

FRIAR JUAN POBRE OF ZAMORA
AND HIS LOST AND FOUND
"YSTORIA" OF 1598-1603
(Lilly MS. BM 617)

By C. R. BOXER

A LATIN TAG WHICH perhaps comes too readily from the pens of bibliophiles, *Habent sua fata libelli* is fully justified in the instance of the strange misadventures of the codex described below. Apart from the curious vicissitudes suffered by the "Ystoria," the Franciscan author was an interesting character in his own right, as can be seen from a brief outline of his career. Born at an unascertained date in the Spanish town of Zamora (León), from which he took his original surname, he first appears as a soldier in one of Alva's celebrated *tercios* in Flanders, where he claimed to have been involved in an abortive scheme to effect the surprisal and capture of London, ca. 1574.¹ Finding a soldier's life unsuitable for one of his devoutly religious nature, he became a Franciscan lay brother in a Flemish monastery, but he found it impossible to lead a contemplative life in war-torn Flanders. He therefore returned to Spain, where we

¹ "—que bien me acuerdo abrá çerca de quarenta años, quando andavan de conçierto quinientos soldados para ir a tomar Londres, y la tomaran si ubiera efecto, porque avia algunos, aunque pocos, confiados en Dios nuestro Señor, y vivían debajo de su themor." (Fr. Juan Pobre to King Philip III, homeward-bound off the Bermudas, 16 August 1604, in Fr. Lorenzo Pérez, O.F.M., *Cartas y Relaciones del Japon*, II (Madrid, 1920), 199-203. "quarenta años" is probably a slip of the pen for "treyn ta años," because Alva and his *Tercios* only reached The Netherlands in 1567.

find him at the Salamanca convent of the Franciscan province of San José in 1592, which year, incidentally, is the first firm date in his career. He then volunteered to join a contingent of friars being recruited for the Philippine mission and left with the group from Seville in January 1593, arriving (by way of Mexico) at Manila in the following year.

He first worked as a missionary in the Camarines, Southern Luzon, and was then sent on a tour of inspection of the recently founded Franciscan mission stations in Japan, 1595-96. It was apparently at this time that his name was changed from Fr. Juan de Zamora to Fr. Juan Pobre, as he tells us on fol. 52 of his "Ystoria" (. . . "dos frailes legos, al uno llamaban Frai Juan de Segovia, muy buen religioso, y al otro Frai Juan de Çamora, al qual quitaron el sobrenombre y pusieron Frai Juan Probe" [sic]). On his return to Manila, he was dispatched to Europe by his superiors, in order to report on the state of the Franciscan missions in East Asia to the government at Madrid and to the Holy See at Rome. On 12 July 1596, he sailed in the great galleon *San Felipe* for Acapulco; but this vessel was dismasted in a typhoon and stranded in the bay of Urado, a port in the Japanese island of Shikoku, which belonged to the daimyo of Tosa (17 October 1596). The castaways experienced great difficulties with the Japanese authorities, who subsequently confiscated the *San Felipe's* cargo by order of the *Taiko* (Regent), Hideyoshi. Subsequent developments went from bad to worse, and Fr. Pobre barely escaped being involved in the martyrdom of six Franciscans, three Japanese Jesuit lay brothers, and seventeen other Japanese Christians at Nagasaki on 5 February 1597. Arrested by order of the Jesuit rector at Nagasaki (or so he claimed), Fr. Pobre was

deported in the Portuguese carrack *Santo António* to Macao, where he stayed for some months before finding a ship which brought him to Manila in January 1598.

Here he began compiling his "Ystoria" of the Franciscan martyrs of the previous year, and in June 1599, he was again sent to Europe by his superiors in order to make the report which he had been unable to deliver, owing to the loss of the *San Felipe*, and to give his eyewitness account of the martyrdom. He reached Mexico at the end of that year, and continuing his voyage to Spain, he arrived at Madrid in June 1600, exactly a year after leaving Manila. He was received in audience by King Philip III and by the Council of the Indies, making a very good impression both on that monarch and his advisers. During his stay in Spain, he recruited as reinforcements for the Philippine mission some forty friars, with whom he sailed from San Lúcar de Barrameda at the end of June 1601. Travelling via Mexico, he and his party left Acapulco for Manila at the end of February 1602, sailing in the galleon *Santo Tomás*, in company with the new governor of the Philippines, Don Pedro d'Acuña. This vessel and her consort reached Manila at the beginning of May, but Fr. Pobre was no longer on board. Accompanied by another Franciscan lay brother, he had "jumped ship" at La Carpana (Rota), one of the Ladrões (Marianas) Islands, with the idea of evangelizing the natives and contacting some shipwrecked Spaniards. He remained there for seven months before being picked up by another passing galleon, the *Jesús María*, in October 1602, as related on page 45.

