

## **The Duarte Correa Manuscript and the Shimabara Rebellion**

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As seen through the eyes of Japanese history and contemporary folklore, the Shimabara Rebellion of 1637-1638 has often been depicted as a heroic but doomed act of victims of the Tokugawa despotism, and an uprising tinged with a Christian character. But whether or not one can ascribe a religious origin to the rebellion, or whether the deeper causes were of an economic nature not only agitated the concerned authorities at the time but has long been and remains an intriguing subject for historians of this event. Led by a youth called Masuda Shiro from Amakusa, the peasant rebels of Shimabara, along with their Christian convert followers, held out against the overwhelming Tokugawa forces until driven to the brink by hunger and eventual massacre in a final assault on 12 April 1638 in their stronghold in Hara Castle. Ignominiously, the Dutch at Hirado acquiesced in the Tokugawa request to dispatch a warship to attack the rebel headquarters. More importantly, the episode turned the tables absolutely against Christian activities in the country leading to the final expulsion orders against the Portuguese traders.

The account of the Shimabara rebellion by Duarte Correa, a Portuguese sea captain turned Jesuit or Jesuit sympathizer, published in Lisbon in 1643, deserves special mention even alongside contemporary Japanese and Dutch accounts. Dated October 1638, Correa's account takes the form of a carta or letter addressed to the "Jesuit father in Macau," Antnio Francisco Cardim (1596-1659), pioneer mapmaker of Japan and eminent martyrologist. Ironically, given Correa's own immolation at the hands of religious adversaries, the carta was dedicated to Bishop Dom Francisco de Castro, the Inquisitor General of the Kingdom of Portugal. Still, we do not know how this letter was smuggled out of Omura prison where Correa was incarcerated, or how it was delivered up to Macau and eventually Portugal. Nevertheless, it provides a rare and sympathetic account of the rebellion from one of the victims of the persecution. Yet, it is not a jaundiced account, as Correa reveals some compassion and respect for the victims of this epic battle on both sides.

Leon Pages is the first historian in the modern period to make use of Correa's account; indeed, he reprints the Portuguese version as an appendix. Pages describes Correa as a former ship captain and merchant who visited Japan for the first time in 1619. G.J.C. Henriques, writing in 1901, remarks that little is known of Correa, aside from what is set forth in his pamphlet. But citing Barbosa Machado's Historical Dictionary, Henriques states that, having left his birthplace, Alemquer, Correa travelled to the East where, in Macau, he married a woman "of virtuous antecedents." She evidently left him a widower, he continues, as his account reveals that he was received into the Jesuit Order at the hands of the Provincial Father Matheus de Couros. According to Machado's account, Correa then travelled to Nagasaki where, upon learning of his Christian identity, the authorities had him arrested and, on 4 November 1637, removed to Omura. Having suffered various tortures to induce him to renounce the faith, Correa was bound to the stake and "roasted" in August 1639. But, as Pages elaborates, Correa would have had more than a premonition of his fate, as he was earlier witness in Nagasaki to the persecutions of 1622, 1626, 1627 and 1628, and offered testimony to ecclesiastical authorities in, respectively, Manila and Macau.

It is thus of great interest that Henriques republished Correa's account in Alemquer, Portugal under the title *An Account of the RISING AT XIMABARA and of the notable siege thereof, and of the deaths of our Portuguese fellow-countrymen for the faith*. Coincidentally, Alemquer was also

Correa's birthplace. All the more felicitous, then, that Henriques rendered this work into English, especially as he found that only two copies of the 1643 document had survived, one held in the Lisbon Public Library, and the other which he privately purchased at a book sale in Lisbon. To embellish this narrative, very few copies of Henriques translation exist today. Writing in 1988, the historian Benjamin Vieira Pires describes the Henriques translation "as rare as the Portuguese version." The present author's copy was "discovered" in a *alfarrabista* or second-hand bookshop in the *Bairros Alto* quarter of Lisbon.

