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The Historic Japanese Visitors to St Helena

By Takeshi Sugimoto, Kanagawa University

This article is the result of my literature survey as well as my humble field-work on St Helena in 2013.

Christian boys go to Europe (16C)

The Jesuit's Mission

Francisco Xavier, the Jesuit, landed in Japan in 1549 during a period when samurai warlords were in a state of civil war. Despite this Christianity was gradually introduced among the Japanese population.

Tensho' Embassy to Europe (1582-90)

Alessandro Valignano, another Jesuit, came to Japan in 1579 that is the seventh year of 'Tensho.' He met several Christian warlords and proposed that some boy legates be sent to see the Pope in Rome. He was eager to obtain Royal and Papal support both economically as well as spiritually. He also thought that it would be beneficial to have the Japanese converted by these boys having experienced European and Christian worlds. Three warlords, Sorin Otomo, Sumitada Omura, and Harunobu Arima, agreed to send some of their relations' sons as their representatives.

The principal ambassadors were Mancio Ito, Sorin's relative, and Sumitada's nephew, Miguel Chijiwa. Two other boys Julião Nakaura and Martiào Hara were deputy ambassadors. Jorge de Loyola, an elder Japanese brother, acted as a mentor to these boys. Two other boys, Constantino Dourado and Augustino, were also legate members and were to be trained as printing technicians. All the boys were teenagers. The legation was supervised by the Jesuits. Figure 1 shows them depicted by Urbano Monti in Milan.¹

In February 1582 they left Nagasaki and travelled slowly on to Macao, Cochin and Goa in India staying at these places for months at a time. In January 1584 they set sailed for Europe again stopping at several ports along the way. On 27 May 1584 the legation arrived at St Helena on the



Fig.1

Tensho Ambassadors depicted by Urbano Monte: (clockwise from bottom left to bottom right) Martiño Hara, Julião Nakaura, Diogo de Mesquita, Mancio Ito and Miguel Chijiwa.

Sant'Iago and stayed on the island for eleven days. During their sojourn they attended Mass in the chapel and enjoyed their spare time fishing from the deck. They were good anglers and one day the deck looked like a fish market. They caught so many fish that some were salted or dried to be consumed onboard later.

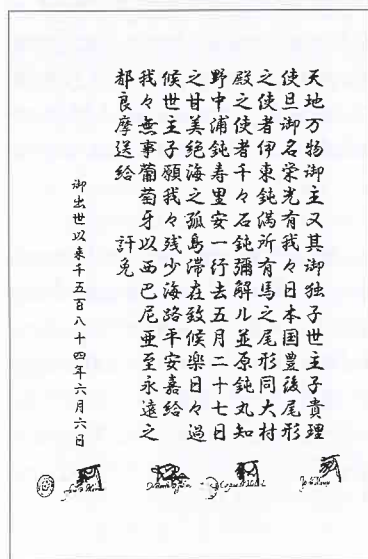


Fig.2 Representation of the envoy's votive writing fixed on the chapel wall in St Helena.

On leaving St Helena Jorge wrote in Japanese a prayer to bid themselves 'Godspeed' for their remaining journey to Lisbon and Rome on a sheet of Japanese paper called 'Torinoko'. Four boys wrote their signatures in Japanese and Portuguese and fixed this votive writing on the wall of the chapel.² Figure 2 is a reproduction using signatures taken from their real ones.

On 6 June the legation left St Helena for Europe and arrived at Lisbon in August. They were enthusiastically welcomed by Catholic Europe. During their stay they met Felipe II of Spain and Portugal, Gregorio XIII, his successor Sixtus V and many other noble people. The event was published in more than 200 pamphlets,

books and so on. The existence of St Helena was for the first time revealed by these publications,³ for example Gualtieri (1586) in Fig.3.