Despite (or because of ?) his tireless peregrinations, his superiors dispatched him for a third time to Spain in the following year, as procurator of the Philippine province.

He reached his destination in the autumn of 1604 and spent the next three years between Valladolid and Rome, striving for the revocation of a papal brief of 1585, which had been promulgated at the insistence of the Jesuits. It was on this occasion that he drew up an undated *Carta Apologética*, in which he sought to prove that Japan, China, and Siam did not lie within the Portuguese sphere of demarcation which had been agreed upon when Portugal and Castile in effect divided the as-yet-undiscovered world between them by the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494. Fr. Pobre argued that the north-south dividing line between the Crowns of Portugal and Castile ran through Malacca, "or very near it," when projected on the other side of the globe, thus leaving East Asia in the Castilian sphere. The brief of 1585 had declared that the Japan mission field belonged to the sphere of the Portuguese *padroado* (Crown patronage of the Church), and the Spanish friars from the Philippines were thereby excluded from it. Fr. Pobre's representations, reinforced by those of the Dominican and Augustinian representatives, were eventually successful. The papal brief *Sedis Apostolicae providentia* (11 June 1608) formally abrogated the Jesuits' monopoly, which had already been breached in practice.

Seven months before achieving this triumph, Fr. Pobre recruited for the Far Eastern missions another fifty-six Franciscans, with whom he left Seville in December 1607, reaching Manila, by way of Mexico, on 12 April 1609. After spending little more than a year in the Philippines, the peripatetic friar was again sent to Europe, this time by way of Malacca, Goa, and the overland route via the Persian Gulf, Iraq, and Syria. He left Manila toward the end of 1611 and reached Madrid some time in the following year.

Active to the end, he was busily engaged in recruiting more missionary friars for the Philippines, when he died at an unascertained date (probably late 1615 or early 1616) in the Franciscan monastery of San Bernardino at Madrid. One of his earlier biographers relates that King Philip III was so impressed by the restless zeal of this much-travelled friar that he commissioned "a famous artist" to paint Fr. Pobre's portrait for the picture gallery in the royal palace. This may well have been so, but the portrait does not seem to have been identified hitherto, and most likely it has not survived. It is worth noting that although he was charged with such confidential and important responsibilities between 1595 and 1615, Fr. Pobre always remained a simple lay brother in his order, rejecting all his superiors' suggestions that he be ordained.²

In 1931, Fr. Lorenzo Pérez, O.F.M., published an article in which he described a hitherto unrecorded manuscript work by Fr. Pobre, entitled: "Ystoria de la pérdida y descubrimiento del galeon *San Phelipe*, con el glorioso martirio de los gloriosos martires del Japon."³ (MS. 4°, 321

² The foregoing is chiefly based on the details given by Fr. Lorenzo Pérez, O.F.M., *Cartas y Relaciones del Japon*, II, 187-211, which has copious quotations from earlier authorities, including Fr. Pobre's own writings. The Lilly Library has a seventeenth-century MS copy (undated, but written at Manila, ca. 1630) of Fr. Juan Pobre's "Carta Apologetica" (Mendel MS. 757).

³ Originally published in the periodical *Erudición Ibero-Ultramarina*, Tomo II, nos. 6 and 7 (Madrid, 1931), pp. 217-35. My description is taken from the twenty-three-page reprint entitled *Fray Juan Pobre de Zamora: su relación sobre la pérdida del galeón "San Felipe," y martirio de San Pedro Bautista y compañeros* (Madrid: imprenta de Ramona Velasco, Viuda de P. Pérez, 1931), and checked with the original MS in the Lilly Library.

leaves, 220 x 160 mm.) The first 281 leaves are by a copyist, made under the author's direction, with some corrections in his own hand and others in a third hand. Leaves 282-321 are in Fr. Pobre's holograph, with numerous emendations and deletions. Leaves 8, 25-32, 314, and 315 are missing. The work is divided into seventy-six chapters. At the bottom of the title leaf, one of the earlier owners of the codex has written: "I, Fr. Pasqual de Torellas, journeying from the Philippines to Rome with the original process of the martyrs of the Moluccas,⁴ found in Babylon⁵ this book, compiled by the venerable Brother Fr. Juan Pobre, from whom the Muslims had stolen it when he passed that way.⁶ I secured it and brought it with me, as it seemed to me that it would be useful in ascertaining the facts and information about our martyrs in Japan; and for this purpose I handed it over to the archive of the Congregation [of Rites] on the 17 January 1620."

