of Chinese brocade. In his hand he held a gilded fan. He was a man of about 45, of white complexion, pleasing countenance and graceful bearing. His voice, his mature speech and his gentleness along with his facial expression and gestures were worthy of note. After reading a passage from his book he proceeded to explain it in such a way that those who

understood what he said were filled with admiration at the art and method of his delivery.

Preachers in the capital city of Japan as also in Europe are usually the most eloquent and the most learned men available and they are highly esteemed by the people.

The substance of his sermon was an appeal to his hearers never, under any circumstances, to omit the invocation to Amida and always to show him respect and devotion. In Amida, he said, their salvation would be assured, and they should follow no other Law but this since it was the source from which all others had sprung. They should, furthermore, always remember the 48 vows made by Amida for the salvation of peoples. In confirmation of this he brought out many comparisons, parables and figures of speech and occasionally voiced vigorous admonitions which he emphasized by tapping the table with his fan and then proceeded in his normal tone to bring his sermon to a close.

Contact with the bonzes and the educated classes in the Capital convinced Frois more and more of the necessity of a more intensive study of Buddhism and its teachings. In later years he therefore spent several hours a day in company with Father Organtino in studying the Hokke-kyo. He himself tells us:

Since it was very necessary to know the various sects of Japan so as to be able to understand their assumptions and thus confute the bonzes by quoting their own books, the priests were most anxious to find someone who would help them with the reading of the eight books of the Hokke-kyo. For the non-Christians, this is the Book of Books, the holiest and the most exalted thing they possess, but it was also a thing of which our priests had known nothing.

By a special dispensation of Providence, it now happened that they found a bonze who could help them in this matter. A nobleman and a nephew of a *Kuge* ['court aristocrat'], he was a good scholar and a man of lively disposition who had studied in Kanto. A good preacher, he was put in charge of a pagoda in Upper Miyako, collected its revenues and acted as superior of the bonzes living there. Since he was young (about 30 years of age), however, he seems to have given himself up to various distractions, got sick and tired of monastic life, returned to the world, and got married to a woman in Miyako. They were poor, and found it hard to make a living, and the priests therefore offered to pay him if he would read to them the Hokke-kyo along with the necessary commentaries. The salary was meager but since the man was in impoverished circumstances, he agreed to do so. He therefore read to them for about two hours a day while they copied down everything in alphabetic transcription, and the bonze then spent another hour giving them such explanations as he still remembered having received from his own teachers.

He realized, of course, that he was helping the Church to combat Buddhism of which he was a follower, but it made no difference to him. The bonzes of the Honno-ji, a monastery of the Hokke-Shu, which was near the Jesuit church,



3. Stamp honoring Frois, SJ

heard about this, and realizing how much damage it would involve for them, decided to kill him. It was too late, however, for the lessons had been going on for a year, and everything had been explained down to the end of the eighth book. Since he was no longer needed, the man stopped coming to the church, and the bonzes desisted from their plot against him.

It was with great joy that Father Vilela had welcomed his old friend as an assistant in February 1565, and he had great hopes that their combined efforts would bring great progress to the Church in Kyoto. Unfortunately, the Shogun was murdered on Trinity Sunday (June 17), and during the turmoil that followed, the missionaries were banished from the city. Frois went to Sakai, where he was again welcomed by Diogo Hibiya. Vilela also arrived there a little later but was soon recalled to Bungo in Kyushu.

Frois thus found himself alone with his two Japanese and two Chinese assistants. In spite of all the efforts of the Christian nobles, almost four years were to elapse before he was able to get back to Kyoto. These years were not spent in idleness, however, for in addition to his work for the Sakai Christians, he devoted himself also to a more intensive study of the language and to writing on religious subjects.

Father Louis Frois was living in Sakai together with Brother Damian and two other young men. In addition to saying Mass for the Christians and hearing their Confessions, he received visitors from various places, perfected himself in the language, translated a number of Japanese books in Portuguese, translated the Sunday Gospels into Japanese and wrote an explanation of the Ten Commandments in Japanese. During this time also, the lives of several Saints were translated, sermons were composed for the principal Feasts of the year, and the first catechism published in Japan was rearranged in proper order. Non-Christians from various principalities came to hear the truths of religion, and no less than 300 persons, most of them soldiers from other places but also a number of nobles and bonzes, were baptized in that poor little house where the priest spent the five years of his banishment from Miyako. (*History of Japan*).