48.
Viaggio delli Signori
cia del uento tanto prospero, che tal giorno fu,
che corsero 160. miglia, di modo che in pochi
di firon all'Isola, che chiamano di Santa Helena.
Giace questa foletta nel mezzo dell'Oceano, do-
ne par à punto collocata dalla Diuina prouiden-
za per aiuto, & ristoro di quei, che nauigano: per-
cioche se ben nō è di giro piu di sette, ò otto mi-
glia, ha nondimenq grandissima copia d'arbo-
scelli, freschi & di piante fruttifere quasi d'ogni
sorte, come fichi, granati, narāci, limoni, & quel
che sopra tutto è necessario, ha fonti d'acqua fre-
sca in grāde abondāza. Il primo che ridusse que-
sto luogo à tanta commodità si dice, che fū vn
soldato Portugheze, l'anno 1512. il qual ritor-
nando dall'India, eleffe di restarsene quiui soli-
tario per far penitenza: alquale lasciando le na-
ui, doue veniuā capre, galline, & simili animali
domestichi, & anco semi di varie herbe, la ferti-
licità del terreno e felicità del Paese, in breue tem-
po multiplicò tutte queste cose in modo, che in
tutto quel luogo altro nō vi si vede. la onde da i
Re di Portogallo fu fatta prohibitione, che niu-
mo qui habitasse, ma si lasciasse tutta q̄ta vetto-
uaglia libera alle nauì, che vna volta l'anno vigi-
gono, le quali tutte vi si forniscono a sua posta
di quanto han bisogno, riceuendo ancora non
minor recreatione che vtilità, si dal riposo di ter-
za ferma, come da vna caccia facile e diletteu-
le, massime che per dar ancor all'uogo cōpimēto
magiore, vi si troua il mare tāto pescado di pesce
grasso

Fig.3 The very first appearance of 'St Helena' in European printings in 1586 (See end of line 3)

Cavendish's Christopher and Cosmus (1588)

In 1587 Sir Thomas Cavendish captured the *Santa Ana*, a Manila galleon and on board found two Japanese boys called Christopher and Cosmus (apparently Christian names) who he took on as crew. Six months later on 9 June 1588 (19 June, New Style), Cavendish visited St Helena. It would be interesting to know whether the two 'literate' Japanese saw the votive writing on the chapel wall fixed four years previously. They left the island on 20 June (30 June, New Style). Christopher and Cosmus were still with Cavendish on his last voyage.⁴

They left Lisbon for Japan in April 1586. They stayed rather long in Mozambique, Goa and Macao where one of their members, Jorge, died. The remainder arrived back at Nagasaki in July 1590 but sadly their story ends with tragedy; during their time away Catholicism had been banned.

Of their future lives, Mancio became a priest pastor and died rather young; Miguel became a layman and then abandoned Christianity to live a low-rank samurai life; Julião became a priest pastor and died a martyr by the Tokugawa shogunate in 1633. In 2007 Benedict XVI beatified him. Martiño became a priest pastor and died in Macao. Constantino, a good printer, became a priest pastor until his death in Macao. Nothing is known about Augustino.

The closing of Japan

The clan Tokugawa won the final battle of the largest civil war in Japan and established a new government. However this led to the Shimabara Rebellion, a large-scale uprising involving peasants and ronin (unemployed samurai) many of whom were Christians. In 1639 after this trouble the shogunate decided to close the door to the rest of the world. This policy is known as the 'Sakoku Edict'.

Shogunate samurai go to Europe (19C)

The opening of Japan

In 1854 Matthew Calbraith Perry, a commodore of the US Navy, succeeded in establishing an intergovernmental convention between the USA and Japan using negotiation backed by the threat of force. Perry visited St Helena on his way to Japan.

Naval cadets to the Netherlands (1862-3)

The shogunate felt a desperate need to possess a modern navy and obtained an agreement with the Netherlands to build the Japanese a warship. They would also train samurai in the study of naval architecture, ship steering, science and technology in general.