While a number of standard accounts of the Shimabara Rebellion have drawn upon or allude to the 1643 document, to my knowledge, no full accounting of Correa's narrative has appeared in English language and no use has been made of Henriques translation and valuable preface in twentieth century writing on the Shimabara Rebellion. It is of interest that none have challenged the authenticity of the document, nor its general interpretation, although some have sought to corroborate with the use of Dutch and Japanese documents. Indeed, Boxer offers that since all of Correa's informants were Japanese and none of them Christian ("as far as is known"), then there is no reason to doubt the truth of his broader statements. The following offers only a slightly contextualized rendering of the entire Duarte manuscript, at least in the interest of making this work better known to an English readership.

### **First Stirrings of Rebellion**

According to Correa, on 8 November 1637, as soon as the Macau ships departed Nagasaki, the Governors of Nagasaki (*Nagasaki bugyo*) also set out for the court at Edo. No sooner had they arrived, however, than news was received of a rebellion in the Kingdom of Arima by the Christians of Shimabara who had killed one of the governors and more than thirty nobleman. The rebels had also besieged the fortress at Shimabara and burnt down all the houses in the town. News of the rebellion soon reached Omura and Nagasaki, although it was then unknown whether the rebellion was Christian motivated or connected with the tax burden. In any event, the Nagasaki Governors returned *post haste* to the city on 17 January 1638 relieved to find it secure. But, as Nagasaki was designated a Crown city (*tenryo*), reinforcements were speedily assembled to guard the suburbs. More than 40,000 men of Chikugo were quartered in the hills with the duty to defend the city and keep its inhabitants under surveillance. No one could move around freely without offering letters testifying as to residence. Similarly, reinforcements were rushed to defend the hills surrounding Shimabara.

### **Events in Amakusa**

To interrupt Correa's account, it should be mentioned that the Shimabara Rebellion had important preludes and was of broader geographical scope than the Shimabara peninsula. As with the peninsula, the remote Amakusa Islands served as a cradle of the forbidden religion after the first exclusion acts were brought down. Beginning with the evangelization of Lu's d Almeida in February 1569 and continuing under the Christian daimyo, Konishi Yukinaga (Don Augustino), Amakusa boasted many converts. With the arrival in Nagasaki in July 1590 of the first printing Jesuit press, Amakusa and, before it, Katsusa in Shimabara also served as centres of missionary activity. But after Konishi's defeat, Amakusa came under the domain of Terazawa Hirotaka, Governor of Nagasaki from 1592-1602.

But, Correa relates, about the same time as events unfolded in Shimabara, certain villages in

Amakusa commenced to rebel. According to some of his informants, this was because of their Christian faith, and, according to others, because of the tyranny practised by the daimyo of Arima. In any case, as soon as the “lord of Amakusa”, Terazawa [Katakata, son of Hirotaka who died in 1633], received news of the revolt, he dispatched nine noblemen with 3,000 warriors. In a battle fought on 27 December 1637, Terazawa's forces were routed with a loss of 2,800 killed. Survivors escaped and the wounded were evacuated to Nagasaki. Among those killed was Miwake Tobe, a general and a man of great income and high status. Correa is in no doubt as to the Christian zeal of the rebels women included who shouted the names of Jesus and Mary at the enemy. But in a subsequent battle on 3 January 1638, the Amakusa rebels suffered many casualties, with at least 1,000 survivors fleeing the scene only to regroup in Shimabara alongside the rebels on the peninsula.

Nicholas Koeckebacker, the Dutch factor in Hirado who explained these events to superiors in Batavia, corroborates that the rebellion at Amakusa was out of discontent at the “many vexations” inflicted upon them by their overlord, the Prince of Karatsu. As the Dutchman witnessed, on 25 December 1637, Karatsu, fifteen miles north of Hirado, sent numerous boat loads of soldiers to Amakusa to punish the ringleaders, only to be routed. He adds that a few days later the Christians of Arima (Shimabara) made common cause with the peasant-rebels of Amakusa, destroying Japanese religious symbols and replacing them with Christian emblems. Writing on 10 January, Koeckebacker put the number of rebels at 18,000. But on 17 February Koeckebacker reported that the rebellion on Amakusa had been decisively crushed, observing that fifty diehard rebels had crossed over the narrow strait to Shimabara for a final showdown.