Fr. Pérez commented that some cardinal or advocate for the cause of the Japan martyrs of 1597 must have taken the codex out of the archive and subsequently failed to return it. At any rate, another Franciscan found it some thirty-five years later in a grocer's shop in Rome, where it was lying unbound, presumably about to be used as wrapping paper. He retrieved it and brought it to Spain, as

⁴ Fr. Sebastián de San José and Fr. Antonio de Santa Ana, who were both martyred in Celebes in June 1610. Cf. Fr. Achilles Meersman, O.F.M., *The Franciscans in the Indonesian Archipelago, 1300-1775* (Louvain and Paris, 1967), pp. 88-89. Their beatification or canonization is still pending at Rome.

⁵ I.e., Baghdad.

⁶ I.e., when he returned to Europe overland from the Philippines by way of Portuguese India, the Persian Gulf, and Iraq in 1611-12.

evidenced by the following autograph inscription on the flyleaf:

History of Japan and the Philippine Islands, with the martyrdom of the pioneer martyrs of Japan, Saint Pedro Bautista and his companions. Compiled by the padre Fr. Juan Pobre, barefoot friar of the Seraphic Order and the Province of St. Joseph in Spain; who finished it in the year 1603, as can be seen in the final chapter, leaf 316, and who was an eyewitness of all that he relates. It was found in Rome by the Padre Fr. Pedro de Aranda y Quintanilla y Mendoza, Secretary-General of the Roman Curia, and Procurator of the University of Alcalá in the year 1655, in a grocer's shop, unbound; and collecting the sheets together he kept it in order to take it to Spain with another book forming a singular relic of the sad martyrs—Fr. Pedro de Quintanilla.

It was, therefore, Fr. Quintanilla who was responsible for the present limp vellum binding of this manuscript. As Fr. Pérez pointed out in 1931, Fr. Quintanilla must have left the "Ystoria" in the monastery of San Diego de Alcalá de Henares, to which University he belonged, as on the end flyleaf is the inscription: "Archive of San Diego. Year 1791." After the (temporary) suppression of the monasteries in 1835, it was brought to Madrid, where the noted bookseller and bibliophile Don Antonio Graiño, famous for his collection of rare books and manuscripts connected with the Philippines, subsequently acquired it. The "Ystoria" was in his library in 1931, when Fr. Pérez saw and studied it, reproducing some extracts from the original in his above-mentioned article in *Erudición Ibero-Ultramarino*. These extracts, in turn, were used by the present writer in discussing the celebrated *gaffe* made by Francisco de Olandia, the chief pilot of the *San Felipe*, when he told his Japanese interrogator that the missionary friars performed the function

of what is nowadays termed a fifth column.⁷ I could not then ascertain the whereabouts of the original MS of the "Ystoria," nor was I more successful in subsequent years. Finally, in July 1962, my friend Fr. George Mensaert, O.F.M., the historian of the Franciscan missions in China and editor of *Sinica Franciscana*, wrote me a letter from the Franciscan archives at Postrana (Guadalajara), the relevant portion of which reads as follows:

Here in Pastrana we have a type-written copy of a very long *relación* by Juan Pobre de Zamora. This copy was made by Father Lorenzo Pérez's order, and he himself described it in *Erudición Ibero-Ultramarino*, II (Madrid, 1931), pp. 217-35. The original was then the property of Antonio Graiño: nobody here knows where it is now. Another typewritten copy is in the hands of Fr. Fidel de Lejarza at Madrid, who long years ago spoke about it to me, and I think I mentioned it to you in 1956. The title is: "Ystoria de la pérdida y descubrimiento del Galeón *San Phelipe* con el glorioso martirio de los gloriosos martires del Japón. Año de 1597." MS in folio [actually in 4°], fols. 321, 220 x 160 mm. If you like to study it and eventually to publish it, Fr. Antolin Abad Pérez, the archivist here, is ready to lend it to you at my request. You could have it for as long as you like

I replied, thanking Fr. Georg Mensaert and Fr. Antolín Abad Pérez for their courtesy, but stating that I still hoped to trace the whereabouts of the original, which had apparently been lost during the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39, and, if possible, to acquire it, edit it, and publish it. In this I failed; but I was very pleasantly surprised in 1968 when Miss Monica Cassels of the staff of the Lilly Library showed

⁷ *The Christian Century in Japan, 1549-1650* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), pp. 164-67, 420-24. The narrative of Andres de Çuaçola cited in the first part of n. 6 on p. 420 is now in my own collection.

me the coveted codex, which she had been cataloguing not long before. The Lilly Library had bought it from the late Bernardo Mendel of Lathrop C. Harper in September 1963. Presumably he had acquired it from Don Antonio Graiño, or whoever was then the owner, after the end of the Second World War. All students of the history of the Far Eastern missions must be glad that this valuable and interesting manuscript has at last come to rest in a library from which (humanly speaking) it will roam no more.