Fig.4 Students in the Netherlands: (in the back row from left to right)

Genpaku Itoh, Kenkai Hayashi, Kamajiro Enomoto, Genkichi Fuse*, and Shin-ichiro Tsuda; (in the front row from left to right) Tarohzaemon Sawa, Hamagoroh Hida*, Daizaburo Akamatsu, and Shusuke Nishi. (* indicate one-time visitors to the Netherlands)

commander; Kamajiro Enomoto, Tarozaemon Sawa, Daizaburo Akamatsu (who drew a map of Jamestown—see Fig 6) and Shunpei Taguchi as second officers; seven other as technicians. Two civilians, Shusuke Nishi and Shin-ichiro Tsuda, and two surgeons, Kenkai Hayashi and Genpaku Ito, were also chosen as students. Most of them were in their twenties.

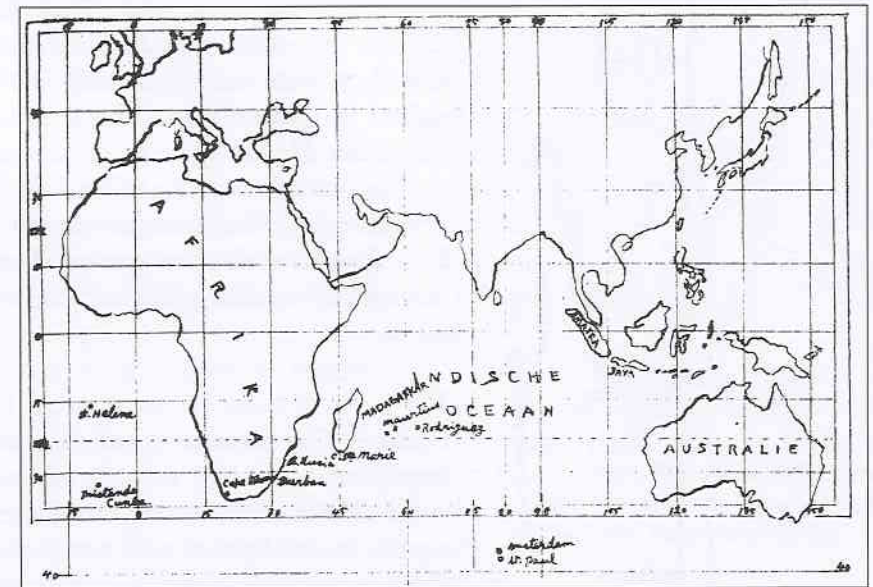


Fig.5 St Helena is seen in the atlas drawn by Enomoto.

They left Nagasaki for Batavia on the *Kallippus* in November 1862 but the ship was wrecked in the Gaspar Strait. They escaped this disaster and eventually arrived at Batavia continuing their journey on the vessel *Ter-nate*. Their next stop was St Helena shown in their atlas (Fig.5) where they arrived on the 26 March. The samurai disembarked in the afternoon dressed in the traditional style each with a pair of swords, long and short. They strolled through Jamestown and almost everywhere crowds gathered to see them. In Upper Jamestown a young teenage girl beckoned them into a garden and further to Cambrian House where her family invited the samurai to tea. They could not talk to each other but everybody enjoyed tea time. The Samurai stayed at Storer's Hotel.

The next day the Samurai made an excursion in a horse-carriage and visited the Briars Pavilion, Napoleon's Tomb and Longwood House. These samurai were adorers of Napoleon. Naval cadets called the 'Madagascar

Fody' 'Napoleon' as shown in Fig.7.