### **The Shimabara Rebellion**

Correa continues that the Shimabara rebels took over two fortresses, “Ficinojo” and “Haranojo” (Hara fortress). This latter, today a tourist and memorial site, surrounded by three walls with three moats, was occupied. Rallying some 35,000 men, not including numerous women and children, they burned the daimyo's rice stores and vessels and came very close to capturing the Shimabara fortress. Meanwhile, the government plan to defeat the rebels was drawn up in Nagasaki by the Governor of Nagasaki, joined by “Nangatodono” who hurriedly returned from a visit to the court to meet the challenge. On 2 January 1638 the two governors set out for Shimabara accompanied by a force of 500 men wearing their respective insignia. Additionally, they requested 800 men from Omura along with four large vessels to guard the river at Nagasaki. On the same day 800 men from Hizen arrived at Isahaya. After the governors of Nagasaki arrived near Shimabara they established their residence in a village half a league (a mile and a half) distant from the fortress to await the arrival of lords from the court. The rebels in turn defended the Hara fortress a further eight leagues (some 24 miles) distant from Shimabara fortress but within sight across the plain.

Correa explains that, according to information supplied by a government spy, the rebel force numbered 30,000 armed with some guns, swords and lances. The government, on its side, rallied fifty pieces of artillery brought in from Nagasaki from Japanese vessels, in addition to a large number of smaller weapons taken from Chinese ships. The government then set about the construction of an earthwork to facilitate the bombardment of the rebel force. As this strategy had little effect, they requested the services of a Dutch ship brought in from Hirado to bomb the fortress from the seaward. In this affair, also corroborated by Dutch sources. The rebels managed to kill a Dutchman on the main-top and another in the act of ascending, before it departed the scene.

Still under siege and taunting the enemy, the defiant rebel forces inflicted heavy losses on government forces without loss on their side. In February, however, six defectors from the rebel ranks brought welcome news to the attackers that the outer perimeter of rebel defences lacked both powder and provisions, while only seventy days provisions remained in the main fortress. In Correa's account, the attacking forces suffered innumerable losses from exposure to the winter cold leaving the roads and fields literally full of dead bodies. Their misery was compounded by rebel sorties, such as the one on 3 February in which the rebels killed over 2,000 men from Hizen including the governor and many nobles. Altogether Hizen had lost 8,000 men slain by the rebels, many of whom had never fired a shot.

From 10 March the government forces began to assemble in Shimabara. By the beginning of April, 30,000 rebel forces were squared off against a combined force of 200,000: 30,000 from Chikuzen, 40,000 from Higo; 25,000 from Chikugo, 2,700 from Bungo, 3,000 from Amakusa, 5,000 from Omura, 3,000 from Hirado, and 500 men belonging to the lord of Shimabara. Faced with the prospects of a long siege and certain death by hunger, on 4 April the rebel forces took the initiative of mounting a nocturnal assault upon Hizen, Bungo and Chikugo forces. This attack, which saw much indiscriminate and confused fighting, left approximately 380 rebels dead. Captured prisoners revealed that no food remained in the fortress; and neither did any powder or cannon balls remain. Taking advantage of this intelligence, Hizen opened an assault on the fortress on 12 April capturing the outer line of the rebel defence system. Forced back to the middle line of defence the rebels were reduced to flinging their last cooking pots at the attackers. Even their defensive ditch (34 feet deep and 80 feet wide) began to fill up with dead and living. The end came on 15 April (1638) "not one being left except those who fled, and were caught and put to death later on."

