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Stephen Turnbull

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WARS AND RUMOURS OF WARS

Japanese Plans to Invade the Philippines, 1593–1637

Stephen Turnbull

On three occasions between 1593 and 1637, the incumbent rulers of Japan gave serious consideration to sending military expeditions against the Spanish rulers of the Philippines. None of these proposed invasions ever set sail, but an examination of the plans made and the reasons they were not put into effect sheds considerable light on Filipino-Japanese relations during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As all three ventures foundered partly because of a lack of naval capacity, these little-known schemes also provide important information about Japan's military capabilities at this time in its history.

Spanish colonists first arrived in the Philippines in 1564 as a result of an expedition from the Americas under Miguel López

Stephen Turnbull took his first degree at Cambridge and has two master's degrees (in theology and military history) from Leeds University. In 1996 he received a PhD from Leeds for his work on Japan's Kakure Kirishitan. His work has been recognized by the awarding of the Canon Prize of the British Association for Japanese Studies and the 1998 Japan Festival Literary Award. Now retired from Leeds University, Stephen Turnbull is emeritus professor of Japanese studies at Akita International University, research associate at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and an honorary lecturer at Leeds. Dr. Turnbull's current academic research projects include a study of Japanese mercenaries in Southeast Asia, an analysis of the siege of Tanaka Castle in 1587, and, in cooperation with Mie University, a major work on the idea of the ninja as a cultural phenomenon.

de Legazpi, and on 23 July 1567 in a letter to King Philip II, this "very humble and faithful servant who kisses your hands and feet" notes that Chinese and Japanese came to trade on the larger islands, bringing with them "silks, woolens, bells, porcelains, perfumes, iron, tin, colored cotton cloths, and other small wares."¹ The letter is the first acknowledgement of peaceful encounters between the Spanish and the Japanese.

It was not long before there were interactions of a very different kind, involving marauding bands of *wakō*, the pirate gangs who were usually perceived to be Japanese even when they included an international component. In 1572, Juan de Salcedo fought Japanese junks off the coast of Pangasinan

and Pablo Carrion drove Japanese pirates from an enclave at the mouth of the Cagayan River.² It is in the accounts of such operations that we find the first descriptions in any European language of Japanese military techniques and martial customs, from death-defying charges to acts of ritual suicide. So impressed were the Spanish by these warriors that they began to recruit mercenaries from pacified *wakō* and also from within the expatriate Japanese community. However, even though Japanese bravery was recognised and valued, there was a noticeable undercurrent of fear that one day these independent-minded warriors might rise up against their employers. In its most extreme form, that fear envisaged a local uprising in support of an invasion of the Philippines from Japan—an event that was by no means a remote possibility.

HIDEYOSHI AND THE PHILIPPINES, 1592–98

The earliest written mention of fears of a Japanese invasion in the broadest sense of the word appears in a *Memorial to the Council* of 1586, in which there is speculation within Manila that the Japanese *wakō* might have greater ambitions beyond mere plunder: they “make a descent almost every year, and, it is said, with the intent of colonizing Luçon [Luzon].”³ That never happened, but in 1591 the first proper invasion scare began when the Philippines entered the consciousness of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–98). By means of a series of brilliant military campaigns, Hideyoshi had reunified Japan after the chaos of a century of civil war, and he now set his mind on overseas expeditions. The addition of the Philippines to his megalomaniac aims was credited to a certain “Farandaquiemon [Faranda Quiemon]—a Japanese of low extraction,” who induced Hideyoshi “to write in a barbarous and arrogant manner to the governor, demanding submission and tribute, and threatening to come with a fleet and troops to lay waste the country.”⁴

Farandaquiemon was a Japanese Christian merchant from Sakai called Harada Kiemon. He had visited Manila on several occasions, most recently in 1591, and, having looked at its defences, he returned to Japan convinced that the city could be taken easily.⁵ Together with his colleague Hasegawa Sōnin, described as a “court favourite,” Kiemon persuaded Hideyoshi to write his arrogant letter to the governor of the Philippines.⁶ Hideyoshi’s military strength and his unification of Japan had become known in Manila, so the bombastic letter begins with a reference to these military triumphs and his miraculous birth that had augured Hideyoshi’s destiny to rule other nations. The threats appeared later in the missive: “If an ambassador is not sent, I shall unfurl my banner and send an army against that country to conquer it with a multitude of men; so that that country will repent at not having sent me an ambassador.”⁷

