

# The language barrier in the history of Japanese-European relations

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In an age of internationalization and global communication, historians identify with great relish antecedents and prefigurations of international exchange in the past. Students of Japanese history have, rightfully so, been no exception. The history of Japan's relations with other lands in Asia and the West has become a well-established field within Japanese Studies. However, sometimes enthusiasm for the discovery tends to carry away the researcher, blurring his sight, and luring him into too rosy a picture of the past. He may e.g. be tempted to forget how exclusive and secret much of the information was, that seeped in through the narrow channel that was Deshima.<sup>1</sup> In addition, one must not underestimate, ignore or gloss over the height of the language barrier. Westerners reporting on Japan are often supposed to have known at least some Japanese, or else to have had Japanese interpreters with a sufficient mastery of a foreign language in order to convey the meaning of what was being said. However, the question is seldom asked as to how well these westerners or Japanese interpreters understood the language of their counterparts and how many of them did. There is of course no direct way of measuring the spoken language proficiency of persons who have long been dead. However, we have testimonies, or indirect references to the proficiency of foreigners in Japanese, and it appears that the picture is rather bleaker than one might be led to believe by many studies on the subject. Gauging the level of the written proficiency is of course more easy to do, if there are such texts. If they do exist, they are very rare, and even then one is not sure how much editing has been done by a native speaker.

This article sets out to evaluate the volume, quality and spread of the information and knowledge that was transmitted in either direction between Europe and Japan during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The first foreigners to tackle the study of Japanese were, needless to say, the Portuguese and Spanish missionaries, who came to Japan in the 16th century. Mastery of the language was a prerequisite for their preaching and conversion activities. Yet, even so, from the scant information we can gather, it appears that only a limited number of missionaries could read or write at all.

In order to gauge how well the Jesuit missionaries knew the language, it is interesting to cull from contemporaneous sources, such as letters and catalogues, references to the language proficiency of foreigners and Japanese. Instructive in this respect are the old Jesuit catalogues, notably the ones compiled by Alessandro Valignano. The energetic and

entrepreneurial Visitor was keenly aware of the need to master the Japanese language if the mission was ever to succeed. After his initial optimism about the chances of mastering the language, he grew despondent: . . . "however much we learn of the language, and with however much effort, we still sound like children compared to them, and we never reach the stage of knowing all about their writing, and being able to write books ourselves. . . ." <sup>2</sup> Therefore, evaluations have to be taken with a grain of salt. When the Jesuit catalogues state that a father "knew the language well", the spoken language is meant. When someone is able to preach in Japanese, it is explicitly mentioned, which seems to suggest that "knowing the language well" is not enough. Of Matteo Ricci, it is said he "knew Chinese language and letters well." <sup>3</sup> Such an explicit reference to the reading and writing ability is exceptional. In the same way, Pero Paulo Navarro, João Rodrigues and Mateus de Couros are singled out in the 1592 Catalogue for "knowing the language very well, being able to preach and write in it." <sup>4</sup>

Admittedly, we should not make too much of this special mention, all the more since Valignano had to rely on the judgment of others. It is doubtful that he used an objective yardstick to rank them consistently. In the Catalogue of 1592, for instance, Organtino Gnechi-Soldo is listed as someone who knows Japanese "well", whereas Luis Frois reportedly knew it "very well." <sup>5</sup> In the 1593 Catalogue, on the other hand, Frois and Organtino know the Japanese language "well", while there are nine who "know the language very well and preach in it." <sup>6</sup> Yet, the least we are warranted to conclude is that proficiency in reading and writing was a rare commodity. And if the Fathers erred in their judgment, it was usually in overstating the level of proficiency. Xavier set the example. In a letter to Loyola he imparts that his companion Juan Fernandez was very proficient in Japanese, and that he was able to translate Torres' preaching from Spanish into Japanese. In a letter of Torres himself, dating from 1555, however, the author says that both he and Fernandez need an interpreter. <sup>7</sup>

