

2000 Edition

# SORIN OTOMO

Don Mancio Itō, Mandato da (sent by) Don Francesco (Sorin Otomo) Re di Bongo (King of Bungo)

(the chronicle by Ur-bano Monte of Milan in 1587)



Gregory XIII and the first Japanese Embassy to Europe, by G. Valeriano S. J.  
(Title in Latin : *Plura seminaria et collegia condit intra et extra Evropam* )



St. Francisco Xavier  
(Courtesy of the Kobe City Museum)



Four young royal Ambassadors of Japan  
Printed in Augspurg, Anno, M. D. LXXXVI.  
(Courtesy of the Kyoto University Library)

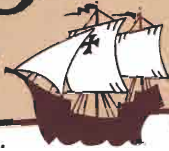


Narban Biombō (南蛮屏風) (Courtesy of the Kobe City Museum)

# The Story of the Great King of Bungo

## Sorin Otomo

The Man who Opened the Way to Europe



Although Sorin used a number of different names throughout his life, including Shiohoshimaru in his childhood, Yoshishige, Sorin and Ensai, this special issue uses the name "Sorin" to avoid confusion.

### The Birth of Sorin, the Young Feudal Lord

A boy was born in 1530, in the middle of a turbulent era of wars.

Congratulations!

It was Sorin.

A perfect boy to become the next lord!

Mother!

He was raised to become the successor of the Otomo family, but his mother passed away when he was only 12 years old.

Sorin's step-mother contrived a scheme to make her own child, Shioichimaru, the family's successor. Sorin's father gradually paid more and more attention to Shioichimaru.

My father and my stepmother will abandon me...

Young master! Stop!

Get your hands off of me!

Sorin became an unhappy youth, leading a wild life... Eventually, he acquired the reputation of being rebellious.

At the same time, Oda Nobunaga, who was 4 years younger than Sorin, was also widely known as being rebellious in Owari (present-day Nagoya).

You're finished!

Family strife broke out in 1550 when Sorin was twenty years old. Sorin's father, stepmother and Shioichimaru were killed by senior retainers during the "Otomo Nikai Kuzure" incident.

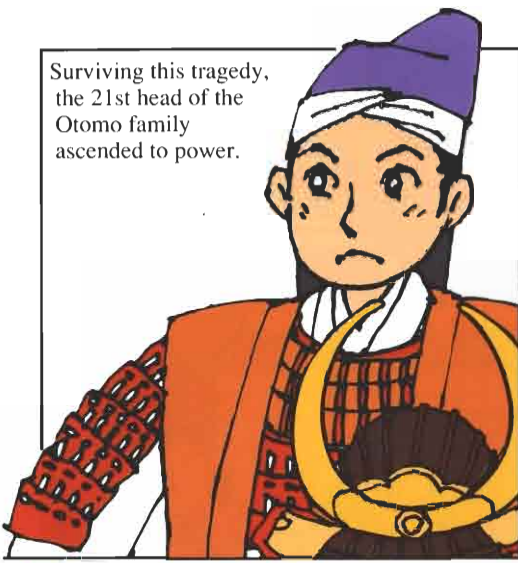
Die!

Don't mess with me!

Is this about my successor!?

The Otomo Nikai Kuzure Incident : Otomo senior retainers Tsukumi and Taguchi killed Sorin's father, stepmother and stepbrother Shioichimaru. It is said that this incident occurred because of the constant antagonism on the family estate. Sorin, who had been in Bepu when the incident occurred, settled it quickly and skillfully, assuming the post of the 21st head of the family, thus avoiding a crisis.

Surviving this tragedy, the 21st head of the Otomo family ascended to power.



You all share my destiny!



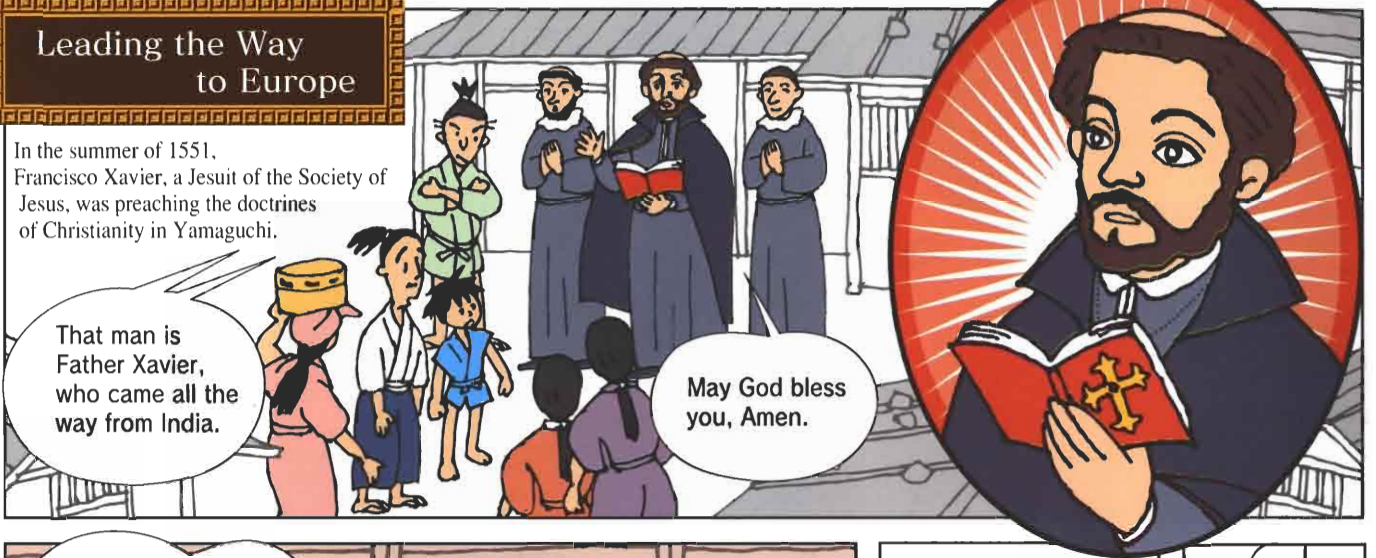
Otomo was on his way to seek his destiny...

### Leading the Way to Europe

In the summer of 1551, Francisco Xavier, a Jesuit of the Society of Jesus, was preaching the doctrines of Christianity in Yamaguchi.

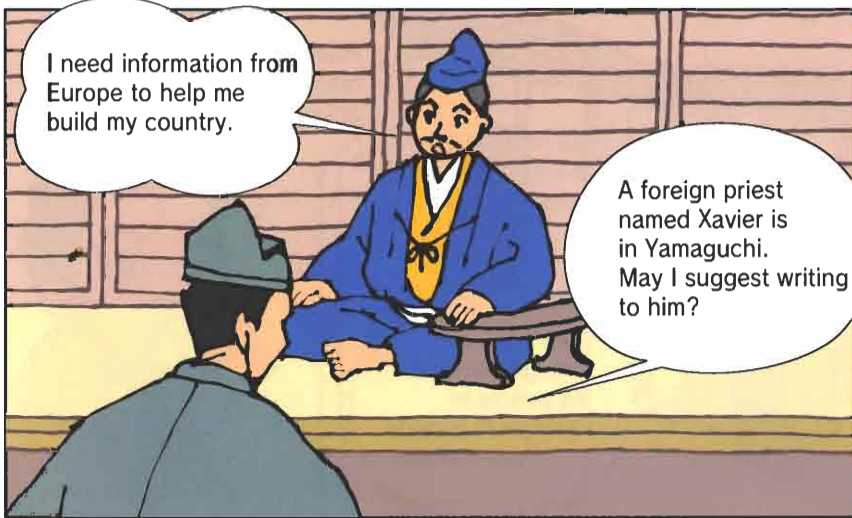
That man is Father Xavier, who came all the way from India.