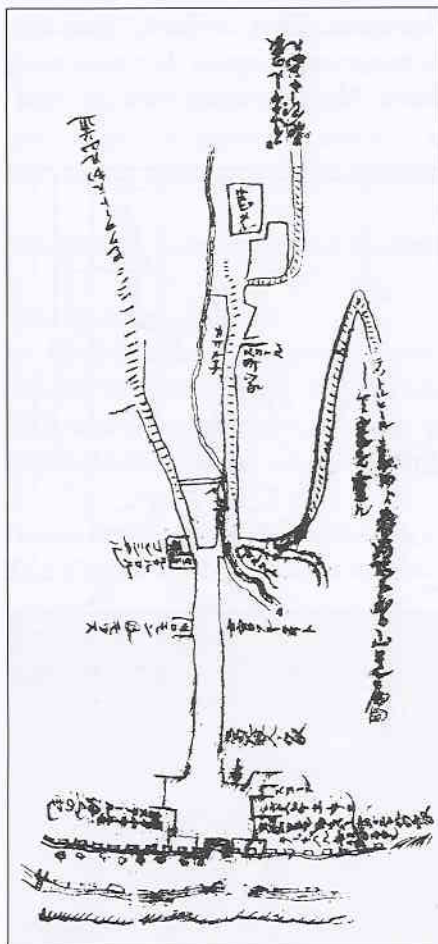


Fig.6 Map of Jamestown drawn by Akamatsu

They had been invited to see Sir Edward Hay, the Governor at Plantation House and after this salutation visit they were surprised to find a large tortoise in the front yard. Their last day on the island was 28 November and they went out again to see the sights in Jamestown. They visited Cambrian House again and met just the two daughters: the elder E.M.H. Pritchard and the younger was Dora F.K. Pritchard. In the garden Dora taught the samurai plant names, one by one.

The next day the *Ternate* sailed for Europe. The samurai spent the next few years studying in the Netherlands. Their later careers were interrupted by the Boshin civil war (1868-9) when the Tokugawa shogunate was defeated by the allied forces of several feudal domains. Uchida, a field officer in the war, became a bureaucrat at the Imperial University but died young. Akamatsu, taught at the Shogunate Naval Academy, served the new government as a professor at the Military Academy and later became a vice-admiral in the Imperial Navy. Taguchi became a professor at the Shogunate Naval Academy but died before the Boshin war. Nishi was a Principal at several schools and later became a politician in the Senate. Tsuda worked in the new government and later became a politician in the Senate. Hayashi became a Surgeon General, and Ito a Chief Court-Physician. Enomoto and Sawa led the shogunate Navy in the Boshin war, continuing to fight on even after the Shogun's surrender. Both were caught and jailed but later received a pardon from the imperial govern-

ment. Enomoto quickly rose to vice-admiral in the Imperial Navy and later became Naval Minister. Sawa became a professor at the Naval Academy, his son, Kan-nojo, playing an important role in relations between Japan and St Helena.

Students to Russia (1866)

In 1858 Russia opened its consulate in Hakodate, Hokkaido. The lack of interpreters created difficulties for the Russians and when the Consul met the Shogun in 1865, he proposed that some Japanese children should be sent to St Petersburg to study the Russian language. The Tokugawa shogunate agreed with this proposal and decided to send students to Russia.

Those chosen to go were as follows:

The eldest aged 30 years was Magistrate's clerk Sakuzaemon Yamanouchi who acted as a tutor to other students. The others were boys studying foreign languages: Jojiro Ogata, Bunkichi Ichikawa, Hikogoro Otsuki, Jiro Tanaka and Seiji Ozawa, who at 13 years was the youngest (Fig.8).⁶

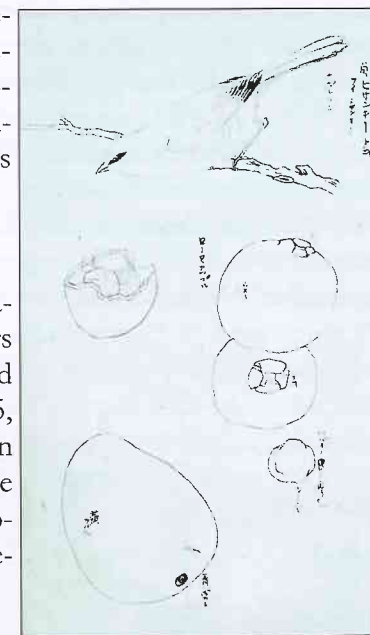


Fig.7 Natural history of St Helena drawn by Uchida: (from top to bottom) Napoleon (Madagascar Fody), Rose Apple, Banyan and Papaya.