Luis Frois was undoubtedly one of the best informed about Japan. He was over thirty years when he came to Japan in 1563. He had been in Asia since 1548. He claims to have conducted a theological dispute with the monk Nichijō in front of Oda Nobunaga. <sup>8</sup> This dispute took place in 1569. <sup>9</sup> This does not tally with the contention of Francisco Cabral that it took at least six years before one could hear confession in Japanese, and fifteen before one could preach to the Christians. <sup>10</sup> In 1576 Cabral reported to Valignano that Frois had been studying Japanese for sixteen years, and undoubtedly had a better mastery than any of the other foreign Jesuits, yet he still did not address non-Christians in public. <sup>11</sup> This is corroborated by an unpublished letter of the Jesuit Society, referring to a point in time ten years later, where we read the following: "Among all missionaries staying in Japan, he is the most conversant in Japanese, but still he is handicapped in talking to the Christians, so he never preaches before pagans." <sup>12</sup> Cabral had only a very poor command of Japanese and had to rely on an interpreter. He believed the language could never be mastered. <sup>13</sup> When this same Cabral gives his judgement and places himself in the same rank as Organtino, known to be

one of the most proficient Jesuits at the time, we know that he is very mild for himself. This does not necessarily mean that he practices the same leniency in judging others, but it is hard to detect any ill-feeling towards Frois in the phrasing. Consequently, it is quite unlikely that Frois was able to conduct a dispute with a learned monk. Already Matsuda Kiichi voiced this doubt.<sup>14</sup> However, it appears that the Japanese Brother Lourenço was present in this two hours long dispute<sup>15</sup>, so in all likelihood, Lourenço assisted as an interpreter. This may sound odd, if one thinks of the remark in the Catalogue of 1579, where Valignano states that Brother Lourenço only knows Japanese<sup>16</sup>, for he cannot possibly have translated what Frois supposedly had explained in Portuguese. Nevertheless, Valignano praises him as a good interpreter in his *Principio*.<sup>17</sup> This seeming contradiction is probably easily explained in connection with Frois' meeting with Nobunaga. In all likelihood, Lourenço must have known Frois' way of reasoning and argumentation very well, since he had been his companion for a long time. So, when Frois started disputing with Nichijō, Lourenço was on familiar ground and supplemented Frois' crude argumentation with finer nuances in elegant and therefore convincing Japanese. Lourenço is reported to have been outstanding as a preacher of Japanese. He must have been a valuable ally in the dispute with Nichijō.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, Frois apparently made steady progress in his study of the language, for he acted as Valignano's interpreter, when the latter met Oda Nobunaga in 1581.

Francisco Rodrigues supposedly was the chief editor of the *Vocabulario da Lingoa de Iapam* (cfr. infra). In 1599 he taught Valignano and Bishop Cerqueira Japanese in Amakusa.<sup>19</sup> In the 1593 Catalogue he is ranked as one "who knows the language very well and preaches in it."<sup>20</sup> His fame is outshone however by João Rodrigues. The Visitor Francisco Vieira, who visited Japan in 1618, considered Rodrigues one of the most able linguists the Jesuits ever produced.<sup>21</sup> He was only sixteen when he came to Japan, and had spent more than three years in the country before he became a Jesuit novice on Christmas eve of 1580.<sup>22</sup> In a letter of 1598 addressed to the General Aquaviva, Rodrigues claims to have been brought up amongst the Japanese from childhood.<sup>23</sup> In addition, he was fortunate enough to receive some tutoring by the brother Yōhō Paulo.<sup>24</sup> One report says he knows Japanese very well, another notes that he preaches and writes in Japanese.<sup>25</sup> When Valignano met Hideyoshi in 1591, Rodrigues was his interpreter. When in November 1599, Tokugawa Ieyasu wanted to send an embassy to the Philippines, a few days before their sailing from Nagasaki, Rodrigues was called upon to translate the official letters, composed in Chinese, into Spanish.

## Ranking

In his *Arte Breve da lingoa Iapoa* (Macao, 1620), João Rodrigues divides the students in two different groups: on the one hand, those who aim only at understanding the language quickly, so as to be able to hear confession and to speak to the Christians about what concerns their souls and about the most ordinary matters of everyday conversation; on the other hand, he assigns a special mission to men of ability and maturity, who aim at a mastery

of the language which will enable them to preach to the pagans and confute their errors and superstitions in debates and in writing, defending the faith against its adversaries.<sup>26</sup>

The Jesuits used different standards to assess linguistic proficiency. Hearing confession was one of the easier things to do. The need to at least reach this stage of proficiency was great, for otherwise the priest had to use an interpreter in the confessional, which is by definition a secret between the priest and the penitent.<sup>27</sup> They probably used confessionaries with a list of sins, or at least they could do with a vocabulary, without many syntax. Besides hearing confession, we may distinguish three more levels of proficiency: those who speak the language well, those who can preach in it, and those who can write it.