May God bless you, Amen.



I need information from Europe to help me build my country.

A foreign priest named Xavier is in Yamaguchi. May I suggest writing to him?



Autumn, 1551  
Beppu Bay

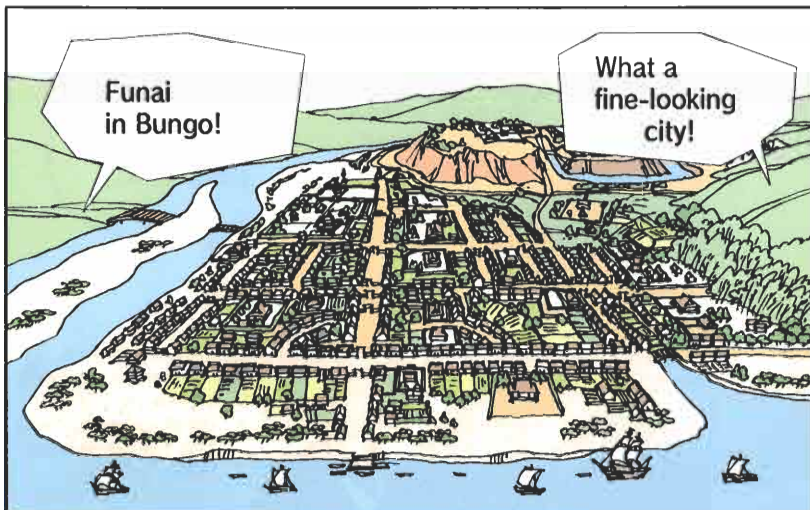


Have we arrived?



Funai in Bungo!

What a fine-looking city!



Xavier was the son of the Lord of Xavier Castle, in the Kingdom of Navarra in Spain, near the French border. He established the Society of Jesus with his colleague, Ignatius Loyola, from St. Barbara's College in Paris. Xavier visited many Asian countries as a Christian missionary at the request of Portugal, which was strongest nation of the era.



The Otomo family Yakata (palace) in Funai (present-day Kentokumachi)



Welcome, Father Xavier. May I assist you in any way?

Thank you, young Lord Sorin. I came to spread the teachings of Jesus Christ.

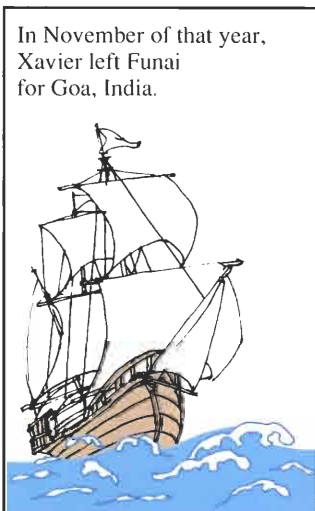


I want to make this town stronger and more affluent.

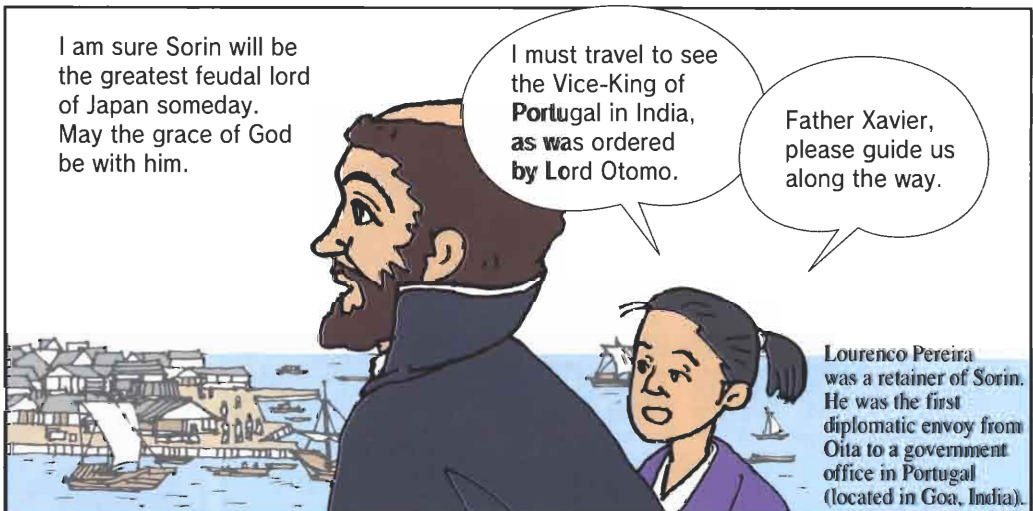
Can I ask for your assistance?

I will make an arrangement with the people in Portugal to provide you support.

Please let the teachings of Jesus spread.



In November of that year, Xavier left Funai for Goa, India.



I am sure Sorin will be the greatest feudal lord of Japan someday. May the grace of God be with him.

I must travel to see the Vice-King of Portugal in India, as was ordered by Lord Otomo.

Father Xavier, please guide us along the way.

Lourenco Pereira was a retainer of Sorin. He was the first diplomatic envoy from Oita to a government office in Portugal (located in Goa, India).



In meantime, European ships laden with firearms, gunpowder, silk fabric and raw silk started calling at Funai Port for trade.

Trade with Europe is booming!

We have been ordered to make Funai a town friendly to foreigners.

Let us make it a town to be remembered.!



### Sorin, Great Leader of Kyushu



We just delivered the Thai ceramics and celadon porcelain from Korea a few days ago. I am wondering if Soetsu of Funai has some stock to fill his order.



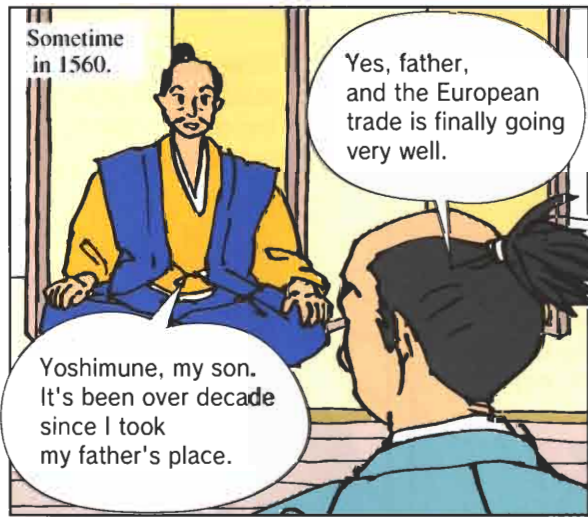
Thanks to Lord Sorin, my shop is one of the largest in Funai.

I'll have to open another shop in Usuki soon. I am so busy!

< Soetsu Nakaya . wealthy merchant of Funai >

Lord Sorin of Bungo has requested a quick delivery for the Jingdezhen ceramics.

< Soshitsu Shimai, wealthy merchant of Hakata >



Sometime in 1560.