The students travelled on the Russian corvette *Bogatyr* setting sail in September, 1865; on 21 January the following year they anchored at St Helena. On the 22nd, Yamanouchi, along with other three students, disembarked and

Fig.8 Students in Russia: (l to r) Seiji Ozawa, Sakuzaemon Yamanouchi, Jojiro Ogata, Hikogoro Otsuki, Bunkichi Ichikawa and Jiro Tanaka.

came ashore complaining bitterly about having to pay four shillings for a ferry, the amount almost equalling the supposed daily expenditure per person in St Petersburg. He was not impressed by Jamestown, but was astonished by the extraordinary number of guns. The next day Yamanouchi and Ozawa made the Napoleonic tour and hired a two-seater carriage for thirty shillings. The carriage was escorted by an African boy. The barefoot runner asked them for a drink, and they bought one for him for two shillings. In Longwood House a French guide showed them around the rooms. Then they went on to Napoleon's Tomb guarded by a French soldier. Yamanouchi was deeply impressed by the gloomy scenery and bought a guide book written in English for twelve shillings. At the end of the day they returned to the ship and on the 24th the *Bogatyr* weighed anchor for Plymouth. Unfortunately the venture failed; a year later Yamanouchi became sick and went back to Japan and when the Boshin war broke out the shogunate ordered the students to return to Japan.

The separate ways

After the Suez Canal opened in 1869, the imperial government sent its envoys and students through the canal. Japan also went to wars against foreign countries.

Nautical School trainees sail around the world (20C)

Japan as a maritime nation

The imperial government established a training school for seamen: Tokyo Nautical School. Many good seamen have been raised by this tertiary school, and they supported the infrastructures of Japan as a maritime nation.

The circumnavigating voyage (1912-3)

Vice-Admiral Kan-nojo Sawa, a son of the first samurai visitors, heard that trainees of the Nautical School would make a circumnavigating voyage via St Helena. Kan-nojo passed his father's journal on to the captain of the *Taisei-maru*. The members on board were thirteen officers, 44 crew and 125 trainees. Trainee Mitsusuke Yonekubo (Fig.9) was asked to correspond about 'life at sea' with the Tokyo Asahi Shimbun.⁷

In July 1912 they left Shinagawa for the USA arriving at San Diego in August and staying there until October. They sailed around Cape Horn

and tried sailing toward St Helena but were thwarted by a northerly wind and instead they went to Cape Town. The ship arrived there in February 1913. After refreshing themselves, they set sailed again for St Helena.

The *Taisei-maru* arrived at St Helena on 15 March (Fig.9 and 10). Yonekubo had to work on board for a while but on the 18th he disembarked and came ashore. He went up to Ladder Hill via Jacob's Ladder and had a conversation with a soldier there. Their topic was how to take this island. He bought a paper knife made by Boer prisoners with the inscrip-