As those readers who have had occasion to consult the voluminous and well-documented works of Fr. Lorenzo Pérez are aware, the chief purpose of Fr. Pobre in writing the "Ystoria" was to give an eyewitness account of the events leading to the martyrdom of the Franciscan friars and their Japanese neophytes in February 1597, with the aim of securing their beatification and, in due course, their canonization.⁸ The codex is also interesting for the author's account of his stay in the Ladrones (Marianas) Islands in 1602, as it is one of the earliest fairly detailed descriptions of the inhabitants which we possess. As a rule, Fr. Pobre writes of himself in the third person, but he occasionally slips into the first. From internal evidence, it would seem that he began to write (or dictate) his narrative soon after his return from Japan (via Macao) to Manila in January 1598. He concluded it, as he tells us on the last page of his text (fol. 321 verso) on board the galleon *Espíritu Santo*, sailing into Acapulco harbor on Christmas Eve 1603, "con el favor de Nuestro Señor llegamos al deseado puerto de Acapulco, vigilia de la natividad de

⁸ The twenty-six martyrs of Nagasaki (5 February 1597) were canonized by two Bulls of Pope Urban VIII, dated 14 and 15 September 1627.

nuestro señor Jesucristo, donde este pobrecillo miserable tomó puerto, e iço fin a su istoria.”

It is not, perhaps, surprising that the “Ystoria” was never published, since it is replete with the most bitter denunciations of the Jesuits of the Japanese mission. Together with their Portuguese backers, they are accused, in effect, of being mainly responsible for the chain of events which culminated in the tragedy at Martyr’s Mount, Nagasaki, on 5 February 1597. Accounts of the wreck of the *San Felipe* in 1596 and the martyrdom of 1597 are found in almost every book on the history of Japan, and there is an enormous literature on the subject. There is no point in going over this highly controversial ground here, but a perusal of Fr. Pobre’s “Ystoria” affords additional proof of James Murdoch’s contention:

The simple truth of the matter is that, from 1594 down to 1614 at least, between Jesuits and Franciscans in Japan it was all but war to the knife, just as it was in Paraguay a few years later on. No amount of Church historiizing will suffice to conceal that truth from any one who takes the trouble to spend some little time over the letters sent by the rival Orders and Society to their respective headquarters.⁹

⁹ J. Murdoch and I. Yamagata, *A History of Japan during the century of early foreign intercourse, 1542-1651* (Kobe, 1903), p. 490. As early as 1599, the Jesuits published at Madrid a formal refutation of the stories spread by the Franciscans about the affairs of the *San Felipe* and the martyrdom of 1597, but it failed to stem the mounting tide of criticism: *Dos Informaciones hechas en Iapón: una de la hazienda que Taycosama, señor del dicho Reyno, mandó tomar de lo Nao S. Felipe, que arribó a el con tempestad, yendo de las Filipinas á Nueva España, y se perido en el puerto de Vrando: y otra de la muerte de seis Religiosos Descalços de S. Francisco, y tres de la Compañia de Jesus, y otros diez y siete Iapones, que el dicho Rey*

Actually, in their published accounts, many of the contemporary Jesuit and Franciscan chroniclers made no attempt to pull their punches, still less to conceal the truth as they saw it. But Fr. Pobre's allegations perhaps went too far, even for his own superiors at Rome, as they certainly must have done for ecclesiastical censors who were primarily concerned with the preservation of Church unity.