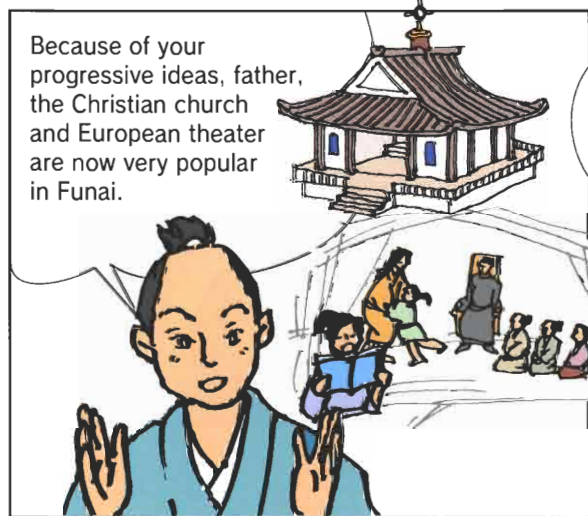
Yes, father, and the European trade is finally going very well.

Yoshimune, my son. It's been over decade since I took my father's place.

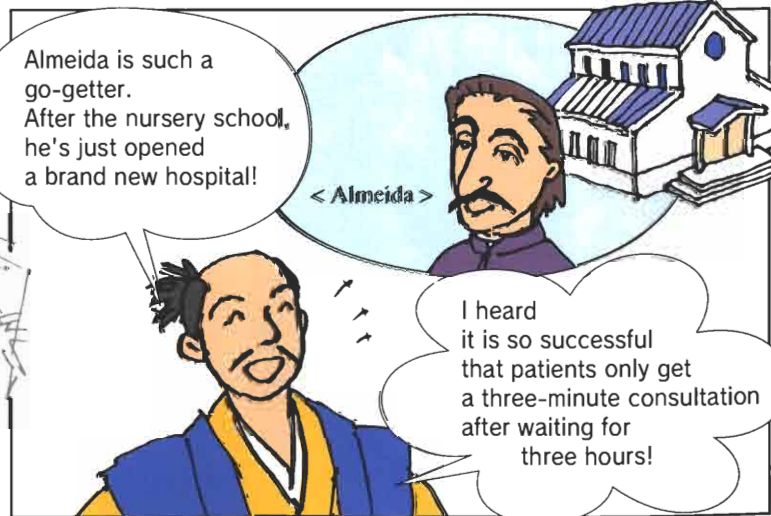


< Yoshimune, the eldest son of Sorin >

Now we can import a number of rare items such as Chinese brocade and leopard leather from Ming China and Korea.



Because of your progressive ideas, father, the Christian church and European theater are now very popular in Funai.



Almeida is such a go-getter. After the nursery school, he's just opened a brand new hospital!

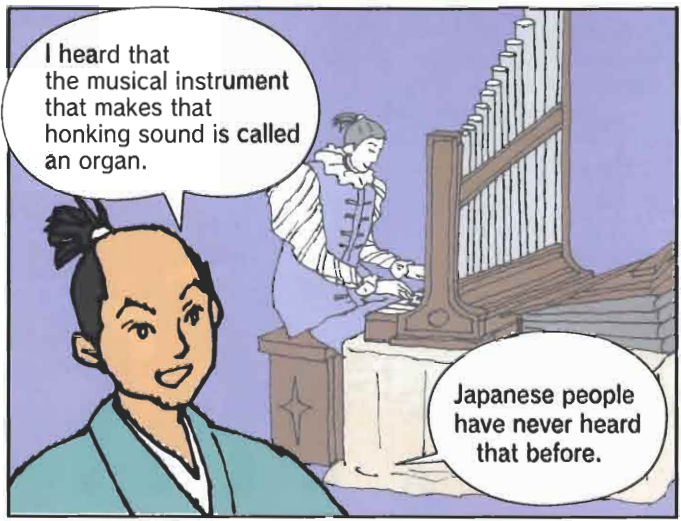
< Almeida >

I heard it is so successful that patients only get a three-minute consultation after waiting for three hours!



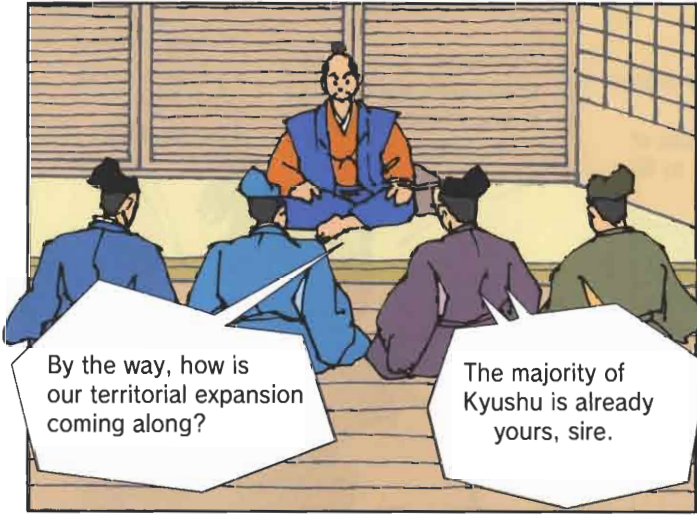
I listened to something called a "children's choir" last night.

It was quite unlike Noh singing; something that I'd never heard before.



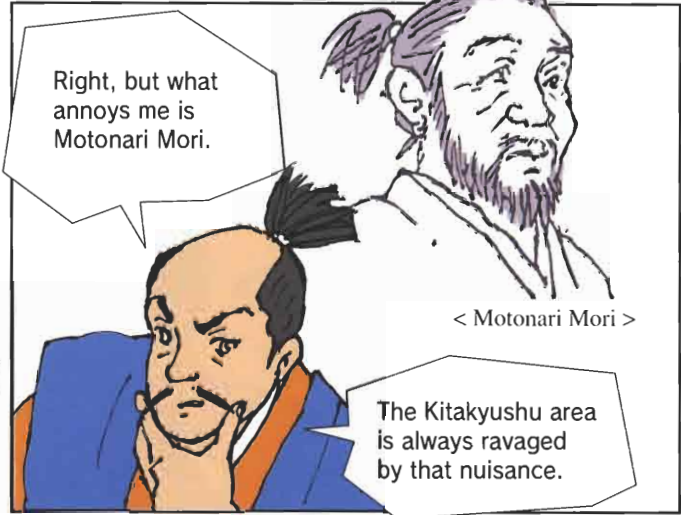
I heard that the musical instrument that makes that honking sound is called an organ.

Japanese people have never heard that before.



By the way, how is our territorial expansion coming along?

The majority of Kyushu is already yours, sire.



Right, but what annoys me is Motonari Mori.

< Motonari Mori >

The Kitakyushu area is always ravaged by that nuisance.

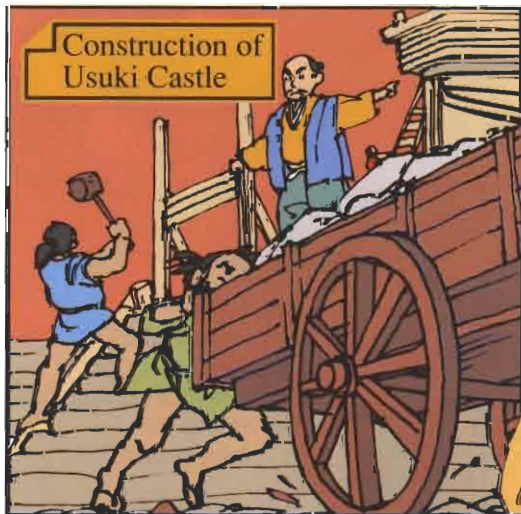


Things are rarely as smooth as a game of soccer...