The Spanish sent back a reply dated 1 May 1592 that was delivered to Hideyoshi by the Dominican friar Juan Cobo. Cobo traveled to Japan with a Chinese

Christian called Antonio López, who appears to have been sent as a spy. Cobo and López met Hideyoshi at Nagoya Castle, the military base in Kyushu built for the invasion of Korea. “Cobo showed the king of Japon [Japan] the kingdoms of our king on a globe. He gave this to the king, with the names of the kingdoms written in Chinese characters, with the distances between them.”⁸ Harada Kiemon then took personal charge of a second Japanese embassy to Manila. The Japanese delegation and Cobo’s embassy left for the Philippines in two separate ships, which was fortunate in view of the disaster that would overcome the embassy, because Cobo’s ship was wrecked off Taiwan and he died at the hands of aboriginal headhunters. Antonio López arrived safely in Japan aboard Harada’s vessel.⁹

Harada Kiemon began his address to the council in Manila by stating that Hideyoshi had laid on a magnificent reception for Juan Cobo because he “knew that the Spaniards are a warlike nation.”¹⁰ Impressive though Kiemon was, the council gave much more attention to debriefing Antonio López, who certainly knew how to gather information. On 1 June 1593, López was questioned closely under oath about what he had seen and done in Japan, with most of the questions relating to his knowledge of any Japanese plans for an attack on the Philippines. López said first that he had heard that Hideyoshi had entrusted the conquest to “Kunquyn,” which probably refers to Harada Kiemon.¹¹ There was also a possible motive, because “[i]n Japon there is universal talk of the abundance of gold in this land. On this account, the soldiers are anxious to come here; and are coming, as they do not care to go to Core [Korea], which is a poor country.”¹² López also stated that the Japanese had interrogated him about the military strength of the Philippines. He seems to have tried misinformation on that point, even though his initial reply had caused some arrogant amusement: “The [Japanese] laughed when they heard Antonio say that these islands contained four or five thousand Spaniards. They said that the defense of these islands was merely a matter for jest, for one hundred of the Japanese were worth two or three hundred of us.”¹³

López also mentioned that three large ships were being built in Japan, although he did not know their purpose, and he warned his hosts that in his opinion the Chinese community in Manila could not be trusted.¹⁴ López also had overheard the Japanese discussing the likelihood of the Philippines being reinforced when under attack. “[F]our months are needed to go from Mexico to Luçon,” said López, “and on this account but few soldiers could come from Mexico. Japan is not more than twenty days’ journey distant, and therefore it would be well for us to appreciate this fact.”¹⁵ In terms of Harada Kiemon’s personal ambitions, everyone López had met believed that when the Philippines were conquered he would become the governor.¹⁶

More interesting details then emerged about the size of the invading army, although the figures were very vague. López heard in “Hunquin’s house” (probably

referring to Hasegawa Sōnin) that one hundred thousand would be sent, but when López (modifying his earlier figures) told them that the Philippines only contained five to six thousand soldiers, of whom no more than three to four thousand guarded Manila, the Japanese said that ten thousand would suffice. His host later told him that they had decided further that no more than five to six thousand men would be needed, conveyed on ten large ships.¹⁷

The final point López covered was the invasion route: “[T]hey will come by way of Liuteui [the Ryukyu Islands, modern Okinawa Prefecture].”¹⁸ An invasion route via the Ryukyus and then Taiwan was the sensible one; it avoided open seas for the maximum amount of time, and it is only five hundred miles from Taiwan to Luzon. This was exactly the route the Japanese chose in World War II, when they attacked the Philippines from Taiwan, with additional forces landing farther south on Luzon from Amami-Ō-shima.