An understanding of why the "Ystoria" did not see the light of day in print before Fr. Pérez published his extracts from it in 1931 does not lessen our sense of its importance as a source for the events which it describes. It is easy to discount Fr. Pobre's obvious anti-Jesuit bias, which he makes no attempt to hide, and when this is done, we are left with an eyewitness account of events by a man who was an active participant in them. The somewhat cryptic allusion in the title to the "descubrimiento del galeón *San Felipe*" was actually intended as an exposure of the intrigues against the friars and the shipwrecked Spaniards perpetrated by the Jesuits, who were motivated by their desire to keep the Japanese mission field to themselves, just as the Portuguese traders from Macao at Nagasaki were eager to prevent the Spaniards at Manila from competing with them in the highly profitable Japanese trade. Fr. Pobre claims that, but for the shipwreck of the *San Felipe* and the subsequent martyrdom of 1597, these machinations would never have

mandó crucifjar en la ciudad de Nangasaqui. There is a copy of this exceedingly rare work in the Lilly Library; I have been able to trace the whereabouts of only three others. For other relevant contemporary material on this controversial subject, see Fr. R. Streit, O.M.I., *Bibliotheca Missionum*, IV, *Asiatische Missionsliteratur, 1245-1599* (Aachen, 1928), pp. 484-511.

come to light, or at least would not have received such publicity.¹⁰

Apart from defending—not altogether convincingly—the chief pilot of the *San Felipe* from the accusation that he had uttered the unfortunate phrase about the friars being the forerunners of the *conquistadores*, which gave the Japanese a pretext for confiscating the cargo of the *San Felipe* and crucifying the missionaries, Fr. Pobre loses no opportunity to contrast Franciscan methods of evangelization with those employed by the Jesuits—to the advantage, it need hardly be said, of the former. Time and again, he criticizes the Jesuits for concentrating their efforts on the “great ones of the earth,” with the conviction that if they secure their conversion, then the common people would immediately follow suit. The Franciscans, on the contrary, preferred to concentrate on the poor and lowly, “because usually the rich are more sunk and involved in vices, which forms the greatest difficulty in the way of conversion.”¹¹ Similarly, Fr. Pobre continually refers to himself and his Franciscan colleagues as poor, simple, and uneducated men

¹⁰ “Ystoria,” *passim*, and particularly fols. 2-3 of the “prologo,” and ch. 24, fols. 106-10, “Do lo que començo a descubrir el galeon *San Phelipe* perdido y hecho pedaços y despues de aberle tomado lo hacienda Taicosama.” This last section was published by Fr. Lorenzo Pérez in 1931, *Erudición Ibero-Ultramarino*, II, 217-35, whence the English version in my *Christian Century in Japan* (1951), pp. 420-24. The discussion still continues, as can be seen from Fr. Josef Schütte, S.J., “Der ausspruch des lotsen der *San Felipe*. Fabel oder wircklichkeit?” *Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft*, II (Münster, 1952), pp. 99-116.

¹¹ Ystoria,” fol. 254. The whole of chs. 64-65, fols. 253-59, are worth reading in this connection, and more quotes from them are given below.

in comparison with the Jesuit missionaries, whom he calls worldly-wise and puffed up with their real or alleged intellectual superiority. He acknowledges, somewhat grudgingly, the services of Francis Xavier (not yet canonized, of course) and the pioneers of the Jesuit mission in Japan; but he alleges that most of their successors were men of very different calibre, more interested in things temporal than in things spiritual.¹²

While some of Fr. Pobre's allegations are clearly unfair or unsubstantiated, others are better founded. For instance, there is no reason to doubt his description of the power and prestige which the Jesuits still enjoyed at Nagasaki in 1597, despite their nominal expulsion from Japan by Hideyoshi ten years earlier and despite the crucifixion of three Japanese Jesuit lay brothers along with the Franciscan martyrs in February. By his own account, Fr. Pobre narrowly escaped being included in that martyrdom, and he was placed under arrest at Nagasaki by order of the Jesuits and subsequently deported by them to Macao against his will. He describes how four days after the martyrdom he was told to go on board the Portuguese carrack *Santo António*, which was anchored in the harbor preparatory to making her return voyage to Macao. When he declined to leave the house of the merchant Antonio Garcés, with whom he was staying, the Jesuits sent a *Yakunin*, or Japanese official, to take him on board, if necessary by force. On receiving this order, the *Yakunin*, "who, although he is a gentile, does nothing except what the Fathers want, since it is notorious to everyone that the town of Nagasaki belongs to them," came to carry out his instructions. Fr. Pobre at first refused to go and asked

¹² "Ystoria," fols. 1, 258, for example.

by whose authority the official was acting, to which the latter replied that he was acting on the orders of Padre António Lopes, the rector of the local Jesuits, and that he could not fail to obey his order. Once aboard the *Santo António*, Fr. Pobre tried to escape ashore and go into hiding in the countryside, but this attempt was likewise foiled by the Jesuits. The disgruntled friar was finally set ashore at Macao in April 1597.¹³