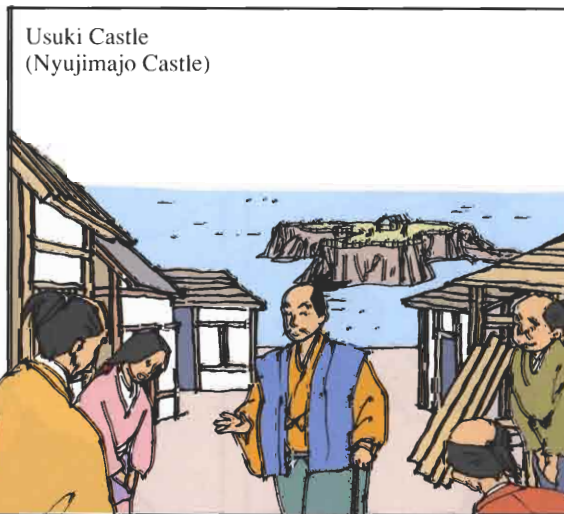
I wonder if there is any good way to...



What if we surprise attack them from the ocean, based out of Usuki?



Construction of Usuki Castle

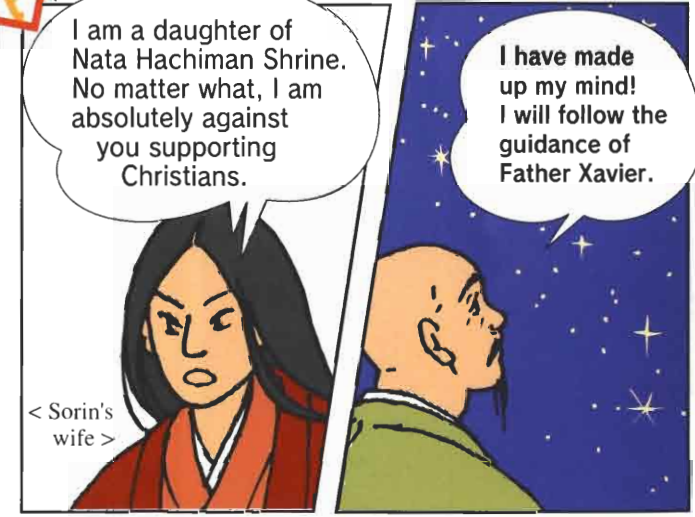
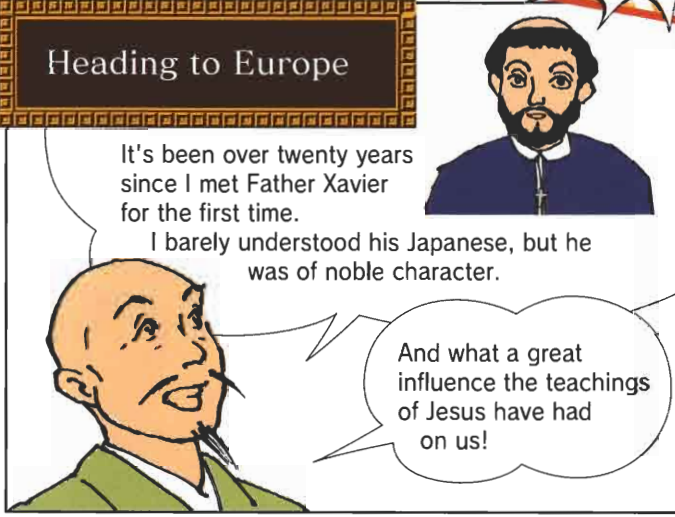


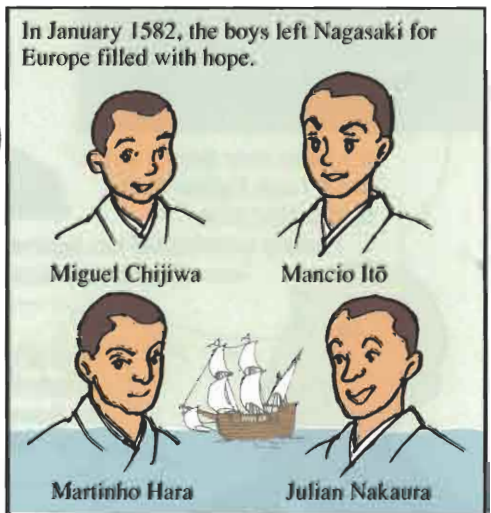
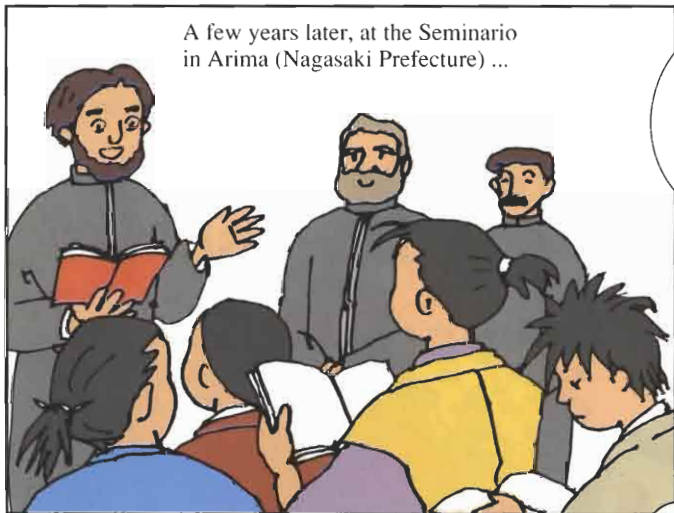
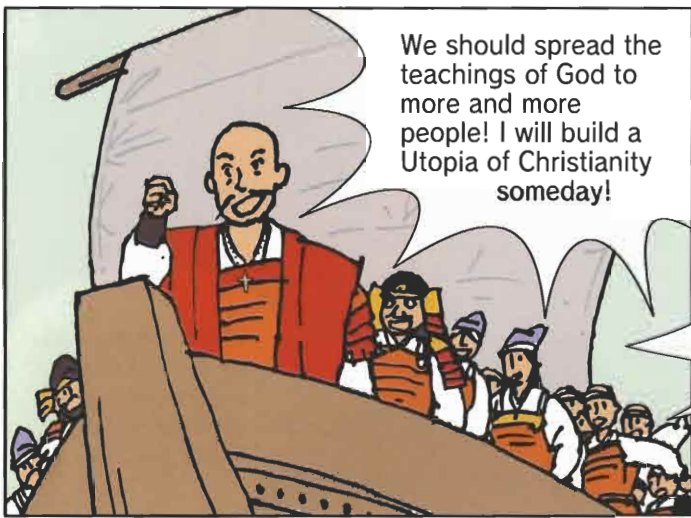
Usuki Castle (Nyujimajo Castle)





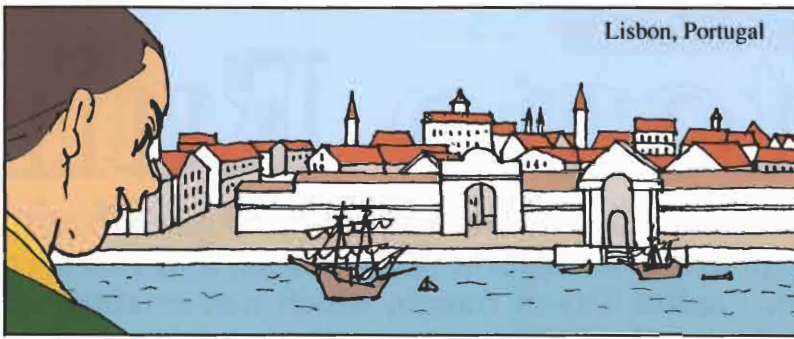
Surprise Attack on Yamaguchi: Supporting Teruhito Ouchi, who was dependent on Sorin in those days, this operation was carried out under the command of the warrior Wakabayashi. It was the most outstanding military operation of Sorin's life.