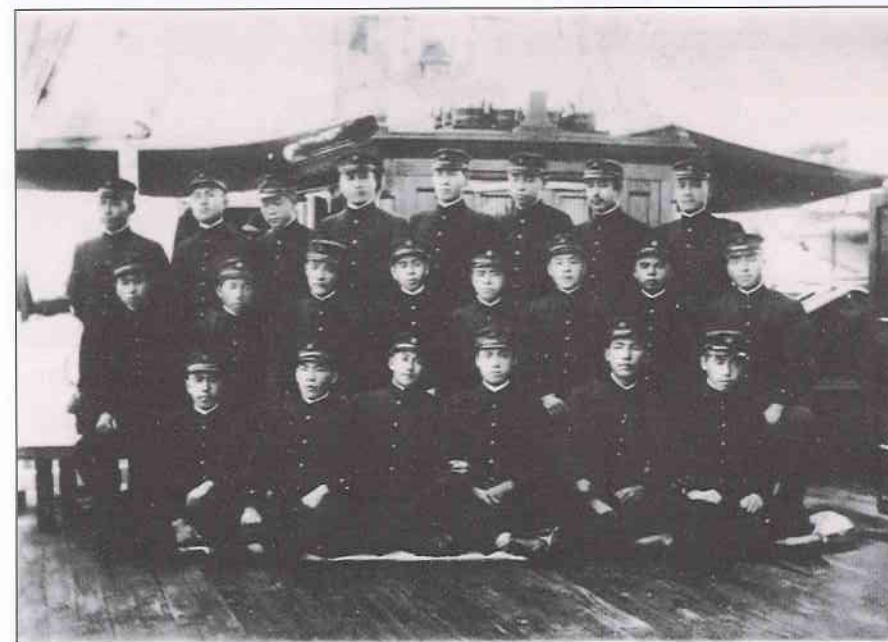


Fig.9 Yonekubo and his classmates: Yonekubo is the third from left in the far back row.

tion of 'StH1902.' Also this day they found Miss Pritchard of Cambrian House. When she had met the samurai with swords, she was nine years old. She still had the guest book with their signatures - Figure 11 - whilst Fig.12 shows the full transcription. They and Miss Pritchard posed for a photograph in the front yard of Cambrian House -Fig.13.

The next day Yoenkubo made the Napoleonic tour on foot guided by a Mr Laurence. Yonekubo was sympathetic towards the exiled Napoleon. After taking photographs, the party was urged by Mr Laurence to carry

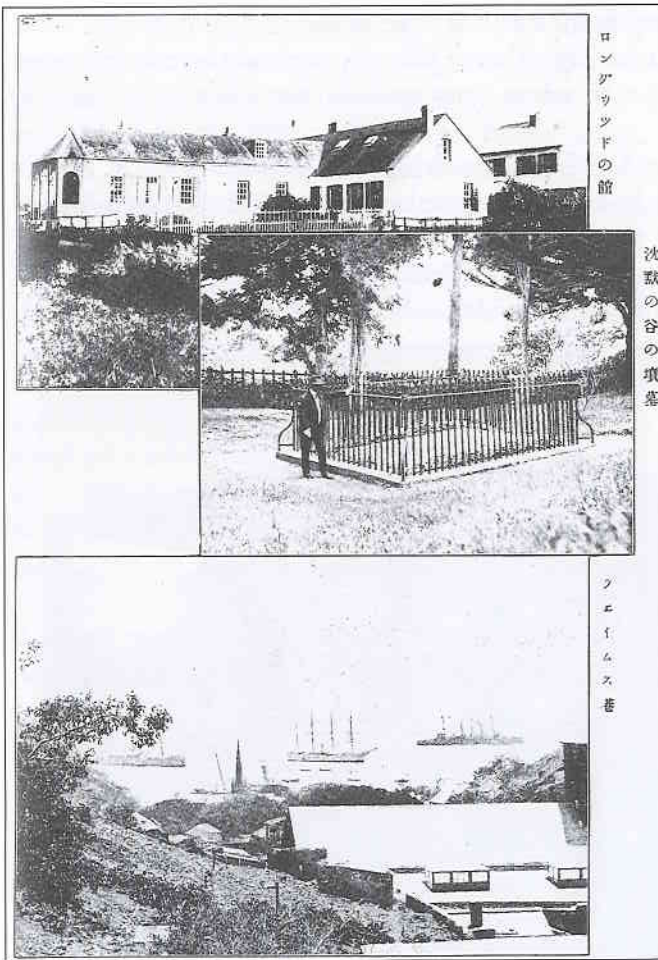


Fig.10 Pictures from Yonekubo's book (1914): (from top to bottom) the Longwood House, Napoleon's Tomb and Jamestown (the ship at the centre is the Taisei-maru).