Fr. Pobre stayed at Macao for nearly nine months before he was able to get a ship bound for Manila; and during that time he became as critical of the Jesuit methods of evangelization in China as he had been of their alleged mixture of things spiritual and temporal in Japan. Unlike his commentary on Japan, where he had been able to observe the Jesuits at work in Kyoto and Nagasaki, his criticism of their methods on the Chinese mainland was based on hearsay, since he himself never left the confines of the "City of the Name of God of Macao in China," as the Portuguese grandiloquently styled their settlement in the estuary of the Pearl River. Fr. Pobre, incidentally, goes out of his way to avoid terming the settlement a city, which he does only once by inadvertence, otherwise invariably calling it a *pueblo*, and thus, by inference, a petty place in comparison with Manila. He also averred that the Jesuits ruled the roost at Macao just as they did at Nagasaki. During his stay there, he saw an Italian Jesuit and his companion, who (he was told) were the only ones working in mainland China and who were then paying a visit to Macao. "They were dressed in the Chinese way, with long beards and hair."¹⁴

¹³ "Ystoria," fols. 237-38.

¹⁴ "Ystoria," fols. 254-55. The context implies that he was referring primarily to the celebrated Fr. Matteo Ricci, S.J.; but the latter

Fr. Pobre's chief informant on the state of affairs in China was an elderly married Portuguese settler, whom he calls Francisco Carbonero¹⁵ and who was one of the oldest inhabitants. It is to be feared that this old man was not always a very reliable source, despite his long experience. He assured Fr. Pobre (confidentially, of course) that the Jesuits had never converted more than five Chinese to Christianity in the last fifty years, despite the vast claims of missionary success which they made in Europe. On the other hand, he was obviously telling the truth when he explained why the Portuguese did not want enterprising Spanish friars and bellicose *conquistadores* from the Philippines.

We have settled down in this place and married here; we have children and property; and it seems to me that if the Castilians come, since they are a restless race, they will try to enter the mainland. And if their Religious come to try to convert this kingdom, the Chinese will kill them and kick us out. And this is why we stand on our guard and don't allow any Spaniards to come here.

Nor was he convinced by Fr. Pobre's reply that if the missionaries were killed in this way, they would be martyrs, that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church, and that martyrdom was the best way of assuring the expansion of the faith and the conversion of the heathen. "This is true," admitted the old Portuguese, "but we don't want to be martyrs,

seems to have been at Nanchang during all the time that Fr. Pobre was at Macao in 1597. On the other hand, Fr. Ricci's companion, Fr. Lazaro Cattaneo, S.J., *did* visit Macao briefly in 1597. Cf. Fr. Pasquale M. D'Elia, S.J., *Fonti Ricciane. Documenti originali concernenti Matteo Ricci e la storia delle prime relazioni tra l'Europa e la Cina, 1579-1615* (3 vols., Rome, 1942-49), I, 381-86; II, 3-10; III, 27.

¹⁵ This is not a Portuguese surname. Can he mean *Carneiro*?

nor even that there should be any in our time, for we would then lose all that we have." Fr. Pobre pointed out that the Portuguese traders at Nagasaki lost nothing in the recent martyrdom, since the Japanese did not interfere with either them, their wives, their children, or their goods; and he considered that the Chinese reaction would be the same. In any event, he concluded, the conversion of souls should take priority over all earthly considerations whatsoever, and missionary enterprises should never be abandoned, whatever obstacles the world, the flesh, and the devil might place in the way. The old Portuguese retorted that this was certainly the true ideal, but that it was unfortunately an impractical one, "since the more roots we put down on this earth, the less chance we have of ascending to the sky."

Fr. Pobre and his informant were agreed that the idea of an armed invasion of China to protect missionaries sent to expound the faith was wrong in theory and practice. No names were mentioned in this part of the discussion; but presumably they both had in mind the bellicose schemes for the conquest and conversion of China adumbrated a few years before by Fr. Alonso Sánchez, S.J., who was a well-known figure at both Manila and Macao.¹⁶ The old Portuguese observed that, although the Chinese were not a martial race, "yet at the order of a mandarin, they can mobilize not merely one million but many millions of soldiers,—and those which we can get from Castile are both

¹⁶ For Fr. Sánchez's scheme for the conquest of China and related projects, see my *Christian Century in Japan*, pp. 257-59, 484 and the sources there quoted, to which should be added Fr. León Lopetegui, S.J., *El Padre José de Acosta, S.J., y las misiones* (Madrid, 1942), pp. 461-85, and Léon Bourdon, "Un project d'invasion de la Chine par Canton à la fin du XVI^e siècle," in *Actas do III Colóquio Internacional de Estudos Luso-Brasileiros*, II (Lisbon, 1960), pp. 97-121.