The military expedition to Hyuga (Miyazaki): The military expedition resulted in a crushing defeat due to a fierce counterattack by the Satsuma (Kagoshima) forces. Sorin retired to the countryside of Tsukumi, unable to realize his dreams for territorial expansion and the construction of a Christian Utopia in Hyuga.



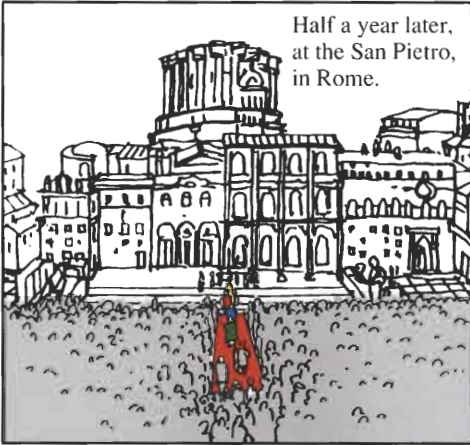


Lisbon, Portugal



Madrid, Spain  
King Philip II

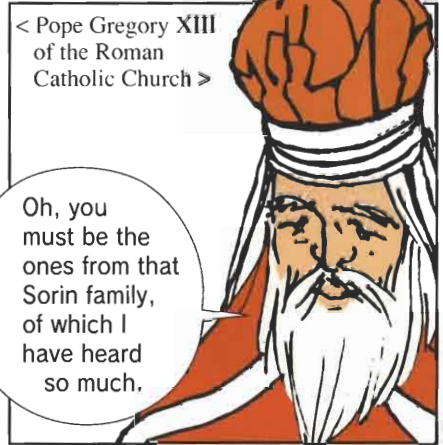
Sire, this is a letter from the Lord of Japan.



Half a year later, at the San Pietro, in Rome.



Your majesty, we came all the way from Japan.



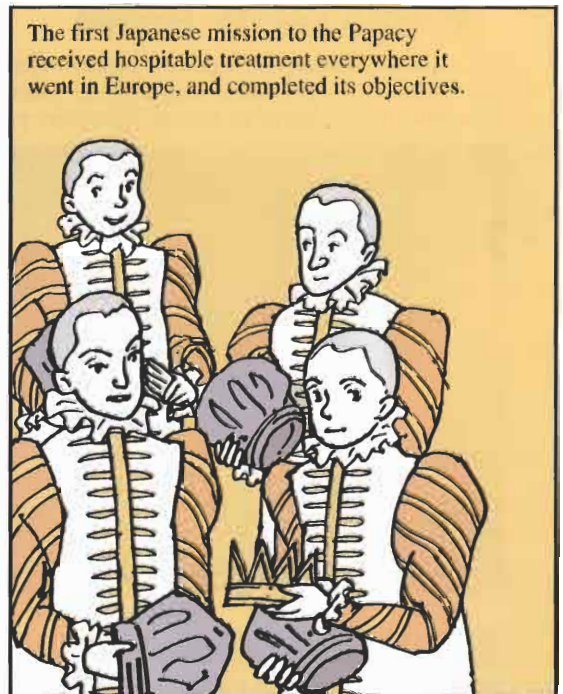
< Pope Gregory XIII of the Roman Catholic Church >

Oh, you must be the ones from that Sorin family, of which I have heard so much.



I appreciate your visit.

Thank you.



The first Japanese mission to the Papacy received hospitable treatment everywhere it went in Europe, and completed its objectives.

Sorin in his later years: The Shimazu Forces of Satsuma (Kagoshima) invaded Bungo (Oita) in 1586 and 1587, leading to fierce battles throughout the prefecture. The Battle of Hetsugigawara is especially well-known. Extensive areas of Funai were destroyed during this attack.

The Excavation of the Otomo Residence Ruins



*Sorin: a man of progressive spirit, who actively introduced Western Civilization into his policy.*

*Sorin: a great man known as the "leader of Kyushu" who reigned over the region.*

*Sorin: a man of civilization who opened the road to Europe for the first time in Japanese history.*

*The prosperity of Sorin's Oita (Funai) is now ready to rise again to its former glory, from beneath our feet.*

The Otomo Family after the Death of Sorin

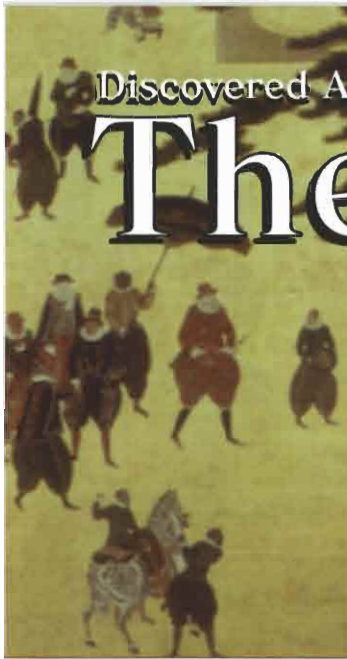
After the death of Sorin in 1587 at the age of 58, his successor, Yoshimune, was exiled by Hideyoshi Toyotomi because of his actions during the invasion of Korea in 1592. There was no chance for a return to power. Descendants of Otomo served the Edo government as master of ceremonies, a position traditionally reserved for honorable families, and also worked for the Lord of Kumamoto as the Otomo-Matsuno family.

Sorin's Active Support of Christianity: Professor C. R. Boxer mentions in his famous book "The Christian Century in Japan" that "the Jesuits had no better friend and protector than Otomo Yoshishige (Sorin), Daimyo of Bungo, whose ports were often visited by the kurofune (Portuguese ships) in the early years of Christian Propaganda in Kyushu."

Discovered After Being Hidden for Centuries

# The Otomo Ruins

The Funai, Capital City of Bungo, in the Age of Sorin Cidade  
The Oita City Board of Education is excavating and researching the Funai (Fuchu), Capital City of Bungo, which was established by the Otomo family during the Warring States Period (circa 1467-1576). Here are some of their discoveries, which shed light on the Funai of centuries ago.



## Researching the Otomo Yakata (屋形 Palace) Ruins

### The Spacious Otomo Family House

Located in the heart of Funai (the modern Oita), the Otomo Yakata (Palace) and attached garden is thought to have covered an area of 200 square meters.



● A bird's-eye view of the Otomo Yakata ruins (near Kentokumachi)



● Ruins of the defensive earthworks

### The Ruins of the Garden

During the excavation, a number of giant stones and the remains of the Otomo Yakata from the Warring States Period were unearthed. A large garden, measuring 16 meters north-south and 35 meters east-west, along with an artificial pond, were discovered in the southeast corner of the grounds. Featuring gigantic rock arrangements, the garden formed a magnificent landscape of skillfully-arranged natural elements.

### The Earthworks of the Otomo Yakata

A portion of the original defensive earthworks, including housing, were discovered in the western area of the site. The investigation of strata indicates that the site had been extended by raising the ground level during Sorin's time. In the neighboring area, several items thought to have belonged to Lord Otomo, a leading lord of the warring era, have been excavated. These items include such finds as Thai ceramic wares, glass goblets, and bullets.