During these years of exile, first Vilela, and then Frois, concentrated all of their efforts on an attempt to get back to the Capital. Help came at last, and that from an unexpected quarter. At the instigation of Ashikaga Yoshiaki, Oda Nobunaga, then a relatively unimportant feudal lord in Gifu, set out with his army in October 1568 and was able, within a matter of days, to overpower the Miyoshi and their followers, and to set up Yoshiaki as Shogun. In the following years, he also subjected most of the powerful daimyos of Central Japan and in this way he prepared the way for the unification of the country and himself became its most powerful figure.

In Kyoto, a new governor was appointed by Nobunaga in the person of Wada Koremasa, a friend of the missionaries, who not only assured them of his protection but intended sooner or later to become a Christian himself. Thanks to his efforts, Frois was able to return to Kyoto in March, 1569, and it was Wada who introduced Frois to Nobunaga.

During the first audience, Nobunaga was so reserved that the opponents of Christianity were quite encouraged, but as time went on, Nobunaga became very friendly with

the priests and helped them in many ways. At the second meeting with Frois, which took place on the spot where 6000 or 7000 workers were busy erecting the new Shogun's palace, Nobunaga talked with him for no less than two hours. Shortly thereafter, the mission received Letters Patent both from the Shogun and from Nobunaga, with the result that the Church in Miyako not only was able to resume its regular work but also was accorded a number of privileges.

New danger threatened, however, when the bonze Nichijo-Shonin, a great friend of Nobunaga, did all in his power to have the priest expelled from the city again. His efforts were in vain. When Frois went to pay his respects to Nobunaga prior to the latter's departure for Gifu, Nichijo was also present with the result that a violent religious dispute arose between him on the one hand and Brother Lourenço and Frois on the other. At one critical stage in the argument, Nichijo snatched up Nobunaga's sword and approached Lourenço saying: "I'll kill your disciple, and then I'd like to have you show me the soul which you claim exists in man's body" Nobunaga promptly broke up the discussion.

Nichijo did succeed in bringing about the fall of Wada, but he remained powerless against Frois. Though Nobunaga carried on a remorseless campaign against the fortified monasteries and the warrior-bonzes, he remained favorable to Christianity up to the time of his death. Frois had learned by bitter experience how necessary the favor of the court and the other potentates was to his work, and he therefore sought the friendship of Nobunaga, often visited him and presented him with gifts from India and Europe.



4. Japanese Christian Nobles

to think of the construction of a real church building in Kyoto, and this plan was taken up enthusiastically by the Christians who also pledged the necessary help.

Since the mission grounds were too small, it was decided that a three storey building should be built, and this called forth a storm of criticism from unfriendly neighbors. The building was to be erected in Japanese style, and the plan was drawn up mostly by Dario Takayama Hidano-kami. The nobles of the area either sent building material or men to do

the work. Takayama saw to it that only the best and finest wood was used. The Christians of Omi province, for instance, brought in 1,000 logs while others went to Kii to procure the finest wood available there.

By the Feast of the Assumption, 1575, the building was finished except for minor details. Father Organtino, who had directed the building operations, then celebrated the first Mass in the new church. Christians came in from all over the area and continued the festivities until late at night. Even non-Christians were impressed, and many of the curious came in groups to admire this 'temple of the South Barbarians' (Nambanji) as the building was popularly called. Centuries later, when Christianity had long been extinct in Kyoto, the memory of this church still survived in the so-called 'Namban' literature.

(3) HISTORIAN OF THE JAPAN MISSION

Frois had spent ten full years in the Miyako area when he was recalled by his Superior to Kyushu in 1576. The next four years were spent for the most part in Usuki, the residence of the famous Otomo Sorin. These were the years when those struggles for control took place in Kyushu of which Frois gives us an eye-witness account in his letters. It was also during these years that Christianity attained to a predominant position in Bungo and when a number of the nobles were converted, often after dramatic discussions and disputes with their Buddhist relatives or retainers. The Daimyo himself was finally baptized in 1578.

In 1579 the Visitor, Father Alexander Valignano, made his first visit to Japan, and Frois was asked to accompany him as interpreter when he set out for Kyoto in March 1581. They arrived just in time to take part in the great festivities arranged by Nobunaga to celebrate his victories. Frois also accompanied Valignano to his audience with Nobunaga, and both were cordially received. Valignano obtained permission during his Kyoto visit for the establishment of a college for the education of young nobles, which was to be erected in Azuchi, the city which Nobunaga had built for himself on the shores of Lake Biwa. Organtino was appointed Rector of this school while Frois was to take temporary charge of the mission in Kyoto.

The records show that Frois was in Kyoto in April 1581, and that he paid a visit to his old fiends, Dario Takayama in Kitano-Sho (now Fukui) in May. In the fall of that year, however, he returned to Kyushu where he was occupied in the following year with secretarial work for the Superior, Father Coelho, in Kuchinotsu, Nagasaki, and Kazusa.

