



Left: Battle dress: a striking suit of armour. Right: The jacket of a female firefighter—one of the non-military roles the samurai adopted

The way of the warrior

Samurai rose to be global emblems of honour and courage, but their story doesn't always match the myths they told about themselves, as a British Museum exhibition shows

ANTOKU was a toddler when he became Emperor of Japan. It was

bushi. Much like their name, their role was not exactly what decades of books and films

example of their 'flexible' approach to combat ethics comes from the Genpei War. Yoritomo,

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The teenage diplomat

It must have been the adventure of a lifetime for a barely teenaged boy. In 1582, when he was only 13, Itō Mancio, the grandson of a powerful lord who converted to Christianity, led a Japanese delegation to the Vatican. After a long journey via Goa, Lisbon and Madrid (where he was received by Philip II of Spain), he reached Rome in March 1585. He met the ailing Gregory XIII and attended the coronation of successor, Sixtus V, who made Ito a Knight of the Golden Spur. On his way back home, the young samurai had his portrait (*right*) painted in Venice by Domenico Tintoretto (now on show at the British Museum's 'Samurai' exhibition). He eventually made it back to Japan in 1590 and became a Jesuit priest.



in particular, had been circling Japan with their ships, pressuring them to open up to trade'

to the Allies, this militarist taint would once again lead to the repudiation of samurai