### **The help of the Japanese**

More than once Valignano deplures the poor level of linguistic achievement of the European Jesuits. He therefore urges that Japanese should become members of the Jesuit Order. The Japanese are indispensable to bridge the linguistic gap, and "all that has been done has been done by some Japanese brothers that we have in the Society."<sup>28</sup> Even the European fathers who are able to preach to the Christians in Japanese are reduced to silence when a Japanese brother, "even an ignoramus" is present.<sup>29</sup> Japanese interpreters, recruited from among the *dōjuku* and brothers, assisted the fathers in many ways, including preaching and hearing confession. The fact is that, for all the efforts made, the Society was extremely dependent on a handful of Japanese brothers. We have already mentioned Brother Lourenço, who was instrumental in converting Yōhōken and his son. About the latter, whose Christian name was Brother Hōin Vicente, the Visitor's Catalogue of 1593 states that "he is a man outstanding and unique among all of Ours in the language of Japan, a great preacher in his language, and he has composed in Japanese and translated into Japanese the greater part of the spiritual and learned books which have so far been made in Japanese."<sup>30</sup> The only title we know of is the *Acts of the Saints*, printed in 1591, and written for the greater part by Hōin Vicente.<sup>31</sup> The father, Yōhō Paulo by his Christian name, is credited by Frois to have contributed a great deal to "the making of the Japanese grammar and the comprehensive dictionary."<sup>32</sup> Yōhō Paulo, reputedly a scholar of considerable standing, is said to have translated many lives of saints and 'other things from our authors' and to have been the author of the "monogatari."<sup>33</sup>

This does not prevent Valignano from also ranking the Italian Navarro very high in his *Adiciones*. He was the best translator into Japanese of all the foreigners and the author of several works in Japanese. The 1593 Catalogue further mentions Takai Cosme, from Miyako, who teaches letter-writing in the college, and Juan de Torres, Japanese from Yamaguchi, who is well-versed in Portuguese, and the teacher of the priests who learned the language well. From the 1593 Catalogue we learn that Takai Cosme teaches 'the letters of Japan' to the *dōjuku*, and helps in writing and composing books. Mentioned alongside Takai Cosme in the 1592 Catalogue as teacher of Japanese in the Amakusa college is Brother Ungyō Fabian,

from Miyako, who teaches Japanese language and writing to the Japanese Jesuits.

The best translator-interpreter of all may have been Hara Martinho, also known as Martinho del Campo.<sup>34</sup> He was one of the four Christian boys from noble Kyūshū families who were sent on a mission to Rome in 1582. When the embassy reached Goa in 1587 on its return voyage, Hara delivered a Latin eulogy of Valignano at the local Jesuit College. He was ordained a priest in 1608 and left Japan in 1614, exiled to Macao, where he died in 1629. In Macao, he lived as a member of the Jesuit community, preaching and hearing confession.<sup>35</sup> In 1596 two Spanish Franciscan friars, newly arrived in Japan, met Konishi Yukinaga, who had just returned from Korea with a Chinese embassy to Hideyoshi. At the meeting Hara acted as interpreter, and the language of communication was presumably Latin.<sup>36</sup>

### **The Japanese and the study of Latin.**

How well did the Japanese do learning Latin or Portuguese? In spite of the initial optimism of Valignano, only very few seem to have progressed very far. In 1592 Valignano writes that none of the Japanese Jesuits has an acceptable level of Latin, and that situation has not basically altered in 1601, the year when the first two Japanese Catholic priests are ordained<sup>37</sup>. One notable exception is Hara Martinho, about whom the 1593 catalogue says that he has finished his Latin studies, although he is still a novice and in the Society for only one and a half years<sup>38</sup>, but this is not without any connection with the special career of the man, who during his mission to Europe had excellent opportunities to learn Latin.