few and ill-trained." There might be some chance of success if the Portuguese and the Spaniards on the one hand, and the Jesuits and the friars on the other, were all firmly united in the service of both God and King Philip. "But I assure Your Reverence," said the old Portuguese, "that I would be seeing the greatest miracle that ever was in the world if I heard that the Fathers [of the Company] were united with Your Reverences, and the Portuguese with the Castilians." They concluded their last conversation by agreeing that the best method of converting the Chinese would be to send out carefully selected and truly apostolic missionaries, preaching by word and deed, "building hospitals and curing the sick," after the precedent set by the recent Franciscan martyrs in Japan.¹⁷

The bulk of the codex, chapters 18-58 (fols. 72-237), comprises a description of the chain of events set in motion by the wreck of the galleon *San Felipe* at Urado (Tosa) on 17 October 1596, culminating in the martyrdom of 5 February 1597, with the signs and portents accompanying it. Much of this information is already available in other contemporary accounts, particularly those edited and published by Fr. Lorenzo Pérez, O.F.M., in his voluminous *Cartas y Relaciones del Japon* (3 vols., Madrid, 1916-23). As indicated above, Fr. Pérez also published some extracts from the recently rediscovered "Ystoria" in his article on this MS and its author in *Erudición Ibero-Ultramarino*, II (1931), 217-35. These extracts include a fascinating eyewitness account by a Portuguese merchant, Francisco Rodrigues Pinto, of the behavior of the martyrs on their way

¹⁷ "Ystoria," fols. 253-59, for Fr. Juan Pobre's discussions with the old Portuguese on the best methods for the evangelization of China and Japan.

to execution (fols. 216-17 of the MS) as well as a letter of Fr. Gerónimo de Jesús (fols. 260-62). Fr. Pobre's approach to the martyrdom of his companions is uncritically hagiographical; but the modern reader has a wealth of both Franciscan and Jesuit primary sources in print from which to check his statements.

Not the least interesting section of the "Ystoria" is that which relates to his stay in the Ladrones (Marianas) Islands from April to October 1602 (fols. 267-313 of the MS). In chapter 70 (fols. 282-95) he gives a valuable account of the natives and their customs. They were expert fishers, swimmers, and divers, being taught to swim at the age of four or five. Men and women both went completely naked, but they brought up their children very well, and the islanders were very charitable in their relationship with each other. They had no formal laws, and they did not worship idols; but they kept the bones of their ancestors in their huts and regarded them as sacred relics. Their agricultural implements, such as they were, were made from palm trees. Their weapons were originally made only of palm or stone, but since their contacts with the Spaniards of the passing Manila galleons, which frequently called at the islands for fresh provisions and water on the voyage from Acapulco, they had also begun using iron weapons.

It is worth noting that Fr. Pobre introduced the cultivation of maize into the island where he spent most of his time (La Çarpana). "Sometimes the lonely Pobre would climb up the hill to the cultivated plots of land, where he would sow some grains of maize among the Çamotes of his master; and they took so well that within fifty-eight days, or two months at the most, the ears of maize were harvested, which the Indians ate with great gusto. But there is such a

great quantity of rats in these islands, that they devoured more than half of everything that was planted." Rats, he added, were the only animals of any kind in all the islands, and there were very few birds. It would seem from this passage that the Spanish missionaries, or some of them, were in the habit of distributing grains of maize in the countries where this cereal was unknown. At any rate, the fact that Fr. Pobre had provided himself with such seeds when he "jumped ship" in mid-Pacific in 1602 should not be overlooked by writers who discuss the controversial problem of how the cultivation of maize was spread and the confusing chronology of this crop.¹⁸

Before he left La Çarpana on 4 October 1602, Fr. Pobre had met one of the survivors from the wreck of the Acapulco-bound galleon *Santa Margarida*, which had left Cavite in July 1600 with more than 300 persons on board. After a disastrous voyage in which 260 passengers perished, the galleon became stranded off La Çarpana, where most of the enfeebled survivors who struggled ashore were killed by the islanders. Only 21 survived to be picked up by the galleon *Santo Tomás*, from which Fr. Pobre absconded in 1602. He also gives a narrative of the misadventures of the sister ship *San Gerónimo*, which left Cavite on 27 July 1600 for Acapulco, but which was forced back to the Philippines by contrary weather and storms at the end of March 1601, with only 22 survivors out of 250 persons who had embarked.¹⁹

¹⁸ "Ystoria," fol. 312. For a recent discussion of the origin and diffusion of maize, see the erudite article by Orlando Ribeiro, "Milho," in Joel Serrão (ed.), *Dicionário de História de Portugal*, III (Lisbon, 1968), pp. 58-64.