Yonekubo's later career

Yonekubo became a captain of several vessels. He was so critical about working conditions of sailors that eventually resigned to become an activist in the labour movement. Later he became a politician and served for the post-WWII government as the first Minister of Labour.

on to Longwood where they made a guided tour inside the house.

On 20 March the *Taisei-maru* weighed anchor for Rio de Janeiro. After refreshing themselves there, they set sailed for Fremantle encountering several heavy storms on the way and losing two trainees by scurvy. The ship arrived at Fremantle in August and in October they returned to Shinagawa via Bima and Kota Ambon. This was the longest voyage ever made by the Japanese. It took 471 days and they travelled 36,377 nautical miles.



Our Trip (21C)

My wife Hiromi and I visited St Helena from 2nd until 10th of September 2013. The gap of 429 years is much too large. We couldn't even find a piece of wood from the Portuguese chapel. The gap of 150 years is very large, too. But Mr Nick Thorpe showed us in and around Cambrian House. He also provided us with antique photographs including Cambrian House, Storer's Hotel, the Ladder Hill Observatory and so on. Besides our treasure hunting we found the island fascinating and pleasant. This experience is the true treasure.

We kwamen naar eiland Sint Helena op de 11^e Februari devde Bunkuu.

Utida Tunedgiro Commander
Itou Genpak doctor
Sawa Tarozaemon 2nd officer
Akamats Daisaburo "

内伊沢赤 二月文
田東太松 月久
恒玄郎大 十一三
次伯左三 歳
郎 衛門 日 亥
門 春

26 March 1863

Signatures of Japanese naval officers
visited at St Helena March 20th 1863
entitled Cambrian Cottage on the
20th and again on the 28th.

Fig.11 (Above) Signatures of the first samurai visitors to St Helena kept in the guest book of Cambrian House.

Fig.12 (Left) Representation of the signatures: the top three lines are written in Dutch; the Japanese vertical lines are dates and visitors' names.

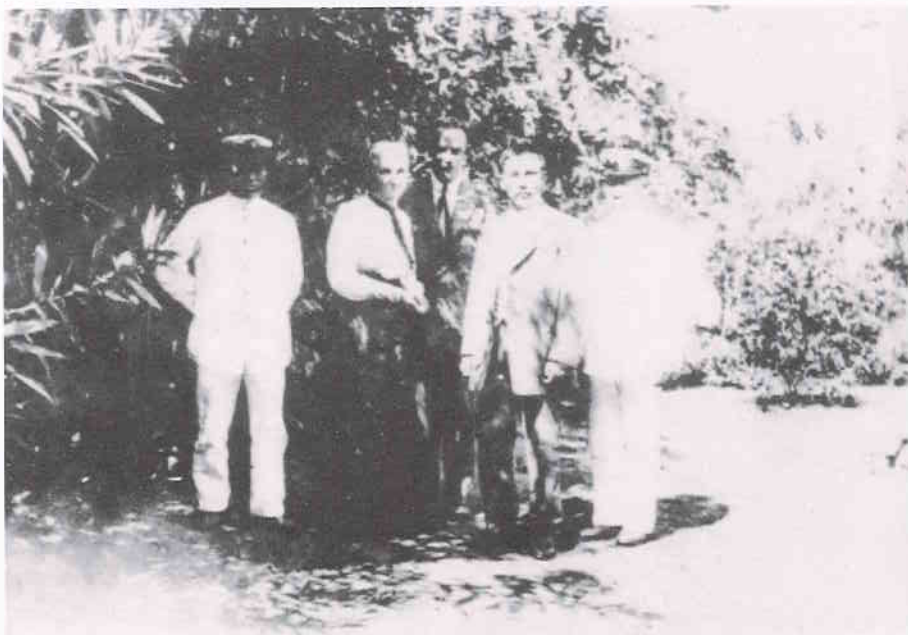


Fig.13 Miss Pritchard and officers of the Taisei-maru: the most front is Captain Koseki.