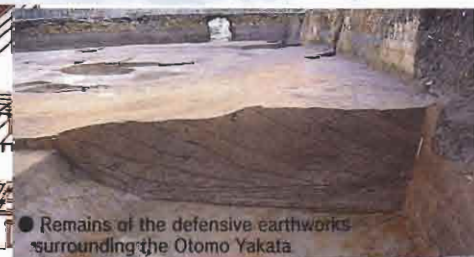
● Unearthed tea utensils (partly restored)

### A Miyako (Kyoto) Style Palace

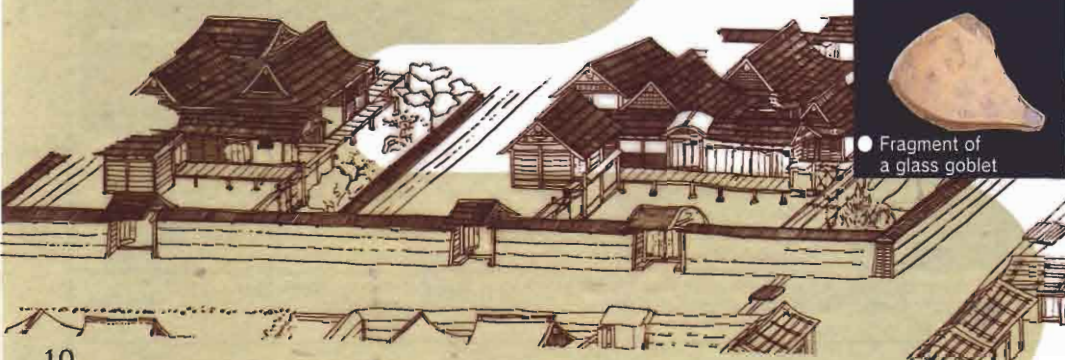
In a pair of six-paneled folding screens entitled "Scenes in and Around Kyoto," the Muromachi Period (early 16th century) palaces of the Ashikaga Shogun and the Hosokawa Kanrei, a high-ranking official next to the Shogun, are shown featuring large gardens. Judging from evidence found in the ruins, the Otomo Yakata seems to have been designed in similar fashion and scale.



● Fragment of a glass goblet



● Remains of the defensive earthworks surrounding the Otomo Yakata



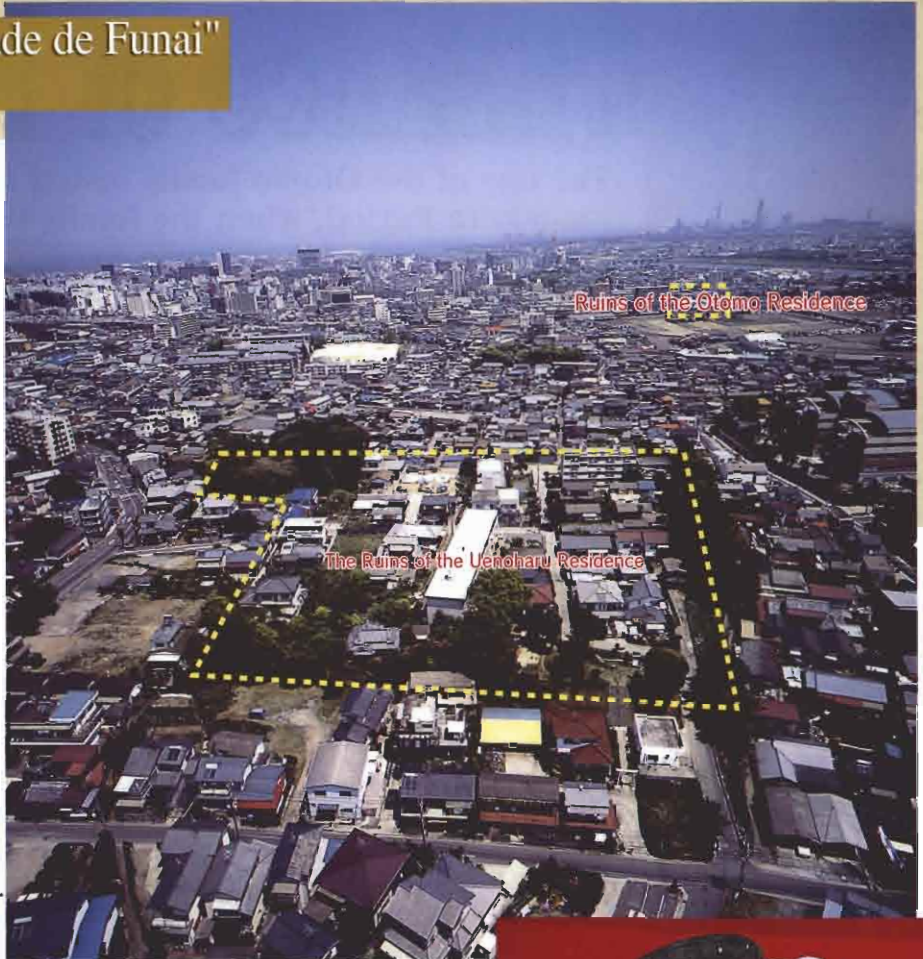
# Researching the "Cidade de Funai" (the modern Oita)

## Funai (Fuchu)

Over 400 years ago during the Warring States Period, Lord Otomo established neatly-ordered Funai (Fuchu) with 41 machis (町 areas) in areas approximately 1.5 km north-south and 0.6 km east-west. The streets were laid out with great care, intersecting at right angles, and were crossed here and there by boulevards. These machis illustrated the prosperity of the Sorin Era.

## International Trade City, Funai

The harbor of Funai, the capital city of Bungo, was called Oquinofama. Here, Japanese, Chinese and Portuguese merchants traded products from all parts of Asia and Europe; imports from China included silk goods, gold, mercury and porcelain, while Portugal traded woolen cloth, linen, glassware and wine. In exchange for these products Funai exported silver, sulfur and arms. The city was highly prosperous in the second half of the 16th century, roughly on par with the Hakata or Sakai of the same time. The Colegio (Christian college of theology and culture), Hospital de Funai (a European-style hospital) and the Church of Nossa Senhora da Piedade were founded and helped introduce the essence of the European culture to the region. Further study is planned.



● Ruins of the Otomo Residence from Ueno Hill



● Upper portion of a jar imported from Myanmar



● Remnants of 10 large Bizen-yaki ceramic jars (Nishiki-machi)

## Ceramics Imported through Trade with European Countries



● Jar made in Thailand

## Funai: A Center of Foreign Trade and Commerce in Kyushu

A street that was approximately 10 meters wide and ran through Yokokoji-machi (present-day Nishiki-machi) was lined with large stores, including one equipped with 10 earthenware jars, and a blacksmith's shop with bellows. These discoveries indicate a past commercial district.



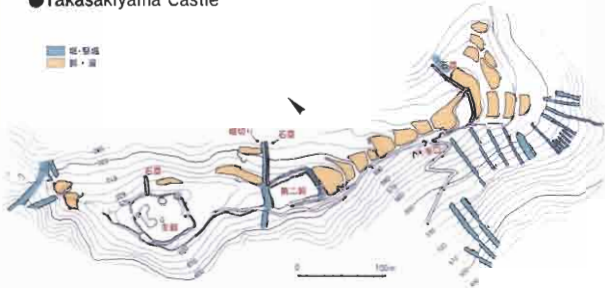
● Ruins in Nishiki-machi

# The Brilliance of Four Centuries

The age of the Otomo family lasted for 400 years, from the beginning Kamakura Period, when the family served as Shugo, or the equivalent English sheriff of the Middle Ages, in Bungo. Traces of the family's development and splendor can be seen both inside and outside of the

## ● In Oita City

### ● Takasakiyama Castle



● Reconstruction of Takasakiyama Castle

### ■ Takasakiyama Castle Ruins

Takasakiyama Castle, the main castle of Otomo erected on the summit of Mt. Takasaki, was known for its impregnability, as it was well-protected by moats and stone ramparts. Together with the Otomo Residence, it is one of the most important ruins connected to Otomo in Oita City.