The study of Latin proved to be a formidable obstacle for the Japanese, and Bishop Pedro Martins as well as Valignano, were struck by the reluctance with which they learned it. This impression is in sharp contrast with some of the more optimistic assessments by Valignano, made in earlier days when he was confident that the Japanese seminarians would make excellent students. He was so carried away that he wrote that “the children learn to read and write in our language much more easily and in less time than our children in Europe.” Some other ecclesiastics too seem to have had spells of optimism, such as e.g. Pedro Gomez, who reports in his annual letter of 1593-1594, that the students are now studying Latin much harder than before, and he ascribes this improvement to better teachers, the availability of printed books and the prospect of ordination. Later on, Valignano repeatedly deplores the slow progress the Japanese made in the study of Latin.<sup>39</sup> There were a few exceptions, such as Hara Martinho, Constantino Dourado, Yūki Diogo, and Kasui Pedro, but they had been abroad for considerable periods of time, where they may have found conditions more conducive to the mastery of the language. Constantino Dourado had been a companion and a servant of the four legates sent to Rome. Frois praises Dourado’s proficiency in the Portuguese language, and reproduces a passage of his writing, an appreciation shared by Valignano. A passage in Valignano’s *Principio* of 1601 may go a long way in clarifying the apparent contradiction with respect to the judgment about the Japanese progress in the study of Latin. He strongly qualifies the optimistic statement Maffei has made about the Japanese

ability. Since Maffei draws his information largely from Valignano's earlier writings, it is actually Valignano revoking himself. He writes: "It has been written of Japanese children that they learn to write our letters more easily than Europeans do, and this may have been misinterpreted to mean that they learn Latin and also other subjects more rapidly than Europeans do."<sup>40</sup> In point of fact, close reading of the relevant passage in the *Sumario* seems to support Valignano's way of putting it: he does indeed say "the children learn to read and write in our language much more easily and in less time than our children in Europe". We probably have to acquaint ourselves better with the ideas about education prevalent at the time in Europe. No doubt emphasis was much more on the simple act of writing and reading out loud, which is a very mechanical activity, but it did not necessarily mean understanding, or the ability to compose. Frequently the word "letters" is used in just that sense, not with the meaning of literature. Likewise, Latin is sometimes used in the sense of Roman letters. This is clearly the case in the following passage from the *Sumario*: "In each of these houses there is to be a school for boys, where they are to be taught to read and write in Japanese, and then in due time they have to be taught to read and write in Latin, so that they can read our books, which will have to be printed in their language but in our characters, because of the innumerable multitude of them that there are."<sup>41</sup> It is not clear whether this was intentional or not, but there is often ambiguity in the use of words referring to writing as a set of conventional signs and as the written representation of a message. The 1579 Catalogue lists Juan de Torres as the only one among the seven Japanese Jesuits who knows any language other than Japanese. He is reportedly fluent in Portuguese, which he speaks, reads and writes very well.<sup>42</sup>

### **Textbooks, grammars and dictionaries**

The need to learn the language was recognized very early on. This may sound as a truism, but in those days it was not as obvious as it is now. Cabral e.g. was not in favour of Europeans studying a native language, considered it next to impossible anyway, and was in favour of the establishment of a school for Japanese interpreters. Valignano, however, opting for a policy of adaptation, had urged that all newly arrived missionaries follow a two year training in the Japanese language. Anyway, by the end of 1581, the Funai college had compiled a Japanese grammar (*arte*), dictionary and catechism, presumably in manuscript form, for the Portuguese students. The grammar was compiled by Prenestino, on the pattern of a Latin grammar, although he was not fluent in Japanese.<sup>43</sup>

"The most urgent to print are a *Calepino* and a grammar" says Valignano.<sup>44</sup> Very early on efforts had been made to compile a grammar and dictionary. Frois relates that as early as 1563-1564 Brother João Fernandez, had for seven or eight months worked on the compilation of a grammar of Japanese and Japanese-Portuguese and Portuguese-Japanese vocabularies, which subsequently served as a basis for the published grammar and vocabulary.<sup>45</sup> Mexia relates that a grammar was made in 1580, while Coelho in the annual letter of 1582 informs