According to Correa, after the victory by the government forces, some 35,000 to 37,000 men, women and children were decapitated, their heads placed around the field. Judging from the rich clothes and swords of many the victims they appeared to be of noble blood. The leader of the rebellion, Correa confirms, was the eighteen year old "Maxondanoxiro" (Masuda Shiro), a native of Higo, also going by the Christian name of Jerome. Shiro was captured and decapitated by a soldier of the lord of Higo and his head taken to Nagasaki and exhibited. Still, the number of dead left upon the plain was said to be double that of the rebels. Correa states that from the vantage point of his prison located beside the road from Shimabara, he witnessed numerous servants weeping for their dead masters in addition to countless wounded and stretcher cases, testimony of the ferocious battle. As a sequel to the rebellion, the Hara fortress was destroyed and the lands of Arima and Amakusa together were divided among various lords. The hapless lords of Nagato, Arima and Shimabara were beheaded.

### **Millennial Rebels or Economic Victims?**

Whether pre-modern peasant rebellions were laced with millennial objectives or whether peasants were driven to rebel out of economic hardship, often exacerbated by rapacious tax burdens and other political impositions, is also a question that has engaged modern historians leading to an impressive and complex literature.

But on these questions Correa's voice is refreshingly modern. Correa writes that, according to an enquiry by the Nagasaki Governors as to the cause of the rebellion, they found it owing to "the atrocious tyranny of the Governors appointed by Nangatodono, Lord of the Lands of Arima." To

wit, in addition to the ordinary annual tribute of rice, wheat and barley imposed upon farmers they were forced to pay two other imposts, one on the nono (ninth part) and the other on the canga (for each yoke of oxen?), and the prime leaves of the better half of each tobacco plant, along with specified numbers of egg plants. In addition to regular taxes paid by each household, they were also obliged to cut wood for the soldiers used in salt pans and otherwise increase the revenues of the lord. These impositions did not exhaust the demands made upon the people, however. Persecutions and punishments imposed upon women included plunging them into icy water. In one case a farmer whose virgin daughter was seized, stripped, and tortured by burning sticks, for his nonpayment of debts, retaliated by killing an “officer of justice” and his companions.

But Correa is judicious in his analysis. He states that it was because the farmers were unable to bear any longer the insolence and tyranny practised by the Governors and “Nangatodono’s officers that they rose in rebellion against their lord. It was not because they were Christians, as it answered the purpose of the lord’s officers to say that it was, so as to hide their despotism, and prevent their losing favor with the Tokugawa leaders. Correa hedges a bit in his own conclusion stating that he could not adduce cause but that, in any case, “those who were Christians went about, as it [if] were thunderstruck, saying it was God’s punishment.”

One can concur that the religious dimension of the rebellion was also tinged with a millennial element and, not to put too fine a point on it, would not have been out of tune with even pre-Christian and Buddhist ritualistic. In any case, as Murdoch and Boxer have written, whatever the real or ostensible cause of the rising, it soon assumed a religious character. The point is that the Christianized rebels of Amakusa and Shimabara, in common with generations of peasant rebels in Japan, sprang from a common root. That they carried banners with Portuguese inscriptions such as “Louvada seja o Santissimo Sacramento” (Praised be the most Holy Sacrament) and “San Tiago” may have confirmed their treason in the eyes of the bakufu, but for devotees of a transcendent religious ethos, it may also be seen as mere talisman or religious epiphenomena of a messianic belief in divine redemption. Indeed, once the gauntlet had been thrown down, there was no turning back. Murdoch opines that “in mere moral the insurgent (so-called) farmers of 1637-38 were far very far superior to their adversaries.” Such a moral interpretation also fits the facts, namely that, despite the overpowering firepower of the shogunate, the rebels were practically unwavering in their devotion to an ideal.