### ■ Tsuruga Castle

Tsuruga Castle was built for Toshimitsu, a retainer of Lord Otomo, in mountainous Toshimitsu (利光) (present-day Dainan district), which was located at a strategic position for defending Funai against invaders. The castle is well-known as the site of a fierce battle when the Satsuma (Kagoshima) army invaded Funai in 1586.



● Artifacts unearthed from the castle ruins

### ● Panoramic view of the Tsuruga castle ruins



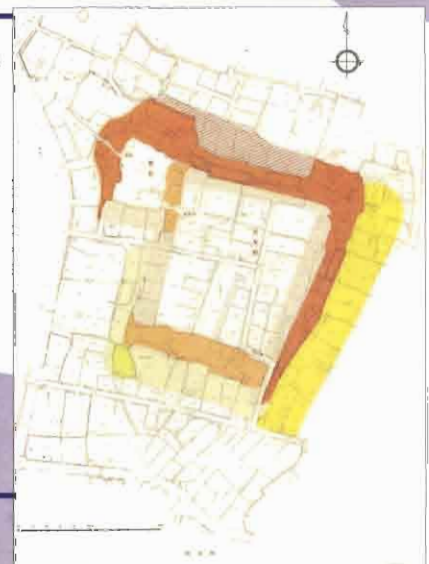
### ■ Another Otomo Yakata (old palace on provisional castle): Uenoharu

Another Yakata of Otomo was located in West Uenogaoka. A part of the site's earthwork has been restored.



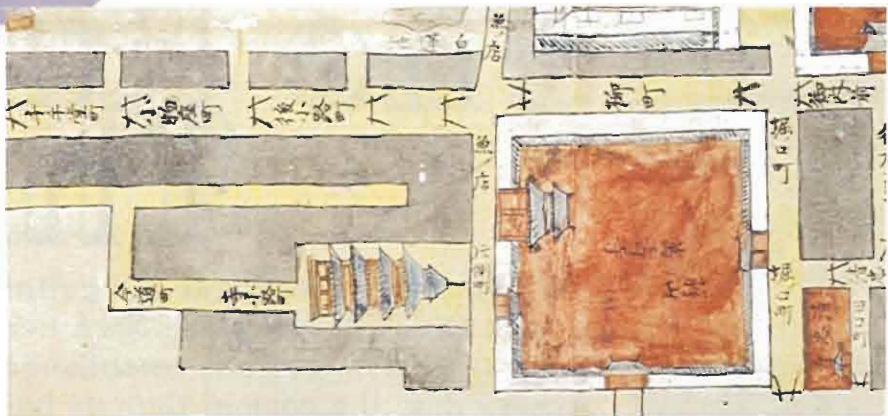
● Bird's eye view of Uenoharu Yakata

### ● Map of restored Uenoharu Yakata



## Manjuji (満珠寺) Temple: the Family Temple of the Otomo Lords

Built in 1306 by Sadachika Otomo (大友貞親), the fifth Lord of Bungo, the temple, with its imposing structure, was recognized as one of the ten finest Zen temples of the era. Sesshu, a master painter, is known to have paid a visit here. Although it was destroyed by fire during the battle of Hosatsu (1586-87, between Oita and Kagoshima), the temple was rebuilt in Kanaike-machi in 1633.



●Manjuji Temple in an old painting map



●Usuhara Hachimangu Shrine

## Usuhara Hachimangu Shrine (杵原八幡宮), Revered by Lord Otomo

Thought to have been built during the Heian Period in 827, this shrine was recognized as being special, because it housed the highest ranking god of War in Bungo. According to legend, this shrine houses the god of the Usa shrine (the word "hachiman" refers to the God of War), and since ancient times was frequented by provincial governors and samurai families. The shrine still holds a variety of articles contributed by the Otomo family.

## ● Around the City

### Hakata Okinohama (恵比) and Funai Oquinofama (比の)

Hakata (Fukuoka City) has been developing as a gateway for trade with foreign lands since ancient times. Lord Otomo ruled Hakata during the Warring States Period. He established the key trade port of Okinohama in Hakata, and actively promoted trade with Korea and China.

Incidentally, the trade port opened by Lord Otomo in Funai was also named Oquinofama. Bustling with merchants from China, Portugal and Japan, Oquinofama Port in Funai flourished as an international trade port.



●Goods imported from Southeast Asia (Courtesy of the Fukuoka City Board of Education)



●Hakata site, as seen from Taihaku Avenue (Courtesy of the Fukuoka City Board of Education)



●Goods dumped at the landing place

# The Ruins of Three Eras



The political, economical and cultural nexus of the area has been located here in Oita City since the Nara Period, when the Bungo Kokuga (国衙) (magistrate's office) was established here. From the Middle Ages to the present day, the core of the city has gradually moved north, and prospered. The current urban district is located in an area covering the historical properties of all three eras, making it a very unique district in Japan.

## ● Oita in Ancient Times

It is thought that Bungo Kokuga, or Kokufu, the magistrate's office in ancient Oita, was located in the area stretching from southern Oita to the hilly region of Uenogaoka. In particular, several historical artifacts such as the ruins of buildings from the late 7th to 10th centuries, such as vermilion roof tiles and gargoyles, have been excavated from the ruins of Uenogaoka, providing proof that it was a part of the Bungo Kokufu (国府). The ruins of an ancient tile-roofed temple with a stone foundation were also discovered here. The Oita Motomachi (元町) stone Buddhist statue (designated as a national historic site) and the Iwaya Temple (岩屋寺) stone Buddhist statue (designated as a prefectural historic site) were carved into the cliffs in Ueno. The soft, mild and graceful statues have eye-witnessed the changes and prosperity of Oita for almost a thousand years.

● Tiles and earthenware discovered in an ancient temple in Ueno



● Oita Motomachi Buddhist statue



● Oita in three different eras



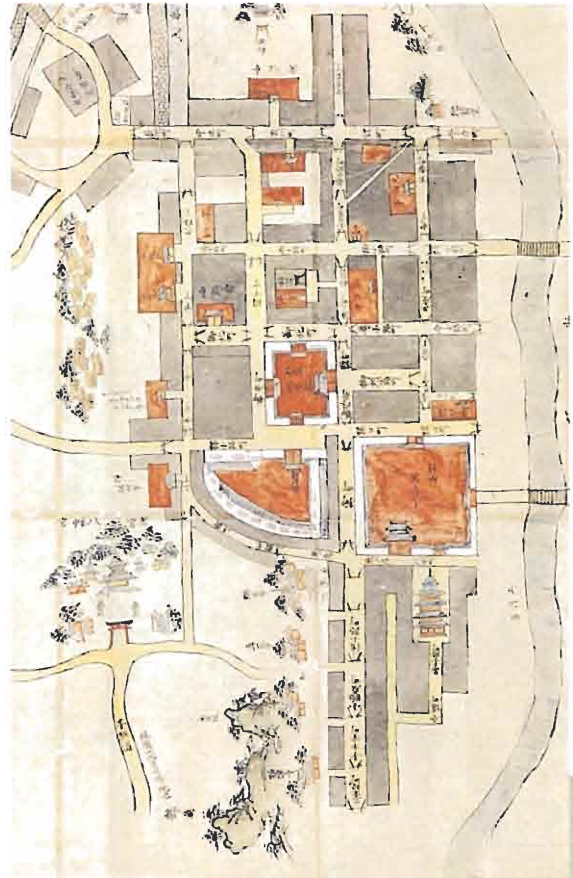
● Funai Castle in "Gojokaezu," an old painting

● Artifacts marked with store and town names (discovered in Wakakusa Park)



## ● Oita in the Middle Ages

About four hundred years ago, Funai (Fuchu), one of the largest towns in western Japan, was established in the area stretching from present-day Moto-Machi to Nishiki-Machi. The illustrations on the old city map, together with descriptions of the Otomo Yakata, Manjuji Temple and Otomo Treasury (Okuraba), indicate a large and imposing city, as illustrated to the left.