Among other things, Father Valignano also ordered some changes in the method of making mission reports. Even before his arrival in Japan, Valignano had discovered that many of the letters and reports, especially those written by young missionaries not yet familiar with Japanese conditions, gave a false impression of the country to the readers. He therefore gave orders that the reports concerning the various missions should be collected by an experienced missionary and should be read and, if need be, corrected under the orders of the Provincial as an official Annual Report. Thus began the so-called Annual Letters. The letters were to serve the double purpose of reporting and of edification. In Europe, they were read principally in the various houses of the Society, but they were also given to the

public—generally in abbreviated form—by means of the press. Since they were quickly translated into most of the languages of Europe and published everywhere, they gave rise to a new type of literature known as the "Letters of India" or as the "Edifying Letters," which served to stir up enthusiasm for the missions throughout Catholic Europe. Since these letters also contained many adventurous details of travel and the life of the Jesuits in the Far East, they were also called "Curious Reports" and appealed to the curiosity of Europeans concerning this newly discovered world in the Far East.

For the editing of these annual letters concerning Japan, it would have been impossible to find a man who was more suitable than Father Frois. He had been in Japan for a long time, knew all of the missions from personal experience, was wide awake and interested in everything, had studied Buddhism and Japanese culture more thoroughly than anybody else, and at the same time possessed a striking talent as a writer. It is not surprising, then, that all of the Annual Letters down to 1596, the year before his death, were written by him. His letters are an almost inexhaustible source not only for the history of missions but also for almost all branches of Japanology. Since these letters were translated into almost all the cultural languages of the Occident, Frois deserves a place among the world's Men of Letters.

In 1583, Father Maffei, the historian of the Society of Jesus, prevailed upon the Superior General, Father Mercurian, to have Frois prepare a systematic history of the missions in Japan. He was therefore given a special assignment and during the next few years devoted himself almost exclusively to this work. When the Vice-Provincial undertook a visitation of all the missions in March, 1586, Frois went along on the trip and was thus enabled to collect all the necessary information on the spot. By December 30, 1586, he was able to finish the first part of the work containing 57 chapters, which served as a general introduction concerning the geography, people, culture, and religion of Japan. This was followed by 116 chapters of historical material arranged chronologically and covering the period from the arrival of St. Francis Xavier down to the year 1578.

History records a severe blow for the Missions in Japan during the year 1587. Up to this time, the Christian name had been held in honor and its prestige seemed even to increase due to the action of the Christian daimyos and samurai who took part in Hideyoshi's campaign against the Shimazu in Kyushu. Then, like a bolt from the blue, came the edict of July 24, 1587, by which Christianity was



5. Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1535-1598)

proscribed by Hideyoshi. Churches were to be destroyed and the missionaries expelled. At that moment, however, there were no ships at hand, and the Vice-Provincial of the Jesuits was able to procure a delay in the execution of the decree, but the missionaries, meanwhile, were to be interned in Hirado.

Thus it happened that Frois also spent some months on that island. When the Christian Daimyos, however, volunteered to keep the priests hidden in their respective districts, the priests were scattered again, and Frois together with the Vice-Provincial

proceeded to Kasuga in Arima. In 1590, he went to Nagasaki and remained there until his death in 1597. He did, however, accompany Father Valignano as far as Macao in 1592 but quickly returned from there to Nagasaki.

Since Hideyoshi did not insist on the execution of his edict, the missionaries were enabled gradually to return to their missions. Since the decree was not revoked, however, and could be enforced at any time, the legal status of the Church was totally changed and the priests kept themselves more or less secluded so as not to excite the wrath of Hideyoshi. Frois was able to continue his work quietly and was able to bring his history down to the year 1593. The completed work embraces the following sections:

General Introduction: Country People, Culture and Religion (37 Chapters)

First Part: covering the years from 1549 to 1578 (116 Chapters)

Second Part: covering the years from 1578 to 1589 (99 Chapters)

Third Part: covering the years from 1588 to 1593.

This is the first monumental work ever written about Japan. Designed originally to provide material for Maffei's *History of the East Indies*, Frois' book aims primarily to serve the needs of Church History and edification, but in addition to this, the book, together with the 138 of his letters which are still extant, provides abundant source material for all branches of Japanology.

On February 5, 1597, Frois was an eye-witness to the death of the Twenty-Six Sainted Martyrs, who were put to death in Nagasaki. He later sent a detailed report about it to the Superior General of the Jesuits. This report was dated March 15, 1597, and was the last work ever written by its author. It was published in Rome two years later and entitled: *Relazione della gloriosa morte di 26 posti in croce 5 Febr. 1597*. Frois himself died on July 8 of that year.

Reference

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

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