¹⁹ Cf. W. Lytle Schurz, *The Manila Galleon* (New York, 1939), pp. 255-56.

Fr. Pobre did his best to persuade the islanders not to harm, in the future, Spanish castaways like those from the *Santa Margarida* and the *San Gerónimo*, but he did not feel very optimistic about the result of his efforts. He thought the islanders would not, in fact, mistreat the Spaniards unless the latter first gave them plenty of provocation; but he was very much afraid that the Spaniards would be only too likely to do just that.²⁰ He also expressed the hope that "when the Religious come to convert these Indians they will be well received, at any rate on Guam and on La Çarpana." The Ladrones were then apparently quite thickly populated. The group comprised some 20 islands, of which Guam (or Boam, as he terms it) was the largest. He estimated that this island contained some 400 *pueblos*, with a total population of more than 60,000 people, whereas La Çarpana (Rota) had some 50 *pueblos* with a total of between 10,000 and 12,000 inhabitants.

When Fr. Pobre disembarked without permission at La Çarpana from the Manila-bound *Santo Tomás* in 1602, he was accompanied by another Franciscan lay brother, Fr. Pedro de Talavera. After some time, the latter moved to Guam, leaving Fr. Pobre at La Çarpana, where he stayed in the hut of one of the headmen, whom he calls his "amo" or master. On 10 July 1602, four galleons left Cavite for the voyage across the Pacific to Acapulco: *Jesús María*, *Espíritu Santo*, *Señora del Rosario*, and *San Antonio*. The last two made a relatively uneventful crossing and reached Acapulco safely. The *Espíritu Santo* was partially dismasted in a typhoon and forced into the Japanese port of Urado, very much in the same condition as the *San Felipe* had been six years previously. While some running repairs were being

²⁰ ". . . los españoles, que aunque nadie les aga mal, ellos lo an de açer a todos . . ." ("Ystoria," fol. 312).

effected, the Japanese attempted to close the harbor mouth and seize the galleon; but the ship fought her way out, largely thanks to the courage of a Negro slave who, under heavy fire, cut the cable which the Japanese had stretched across the entrance to the roadstead. The crew of the *Espíritu Santo* then improvised a jury-mast which enabled the vessel to return to Manila.²¹

Meanwhile, the *Jesús María* had likewise been blown off course, and, after vainly struggling with contrary winds, found herself off the Ladrones on the early morning of 4 October 1602. Fr. Pobre, together with his Indian host, family, and friends, went to the galleon in an outrigger canoe and tried to persuade the captain to pick up his companion, Fr. Pedro de Talavera from Guam, and another friar, Andrés de Nochebuena, apparently a castaway from the *Santa Margarida*. At this juncture, a favorable breeze suddenly sprang up, and the officers and crew insisted that the ship should take advantage of it by weighing anchor and setting course for the Philippines. This was done after Fr. Pobre had taken a hurried but cordial farewell of his Indian friends, commending his two castaway colleagues to the mercy of God. By a singular coincidence, the *Jesús María* reached the entrance to Manila Bay on the same day and on the same tide which the *Espíritu Santo* came limping in under jury-rig after her narrow escape from the Japanese at Urado.²²

²¹ W. Lytle Schurz, *The Manila Galleon* (New York, 1939), pp. 122-23, gives a graphic account of the *Espíritu Santo's* exploit; but he mistakenly locates the scene of the action with the Japanese at Hirado in Kyushu, instead of at Urado in Tosa province, Shikoku Island.

²² "Ystoria," fols. 312-13. Cf. Antonio de Morga, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (Mexico, 1609; ed. W. E. Retana, Madrid, 1909), pp. 131-33.

The last misadventure, which Fr. Pobre relates, but only briefly, in his "Ystoria" is the great fire at Manila which occurred on 30 April 1603. The conflagration started between three and four in the afternoon, behind the Hospital of the Misericordia. By the time it was over, a large part of the city had been destroyed and some twenty-six persons had perished in the flames. Among those whose houses were burned to the ground was Don Matias de Landecho, the "General" of the ill-fated *San Felipe* in 1596, who figures prominently in Fr. Pobre's "Ystoria."

As will be seen from the foregoing sketch, the Lilly Library is fortunate in possessing this precious manuscript of Fr. Juan Pobre, which has survived a shipwreck in the Pacific, fire at Manila, theft at Baghdad and at Rome, and the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39. I, for one, admit that I could not turn these worn and tattered (but still legible) leaves without emotion.