the General that “the grammar of the Japanese language has been finished this year, and a vocabulary and some treatises in the Japanese language have also been made”. The first linguistic text that was printed on the Jesuit press was Manotl Alvarez’ Emmanuelis Alvare Societate Iesu *De Institutione Grammatica Libri Tres*, a Latin grammar with some explanations in Japanese, printed at Amakusa in 1594.<sup>46</sup> The *Dictionarium Latino Lusitanicum ac Iaponicum*, Ex Ambrosii Calepini Volumine Depromptum, a Latin-Portuguese-Japanese dictionary was published in 1595 at Amakusa. It contained 908 pages and more than 20,000 entries. *Rakuyōshū* is a dictionary of kanji, printed on the mission press in movable type in 1598<sup>47</sup>. The *Vocabulario da Lingoa de Iapam* (Nagasaki, 1603) and its supplement (Nagasaki, 1604) is an impressive piece of scholarship. It contains 32,798 entries<sup>48</sup> from a very wide range of fields, differentiates between Miyako area language and Kyūshū language, pays much attention to stylistic problems and to *kun* and *on* yomi of the characters, and contains many examples taken from literature and *mai*.<sup>49</sup>

*Arte da Lingoa de Iapam* took four years to be printed: starting in 1604 and completed in 1608. The *Arte* consists of three parts, called “livros”, that deal respectively with conjugation, syntax, and stylistic problems. It lists numerous examples from literature, in particular from the Jesuit editions of *Taiheiki*, *Heike Monogatari*, and quotations from *Kōwakamai* plays and religious texts by the Japanese brothers.<sup>50</sup> The author also displays a keen awareness of social stratification in Japanese society. He clearly distinguishes the performing arts that are enacted by outcasts, *hinin*, *kawaramono* etc. from the arts that enjoyed patronage of the martial nobility. The great care for stylistics may be gathered from the chapter he devotes to modes of address, epistolary formulas and written requests, etc. In his explanation of the term *orikami*, the letter which in folded twice breathwise, he notes that such letter, when addressed to a lord or a noble person always consists of two leaves. He adds that a letter addressed to actors of *sarugaku*, *dengaku* or *maimai* dancers, does only contain one leaf.<sup>51</sup> His linguistic analysis too is astute for his times and for someone who had not been specially trained as a linguist.<sup>52</sup>

In João Rodrigues’ *Arte Breve da Lingoa Japoa* (Macao, 1620) we read that *mai*, narratives to accompany a dance, as well as *monogatari*, were transposed from classical to colloquial style, to serve as texts for foreigners studying Japanese, and it is possible that some *mai* were specially made for the purpose, but Rodrigues condemns them as bad teaching material.<sup>53</sup>

It is interesting to compare the situation of the Jesuits in China. Fr. Michele Ruggieri, the first Jesuit to work in China, was instructed by Valignano to devote all his time to the study of Chinese. He apparently took this injunction to heart, for in 1581 he is reported to have mastered about 12,000 characters out of a total of approximately 80,000.<sup>54</sup> The study of Chinese was fairly well organized in Macao, which served as a kind of training center for the Jesuits in the Far East. Unlike in Japan, the Jesuits could stay in China much longer, and some became considerably proficient in Chinese, written and spoken. They have left a considerable number of writings in Chinese, notably Matteo Ricci, Adam Schall and Ferdinand Verbiest, but it is clear that all their Chinese works were edited by Chinese. It is practically impossible to find specimens of handwriting, and the only example I have seen is a

practice sheet on which Verbiest had written rather awkward Chinese characters. In his letters he often intersperses the Latin or Portuguese text with common colloquial expressions. It also appears that as he grew older, his Latin and Portuguese grew rusty, a phenomenon also to be observed in the case of João Rodrigues.<sup>55</sup>