But these thoughts are not novel. Sansom, writing in 1931, also suggests that it is “sometimes difficult to disentangle the spiritual from the economic factor” as in such movements as the (fanatic) Ikko or Ikki risings of the fifteenth century, a reference to militant “followers of Amida” whose defensive actions sapped the power of the feudal authority in diverse parts of Japan in this epoch. But, we repeat, on these questions Correa was eloquent, these were peasants who, driven to the brink, had nothing to lose by rebelling against a rapacious government.

## **Sequels**

Jolted by the violence of the Shimabara Rebellion and the various setbacks encountered by the Tokugawa forces, the bakufu resolved to prohibit completely Christianity. To this end, in the spring of 1639, it formally forbade the coming of Portuguese ships to Japan, while all Portuguese and all children of mixed racial parentage were ordered out of the country. Boxer observes that Duarte, executed at Nagasaki on 28 May, was the first victim of this policy. The last captain-majors remain-

ing in Japan departed by galliots on 17 October reaching Macau at the end of October along with the dismaying news of the end of an epoch. Unwisely, in June 1640, the Macau Senate dispatched to Nagasaki four of its leading citizens in an attempt to have the exclusion policy reversed. While the bugyo was cordial, the Grand Council at Edo (roju) answered by having sixty-one of the ship's multinational compliment executed and thirteen spared to return to Macau with the shocking news. It is not so surprising that the official rescript concerning the execution of the Macau Embassy linked the actions of the "worm-like barbarians of Macau" with the Shimabara Rebellion.

If we had not destroyed and annihilated them [the rebels] as quickly as possible, their numbers would have greatly increased, and the revolt would have spread like the rebellion of Chang Lu [revolt of Yellow Turbans in China in AD 184] . . . The instigators of this revolt were deserving of the severest punishment, and therefore a government envoy was sent to Nagasaki, warning your people that they should never return to this country, and that if they did, everybody on board the ships would be killed infallibly, etc., etc.

In 1646, the year of the Portuguese restoration, an envoy of the House of Braganza was admitted to Nagasaki, along with the crew of a Japanese junk which had taken shelter in Macau during a storm. Yet the Portuguese were dismissed with the order never to return. Catholicism, driven underground, then entered the long kakure tradition. Again, in July 1685, the Portuguese of Macau attempted a diplomatic opening with Nagasaki. The Dutch in Deshima were obviously well placed to witness this event. From the pages of the Dagregister for July and August we find the following entries; (July 1685) News of a ship, which turns out to be Portuguese – Commotion – It brings 12 Japanese, which drifted off course to Macau – The Portuguese do not want to trade, but ask for a "receipt" – Some ropes, sails and anchors have been brought ashore, together with the Japanese – their story They have been imprisoned – The bongiosen (bugyo) suspects the Japanese and Portuguese – The Governor sends refreshments – We fear for the life of the Japanese – The Portuguese ask permission to await the arrival of the Dutch ships – (August 1685) The Portuguese ship is ordered to leave – The Portuguese receive permission to leave and are warned never to return again; their reward – The Portuguese leave for Macau – (April 1688) The Japanese who had drifted off to Macau, are released.

From a world-history perspective, it is significant that, as far as the bakufu was concerned, the rebellion was the last straw. Whatever the benefits of the Macau trade in the past, the Japanese saw in the rebellion – however erroneously – the hand of foreign Christian adversaries. Fears that the Spanish would attempt to replicate in Japan what they achieved in the Philippines by force of arms and conversion was dreaded by the shogunate. But, at the same time, the poor showing of the samurai armies against the Christian peasants of Shimabara led to the cancellation of a projected joint Japanese-Dutch expedition against Manila. Not only did the rebellion ring down the sakoku or seclusion period, but it effectively removed active Japanese participation in the tributary-trade system as developed under Ming China. The new terms under which Japan participated in the Asian world-economy actually privileged the Dutch over the Iberian powers, contributing dramatically to the hegemonic sequence in seventeenth-century East Asia in which the latter irrevocably lost rank to the former.

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