Acknowledgements

I appreciate cordially the crucial help offered by Mr Nick Thorpe, Dr Chris and Mrs Sheila Hillman (St Helena National Trust). Thanks are due to Ms Lucy Caesar (Museum of St Helena), Mr Basil George, Mr Clifford Huxtable, the Archive and St Helena Tourism for providing us useful information. Thanks are also due to the Constantines for the accommodation and transportation. I am also grateful to Mr Colin Fox for giving me a chance to write this article and editing my draft.

End Notes

1. Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan keeps the four-volume manuscripts 'Cronaca di Urbano Monte' written from 1585 to 1587.
2. Their votive writing is mentioned in Louis Frois' manuscript, *Tratado dos Embaixadores Iapões que forão de Iapão à Roma no Anne de 1582* (Macao, c.16C): printed in A.A. Pinto, Y. Okamoto & H. Bernard eds., *La première Ambassade du Japon en Europe, 1582-1592*, Monumenta Nipponica Monographs #6 (Tokyo, 1942), 268 pp. & 13 pp.
3. Most of documents are collected in original languages with Japanese translations in *Dai Nihon Shiryō*, Vols XI-1 (UTP, 1959), 670pp. & XI-2 (UTP, 1960), 648 pp.,

edited by the Historiographical Institute, the University of Tokyo. A bibliographical introduction upon 78 publications is covered by Adriana Boscaro, *Sixteenth Century European Printed Works on the first Japanese Mission to Europe* (Brill Archive, 1973), 196 pp. The details of their amazing journey is described in Guido Gualtieri, *Relazioni della Venuta degli Ambasciatori Giaponesi à Roma, sino alla partita di Lisbona* (Rome, 1586), vi pp. & 191 pp. The Jesuits themselves published Duarte de Sande, *De Missione Legatorum Japonen*, (Macao, 1590), xxxiii pp. & 412 pp. This has an English translation: Derek Massarella (ed., annot., & intro.) and Joseph F. Moran (transl.), *Japanese Travellers in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Ashgate, 2012), xxii pp. & 481 pp.

4. Cavendish's circumnavigating voyage is told in the first edition of Richard Hakluyt: *Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of English Nation* (Christopher Baker, 1589), 896 pp. The name of St Helena appears in Cavendish's letter on p.808, but there is no mention about two Japanese in the first edition. The quote above is found on p.817 in the third volume of the second edition: Vol. I (George Bishop, Ralph Newberie & Robert Baker, 1598), 620 pp., Vol. II (GB, RN & RB, 1599), 564 pp. & Vol. III (GB, RN & RB, 1600), 888 pp. Cavendish's last voyage is described on pp. 1192-1200 in Vol. IV of Samuel Purchas ed., *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes, contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells, by Englishmen and others* (William Stansby, 1625): Vol. I, 994 pp., Vol. II, 1156 pp., Vol. III, 1214 pp., Vol. IV, 880 pp. Anthonie Knivet, one of Cavendish's sailors, wrote about Cavendish's last voyage: this memoir is published on pp. 1201-1242 in Vol. IV. A Portuguese was hanged, for two Japanese revealed Portuguese's plot (p.1202). Fragile friendship between Knivet and Christopher is described on pp. 1203-4. They in the end fell out.
5. The related documents are compiled in Toshiaki Okubo & the Japan-Netherlands Institute eds., *Bakumatsu Oranda Ryugaku Kankei Shiryō Shusei* (in Japanese), Vol. I (Yushodo Shoten, 1982), 1160 pp. & Vol. II (Yushodo Shoten, 1984) 867 pp.
6. Yamanouchi's journal is published in Kanau Naito, *Bakumatsu Russia Ryugaku Ki* (in Japanese, Yuzankaku, 1968), 309 pp. & pl.I-XXIV.
7. His journal had first run serially in the newspaper and was later published as a book: Tachio Yonekubo, *Umi no Romance* (in Japanese, Seibundo, 1914), 574 pp. One chapter 'St Helena,' pp.313-374, is a description of what he saw, heard and learned there.