## The Study of Dutch

During the period of *Sakoku*, the Dutch were the only people who were theoretically in a position to learn Japanese. However, only a small percentage actually did. For one thing, the Bakufu made every effort to discourage them from learning the language. Carl Peter Thunberg (1743-1828), who stayed in Japan during the years 1775-1776, deplored the lack of interest of the Dutch in the study of Japanese and compared them unfavorably with the Portuguese.<sup>56</sup> However, there were notable exceptions, such as, for instance, Hendrik Doeff, who could read and write Japanese<sup>57</sup>, but, if he could, it was largely due to coincidence. The Napoleonic Wars in Europe kept him a virtual prisoner for several years on the tiny island of Deshima. Since in principle the Dutch were not supposed to learn Japanese, it incumbered upon the Japanese to make the efforts. The memoirs and reports of the Dutch residents in Deshima give us an idea about the proficiency of the professional interpreters (*tsūji*). During the seventeenth century at least, they concentrated mainly on the spoken language, and had a very limited range of vocabulary. It was not until the 18th century that members of the intellectual and social elite started the study of Dutch as an academic pursuit. Aoki Konyō and Noro Genjō began studying the language at the behest of Shogun Yoshimune. It is not clear how well Konyō knew Dutch: purportedly about 700 words, according to other sources 400 words. Yoshimune's interest in Dutch started when he browsed through a few books (or one book) that were in the Bakufu library. He was surprised by the accurateness of the illustrations. Shogunal interest at once put the study of Dutch on another social footing. However, Aoki and Noro had no books and no teacher. The only possibility for them to learn the language was to seek contact with the Dutch, when these were in Edo for their yearly audience with the Shogun. On these occasions they had to rely on the *tsūji* who accompanied the Dutch. Because the intellectual *Rangakusha* wrote their own history, they have tended to downplay the scholastic merits of the professional interpreters, and, overrated their own learning and knowledge. While, in many instances, their general assessment may have been correct, there are notable exceptions. A few have distinguished themselves, such as Imamura Gen'emon, the assistant of Engelbert Kaempher's.

Yet, in general, the standard of most interpreters was low. Kaempher himself has bitter complaints about them. Although these interpreters receive yearly allowances, they do a poor job. They simply seem to make strings of foreign words which they connect according to Japanese syntax, the result of which is so poor that one would actually need another interpreter to translate their warped translations.<sup>58</sup> This complaint is not an isolated case. We find it regularly in the *Daghregisters*. The poor standard is due to two factors: first, during the

seventeenth century, there was quite a number of interpreters, but they had been trained in Portuguese, rather than in Dutch; secondly, since they had to assist in the commercial transactions with the Dutch, vocabulary was more important than syntax.

### Portuguese lingers on

In a generalizing way it is often said that Dutch-Japanese relations lasted about 250 years, and for convenience's sake, the starting date is usually taken as 1639. However, Portuguese as the vehicle of communication lingered on for a considerable time. A cogent proof of this is the case of Inoue Masashige (1585-1661), the famous Bakufu official known for his ruthless persecution of Christians. Besides his anti-Christian attitude, he also had a very keen interest in Western knowledge, especially medicine. The diaries of the Dutch *Oppehoofden* relate many instances testifying to the frequent contacts he had with the Dutch. He ordered books on anatomy, on medical drugs and scientific instruments with the Dutch, and often addressed queries of a scientific nature to them. He seems to have had (a) private interpreter(s), not of the Dutch language, however, but of Portuguese. In a diary entry of 17th December 1652, the Dutch *Oppehoofd* relates that Inoue inquired with the Dutch whether anyone among them could translate the *Crydtboeck* of Dodoens into Portuguese.<sup>59</sup> They replied that there was no one who could. In the same year Andō Ukyō ordered a book on anatomy "illustrated and in Portuguese", as well as on botany equally "illustrated and in Portuguese".<sup>60</sup> Inoue Masashige owned a copy of the *Vocabulario da Lingoa de Iapam*, and after he lost his copy in a fire, his successor Hōjō Ujinaga asked the Dutch captain for another copy, in vain.<sup>61</sup>

When in 1673 the English vessel "Return" sailed to Nagasaki, its captain Simon Delboe negotiated with the Nagasaki magistrates in Dutch and Portuguese. In his diary he recorded that all questions were put to him in Portuguese, were answered in Portuguese or Spanish, and then put into Dutch<sup>62</sup>. Evidently both languages were used on a more or less equal footing, but the text does seem to suggest that the interpreters were more confident in Portuguese. Even as late as 1695 Imamura Gen'emon took an examination in Dutch and Portuguese.<sup>63</sup> It was probably knowledge of the latter that served him best when he had to assist Arai Hakuseki with the questioning of the Italian missionary Sidotti.

The study of Dutch among the tsūji was far less methodical than had been the study of Portuguese, Latin, and Japanese among the Iberian missionaries. The knowledge that had been accumulated by the latter was simply not passed on. As a result the general standard among the tsūji of Dutch was much lower. Emphasis was much more on lists of words, and less on proper sentences. Kaempfer wrote that he taught grammar to Imamura Gen'emon, a rather puzzling statement, unless we take into account that most tsūji contented themselves with memorizing vocabulary.