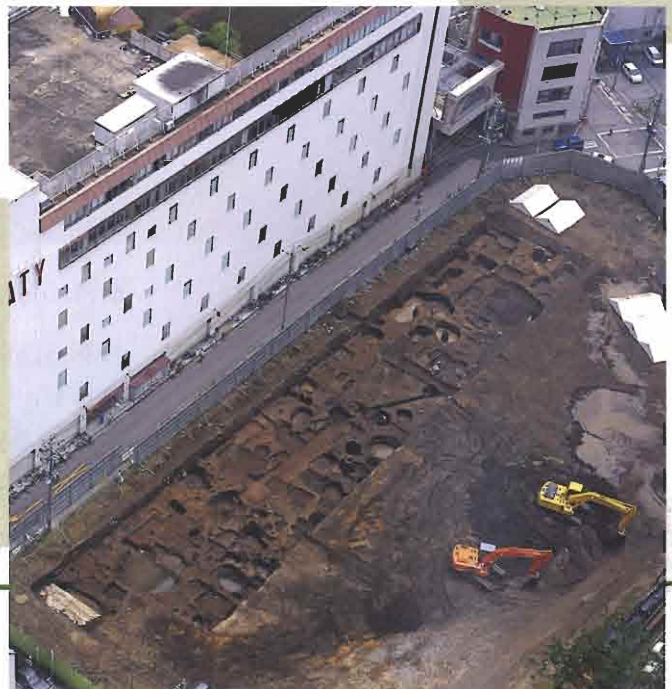
● Old Map of Funai city painted during the Edo Period (courtesy of the Munakata Chizu Co., Ltd.)

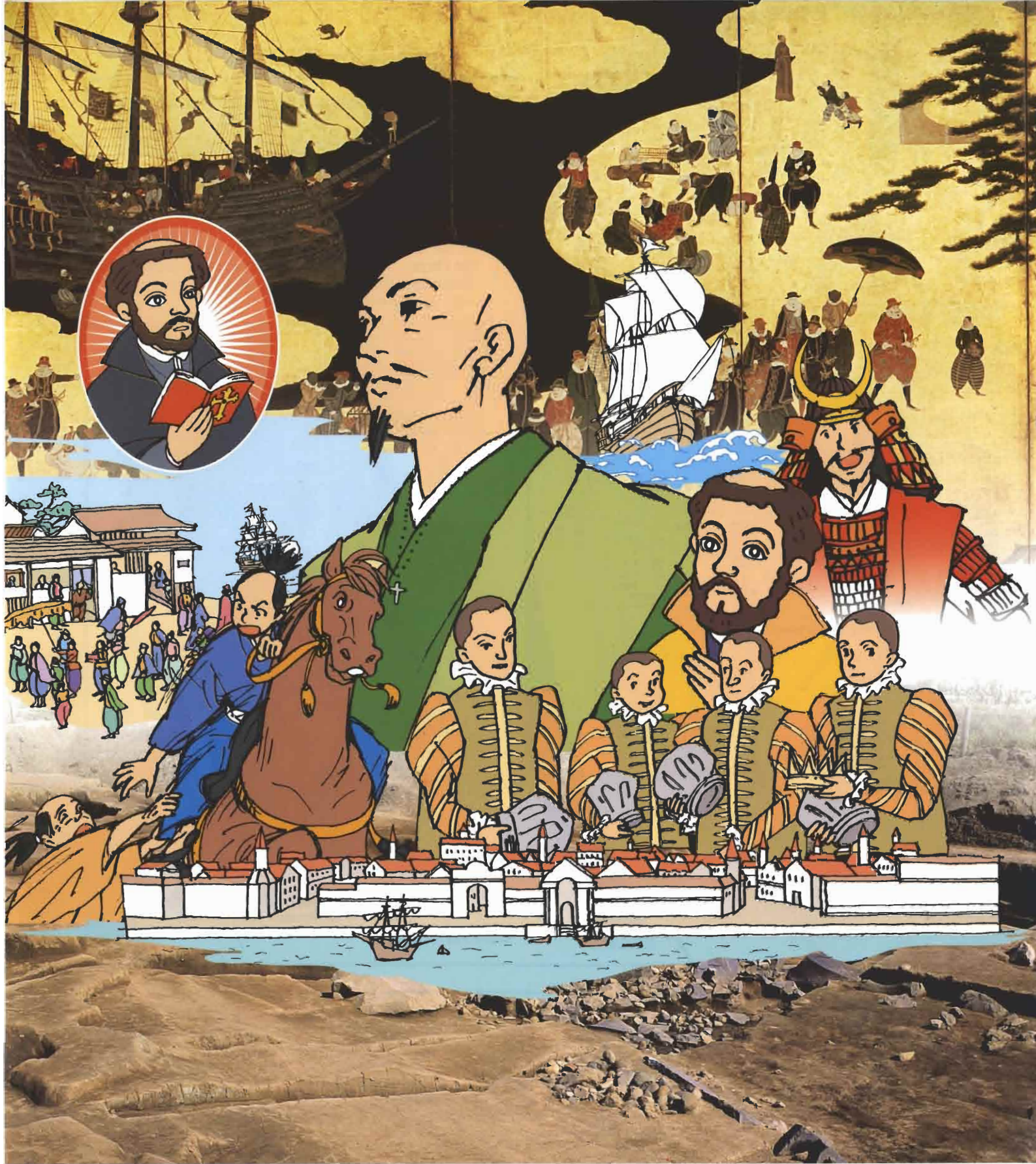
● Restored map

## ● Modern Oita

Construction of Funai City began in 1596, when feudal lord Naotaka Fukuhara began the construction of Funai Castle. Taking advantage of the adjacent Beppu Bay, it became the largest commercial city in Oita Prefecture, consisting of 48 chonin-machi (町人町), or tradesman districts. Historical artifacts which reveal the shape of Oita during the Edo Period have been unearthed in a number of spots throughout the city, including in such places as Wakakusa Park and Jungle Park. These artifacts illustrate the former shape of the city, and shed light on how the local residents once lived.

● Field research in Wakakusa Park (former Nishi Kamitchi-machi and Nishi-machi)





●The following individuals assisted during the production of this special edition :

**Tomohiro Kato**  
(Professor Emeritus of Oita University)

**Toshio Kage**  
(Chief researcher of the Oita Prefectural Ancient Sages Historical Archives)

**Masahiro Shin**  
(Associate Director of Oita City Board of Education)

**Kitaro Kimura**  
(Curator of the Oita City Historical Museum)

**Mistuhiko Tamanaga**  
(Manager of the Cultural Assets Division of the Oita City Board of Education)

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