The threat was sufficiently serious for the Spanish to take specific defensive precautions, and López’s information, limited though it was, probably proved helpful. A document entitled “Luzon Menaced by Japanese” by Governor Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas ordered the citizens to stockpile food and arms. All ships coming from Japan were to be searched. Twenty vessels would be stationed in the river below the artillery of the fort, with all other boats being moved upstream. The invaders could not then use the latter to build defences, and the seacoast would be kept clear for fighting. No ship was to leave without permission lest its crew be caught and interrogated, nor should any gold or silver be moved out of Manila. It also was recommended that the Japanese residents of Manila be moved to a settlement outside the city, and Japanese servants monitored closely.¹⁹ Then a review was held of the available troops, including retired men who still held weapons. It was estimated that the defence of Manila alone required one thousand men, or six hundred at the least. The latter figure was the one included in the document, which implies that six hundred men were all they had. Other strongpoints required fewer, and there would be twenty-five soldiers on board each of four vessels to guard the coasts. The total strength available to withstand a Japanese attack was put at a disappointing 1,517 men, only a quarter of the number about which López had told the Japanese in Nagoya. Spanish defenders were outnumbered four to one, using his lowest estimate of the invading forces.²⁰

The Philippines remained on high alert for four years after Harada’s visit, and during that time the Spanish authorities closely monitored Hideyoshi’s military expedition against Korea. It was launched during the summer of 1592 and rapidly changed from being a blitzkrieg success to a long and painful retreat. The Korean campaign revealed a major Japanese weakness in naval warfare and support, and one of the main reasons for Japan’s eventual defeat was that the Korean navy severed Japan’s lines of communication between Busan and the Japanese island

of Tsushima.²¹ The encouraging lesson was not wasted on Manila. If Hideyoshi could not control the Tsushima Strait, how could he ever contemplate sending an invasion fleet as far as Luzon?

As his Korean incursion dragged on, Hideyoshi grew increasingly suspicious concerning the activities of Portuguese and Spanish missionaries in Japan. An active persecution of Christianity followed, and Japan's first martyrs died in February 1597. One of them, Fray Martin of the Ascension, wrote a letter to the governor of the Philippines as he was on his way to his execution. It includes what he had heard about Hideyoshi's intentions toward the Philippines. "It is said that next year he will go to Luzon, and that he does not go this year because of being busy with the Coreans."²² Martin also commented on the invasion route, whereby "he intends to take the islands of Lequios and Hermosa [Ryukyus and Taiwan], throw forces from them into Cagayan, and thence to fall upon Manila, if God does not first put a stop to his advance."²³

Manila gave some consideration to a preemptive Spanish occupation of Taiwan but, as Fray Martin had envisaged, God put a stop to Hideyoshi's plans. Hideyoshi died in 1598, the troops in Korea were recalled, and no fleet sailed for Manila. A Spanish reconnaissance of Taiwan may well have been carried out at this time, but no attempt was made to exert control over the island. That had to wait until 1626, when the Spanish established Fort San Domingo (modern Keelung).²⁴

THE PHILIPPINES AND THE MATSUKURA FAMILY, 1630–31

Japanese naval weakness would come up again as a crucial factor when an invasion of the Philippines was considered for a second time, in 1630.²⁵ Japan was now under the rule of the Tokugawa family.

The persecution of Christians had intensified since the time of Hideyoshi, and now the only contact Japanese Christians had with the outside world was a handful of brave priests who entered Japan secretly. The Japanese authorities believed they spread sedition and encouraged disobedience, and most of them came by way of Manila, so an invasion of the Philippines would be a heavy-handed way of closing the loophole once and for all.²⁶

However, trade between the two countries was acceptable to both sides. Silver was an important commodity, and Japanese mines yielded perhaps a third of global silver production during the period covered by this article.²⁷ As Antonio de Morga wrote, "[I]t is well to keep the king of Japon friendly by this means. For if he were not so he would be the greatest enemy that could be feared, on account of the number and size of his realms, and the valor of the people therein, who are, beyond comparison, the bravest in all India."²⁸

The 1630 invasion scheme was associated almost completely with a single enthusiast: Matsukura Bungo-no-kami Shigemasa (1574–1630), the *daimyō*

(great lord) and notorious tyrant of Shimabara in Hizen Province, whose cruel treatment of the people and persecution of Christians is very well recorded.²⁹ The Philippines entered Shigemasa's consciousness in 1624 when two ships belonging to the Matsukura were blown off course and ended up on the islands. On returning to Japan, their captains spoke enthusiastically about the considerable mercantile activity that existed between Japan and the Philippines and how Shigemasa might be able to gain control of it by means of a military expedition.³⁰ Shigemasa took no immediate action, because it would have been without precedent for any *daimyō* to act in such a manner purely on his own initiative, rather than by direction of the shogun. But then an incident occurred that provided him the opportunity for an authorised expedition to the Philippines—to avenge an insult to Japan.