In his *Rangaku jishi* (kotohajime) Sugita Genpaku writes that it took hundred years before Dutch writing and reading were practised by the Nagasaki tsūji. From the closure of the

country to the middle of the eighteenth century the Nagasaki tsūji used katakana to transcribe the Dutch words they had picked up anrally and managed to remember. This contention is generally contested by scholars now. Although, in a general sense, Sugita's statement cannot have been very far from the truth, there are testimonies about the training of tsūji, which included reading and writing, taught by Dutch at Deshima. That the Dutch being taught cannot have been of a very high level, hardly needs to be argued. The great majority of the Dutch staff were men of modest educational attainment themselves. At any rate, the study seemed to be concentrated more on vocabulary than on grammar and syntax. As government officials in charge of controlling the goods that were being unloaded and put up for sale, before anything else they had to be familiar with nomenclature. There are quite a number of vocabulary lists, preserved mostly as manuscripts in libraries. As a rule, the words are transcribed in katakana. However, in recent years, collections of conversation sentences in Dutch and Japanese have been found, so that Genpaku's statement has at least to be qualified.<sup>64</sup> Apart from the technical problem of reading and writing romaji, it is easy to assume that there was a kind of prejudice against it, since for the Japanese it was impossible to distinguish between Portuguese and Dutch, and since Portuguese was indelibly associated with things Christian.

#### Notes

- 1 Masaomi Kondo, "Japanese Interpreters in Their Soci-Cultural Context", *Meta* 33, 1 (1988): p. 72.
- 2 J.F. Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits: Alessandro Valignano in sixteenth-century Japan*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1993): p. 179.
- 3 Josef F. Schütte S.J., ed., *Monumenta Historica Japoniae I: Textus Catalogorum Japoniae*, Monumenta Missionum Societatis Iesu Vol. XXXIV, (Roma: Monumenta Historica Soc. Iesu, 1975): p. 313.
- 4 Schütte, p. 287.
- 5 Schütte, p. 285 and 294.
- 6 Moran, *The Japanese*, pp. 183-184.
- 7 Georg Schurhammer S.J., *Das Kirchliche Sprachproblem in der japanischen Jesuitenmission des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts. Ein Stück Ritenfrage in Japan*, Mitteilungen der Deutsche Gesellschaft für Natur- u. Völkerkunde Ostasiens (NOAG), Herausgegeben vom Vorstande, Bd. XXIII (Tokyo, 1928), pp. 12-13.
- 8 Matsuda Kiichi, *Nanban shiryō no hakken*, Chūkōshinsho 51 (Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1964): p. 67.
- 9 Idem, p.52.
- 10 Moran, *The Japanese*, p. 180.
- 11 Moran, *The Japanese*, p. 181.
- 12 Matsuda, p. 67.
- 13 Moran, *The Japanese*, p. 182.
- 14 Matsuda, p. 67.
- 15 Idem, p. 63.
- 16 Schütte, p. 113.
- 17 Alessandro Valignano, *Libro primero del principio y progreso de la religion christiana en Jappon y de la especial providencia de que nuestro Senor usa con aquella nueva iglesia* (unpublished), British Museum Additional Manuscript 9857, ch. 12, 57v.
- 18 Lourenço was an uneducated but talented minstrel, blind in one eye and not seeing much with the other. He had been baptized by Francis Xavier in Yamaguchi in 1551, had served the Church ever

- since and in about 1560 had become the first Japanese Jesuit. He was a very effective preacher, whom Frois credited with converting Takayama Ukon and his father, as well as Konishi Yukinaga and his father; See Moran, *The Japanese*, p. 184-185.
- 19 Moran, *The Japanese*, p. 182.
  - 20 Schütte, p. 314.
  - 21 Michael Cooper, *Rodrigues the Interpreter* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1974): p. 68.
  - 22 Moran, *The Japanese*, p. 181.
  - 23 Moran, *The Japanese*, p. 170.
  - 24 Cooper, p. 68.
  - 25 Idem, p.68.
  - 26 Joseph Moran, "The Well of Japanese Undefined: Joao Rodrigues' Advice on How to Study Japanese", *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 30, 3 (1975), pp. 277-281.
  - 27 J.F. Moran, *The Language Barrier and the Early Jesuits in Japan*, Stirling Occasional Papers No. 4 (Stirling: University of Stirling, 1992) p. 10.
  - 28 Alessandro Valignano, *Sumario de las Cosas de Japon* (1583), ed. Jos. L. Alvarez-Taladriz (Tokyo: Monumenta Nipponica Monographs, 1954), ch. 13, p. 183.
  - 29 Idem, pp. 199-200.
  - 30 Schütte, p. 321.
  - 31 Johannes Laures, *Kirishitan Bunko: A Manual of Books and Documents on the Early Christian Mission in Japan*, 3rd revised and enlarged ed. (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1985), p. 40.
  - 32 Luis Frois, *Historia de Japam*, 5 vols., ed. por Jos Wicki (Lisboa, 1976-1984), vol. 1, p. 172; Moran dismisses Wicki's assumption that Frois is referring to the printed Latin grammar of 1594 and the Latin-Portuguese-Japanese Dictionary of 1595, pointing out that for one thing, Frois is referring to a Japanese grammar, not a Latin one, and the further surmises that the dictionary he is referring to is the Vocabulario da Lingoa de Japam; neither of these works had been printed in Frois' or Y h Paulo's time; see Moran, *The Japanese*, p. 223, n. 40.
  - 33 Moran, *The Japanese*, p. 186.
  - 34 Matsuda, p. 74.
  - 35 Moran, *The Japanese*, p. 19.
  - 36 Moran, *The Japanese*, pp. 93 and 187.
  - 37 Moran, *The Japanese*, p. 92, quoting Alessandro Valignano SJ, *Adiciones del Sumario de Japon* (1592), and Idem, *Libro primero del principio y progreso de la religion* (1601), ch. 7.
  - 38 Schütte, p. 319.
  - 39 Moran, *The Japanese*, p. 151, 162 and 168.
  - 40 Quoted from Moran, *The Japanese*, p. 152.
  - 41 Translated in Moran, *The Japanese*, p. 154.
  - 42 Idem, p. 185.
  - 43 Cooper, pp. 53, 59 and 68.
  - 44 Moran, *The Japanese*, p. 149.
  - 45 Frois, vol. 1, p. 357; See also Moran, *The Japanese*, p. 156.
  - 46 Laures, pp. 16 and 50; see also Cooper, pp 221 and 226.
  - 47 Laures, pp. 58-60.
  - 48 Cooper, p. 222.
  - 49 Thomas F. Leims, *Die Entstehung des Kabuki: Transkulturation Europa-Japan im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, Brill's Japanese Studies Library vol. 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), p.20.
  - 50 Leims, p. 211.
  - 51 Leims, p. 213.
  - 52 See Engelbert Jorissen, "16-17 seiki ni okeru yoroppa-jin to nihongo", *Biburia* 102 (October 1994), p. 169.
  - 53 Moran, *The Japanese*, pp. 156-157.

- 54 Schütte, pp. 116-117.
- 55 Cooper, p. 68.
- 56 Frits Vos, "Mihatenu yume — An Unfinished Dream: Japanese Studies until 1940," In *Leiden Oriental Connections 1850-1940*, edited by Willem Otterspeer (Leiden, New York, Kobenhavn, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1989), 359.
- 57 Vos, pp. 360-1.
- 58 Engelbert Kaempher, *History of Japan, together with a Description of the Kingdom of Siam, 1690-1692*, 3 vols. (Glasgow, 1906), vol. 2, p. 101.
- 59 Sugimoto Tsutomu, *Kaitai shinsho no jidai: Edo no honyaku bunka o saguru* (Tokyo: Waseda daigaku shuppanbu, 1987), p. 31.
- 60 Sugimoto, p. 29.
- 61 Nagazumi Yōko, "Foreign Intelligence and Its Interpreters", in *Engelbert Kaempher — Werk und Wirkung — Vorträge der Symposien in Lemgo und in Tokyo*, herausgegeben von Detlef Haberland (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1993), p. 34 ff.
- 62 Nagazumi, p.33.
- 63 Paul van der Velde, "Die Achse, um die sich alles dreht. Imamura Gen'emon Eisei (1671-1736) Dolmetscher unter ebenbürtiger "Diener" Kaempfers," in *Engelbert Kaempher — Werk und Wirkung —*, p. 177.
- 64 Sugimoto, p. 78 ff.