The affront had its roots in Macao, where in 1622 the Portuguese heroically had beaten off a Dutch attack. A handful of Japanese mercenaries had served on the Dutch side.³¹ The attempt caused such alarm in Manila that the Spanish sent reinforcements to Macao in case of a renewed incursion. The Spanish troops were ordered to stand down in 1624, but instead of sailing straight home to the Philippines their leaders chose to engage in a leisurely piratical expedition.³²

Among their targets was Siam, where they preyed on the local freight vessels "carrying as merchandise, rice, considerable pepper, and some cloth. The last named was much needed by the infantry, who already had no shirts on account of the long voyage."³³ One of the ships they attacked and burned belonged to the king of Siam, but the Spanish pirates really exceeded their brief when they attacked a Japanese "red seal" ship—an authorised trading vessel. It had been sent to Siam by the *machidoshiyori* (town elder) of Nagasaki, Takaki Sakuzaemon.³⁴

The Spanish account of the affair is very shamefaced; it admits that "[o]ne [ship] was Japanese, and carried drugs and merchandise. It was captured in good faith, but the justification of this act is being discussed. It is thought that the Japanese will be remunerated for the injury received, as they ought not to have been harmed."³⁵ The most serious aspect of the incident was the appropriation of the red seal—an act that amounted to an attack on the shogun's personal authority.³⁶ A profound apology subsequently was conveyed to Nagasaki.

No acknowledgement came from the Japanese side, and at its meeting in Manila on 16 January 1629 the council decided to take the matter no further, while minuting four reasons why relations between Spain and Japan were at such a low level. The first was that Spanish trade had been embargoed, not for commercial reasons, but because of its links to Christianity. The second point was that the Japanese had refused to receive any Spanish ambassadors. The third referred to the "old time robberies" of the Hideyoshi era and his threats of invasion, a theme echoed in the Spaniards' understanding of the current situation in their fourth point:

Because . . . the Japanese had news of the richness of these islands, they have always tried to conquer them, by endeavoring to get a foothold on the island of Hermosa, in order to make it a way-station for the conquest of Luzon. That has caused the governors of Philipinas to make great expenditures and vast preparations during the past few years; and but recently it is learned that discussions of this kind are rife in Japan and that their reason for not doing it is not the lack of malice but of power.³⁷

Matsukura Shigemasa possessed both malice and power. He realised the opportunity that had fallen into his lap, and he addressed the *rōjū* (the shogun's senior advisory council) in Edo as follows:

Luzon is governed by the Western country [Spain], and that country in conjunction with Namban [Portugal] is ever looking for an opportunity to invade this empire. For that reason there is a fear that our country will be disturbed. All who come from Spain to Japan touch at Luzon. Therefore if I shall conquer that country with my own troops, place my own agents there, and thus destroy the base of the Westerners, this country will be secure for years to come. If I be permitted I will cross over to Luzon and conquer it. I pray that the vermilion seal of the Great Lord, giving me an estate of 100,000 koku there, may be granted me.³⁸

To his own desire for territorial expansion and personal wealth Shigemasa therefore had added as justification the possibility of invasion of Japan by Spain. While holding back from a binding commitment to send Japanese troops to Manila, the shogun gave Shigemasa permission to investigate it as a potential target and to make military preparations. On 14 December 1630, with the cooperation of the Nagasaki *bugyō* (commissioner) Takenaka Umene, Shigemasa sent two retainers called Yoshioka Kurōemon and Kimura Gonnojō to Manila to spy out the Spanish defences.³⁹ They were disguised as merchants and their cover story was that they wished to discuss the development of trade. Each had ten *ashigaru* (foot soldiers) under his command, but during a stormy return crossing all ten of Kimura's men perished.

While they were away, Shigemasa continued his military preparations. The paucity of sources for what appears to have been the most serious attempt to invade the Philippines is regrettable, although the omissions may indicate simply that certain crucial aspects were never considered. All that is known for certain is that Shigemasa amassed three thousand bows and muskets for his army.⁴⁰ As these are foot-soldier weapons, one might envisage an additional 1,500 foot-soldier spearmen and half that number of samurai with noncombatant support troops, making the total numbers in Shigemasa's army about the same as the five to six thousand reported by Antonio López in 1593. There is no mention of naval support in the very meagre sources, nor is any indication given that Shigemasa knew that the important way station of Taiwan had acquired a Spanish fort since the time of Hideyoshi. Finally, no consideration was given to the

need for artillery against the walls of Manila, but that omission possibly could be explained by the fact that Shigemasa was awaiting the arrival of his spies with the relevant information.

The men returned to Japan in July 1631. No records of the intelligence they brought back with them have survived, but their information is unlikely to have been either profound or accurate, because they were a far cry from the ninja of Japanese martial fantasy. The authorities on the Philippines knew exactly who they were and the real purpose of their visit, as is confirmed by the unsigned “Events in Filipinas” of 2 July 1632:

In Japon they are still pricked with the thorn of the ship which some years ago our galleons captured and burned on the bar of Sian. To avenge this, notable councils have been held in Japon, in order to come and wage war against this land; in order beforehand to have it well explored, they sent last year in January two merchant ships, under cloak of trade and traffic. Although in Manilla warning of this double object had been received, this was not made known; and they were received and regaled as ambassadors from the Tono of Arima and Bungo. A ceremonious reception and very handsome present were given to them; but the city was put in readiness for whatever might happen.⁴¹

A separate Jesuit source suggests that a deliberate attempt was made to impress on the spies the futility of attempting to take Manila by force. It comes in a report sent to Spain on 29 July 1631 by Hernando Pérez. In it he stated unambiguously that Yoshioka and Kimura were “sham envoys sent to investigate our situation in order to have an easy conquest of our country.” Pérez confirmed that presents were given and banquets were held. “However, although on the surface there was a warm reception, in reality there was a display of military strength in accordance with a situation of war. As the envoys passed through the town the army units were lined up from the seashore to the governor’s residence.” Pérez concluded that the envoys were “amazed” by what they saw.⁴² Their undercover mission therefore came to nothing.

The mission was nullified anyway by the unexpected death of the invasion commander, Matsukura Shigemasa.⁴³ He had died suddenly in a bathhouse in Obama while his spies were still in Manila. Murder was suspected.⁴⁴

THE DUTCH AND THE FINAL INVASION PLANS, 1637

No further considerations were given to an expedition against the Philippines for another five years, but while Christian refugees from Japanese persecution continued to arrive in Manila, so also continued the much smaller reverse flow of secret priests to Japan. The last of the line, Father Sidotti, would arrive in Japan in 1708. It may have been only a trickle, but it was enough evidence of a continuing Christian problem to ensure that the idea of an invasion of the

Philippines rumbled on after Shigemasa's death. Shigemasa was succeeded by his son Matsukura Nagato-no-kami Katsuie, who proved to be as much of a tyrant and enemy of Christianity as his father, and it is during Katsuie's reign as *daimyō* of Shimabara that we encounter the hatching of the final scheme to invade the Philippines. Once again there was concern about the lack of Japanese naval capacity—a deficiency that possibly could be made up by Japan's loyal trading partners from the Dutch East India Company (the Company).

The instigator of the 1637 invasion plans was neither Matsukura Katsuie nor his master, the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu, even though the Dutch were convinced the shogun was to blame.⁴⁵ Instead it appears to have been the brainchild of the two current *bugyō* of Nagasaki, Sakakibara Hida-no-kami Toshishige and Baba Saburōzaemon Motonao, who hoped thereby to curry favour with their superiors. The matter was raised at a meeting held toward the end of September 1637 with François Caron of the Company.⁴⁶ Caron long had been insisting that all Japanese trade should be shifted from the Portuguese to the Dutch, and one plank of his argument had been to contrast the Portuguese willingness to flout Japanese laws with the Dutch attitude of docile obedience.⁴⁷

The *bugyō* listened respectfully to Caron, then changed the subject to help from the loyal Dutch to destroy the Iberian bases of Manila, Macao, and Keelung.⁴⁸ Of these three potential targets, the *bugyō* believed Manila was the top priority because its status as the source of supply for Catholic priests would be the best bargaining counter to use with their superiors in Edo when the time came to gain official permission to invade.

That was of course essential, but so was an army—and the *bugyō* were civilian officials, not commanders of samurai. The invading army would have to be supplied either by the shogun or by a *daimyō*, such as Matsukura Katsuie, acting on the shogun's behalf. As for numbers, apparently an expeditionary force of ten thousand men was envisaged, although this is only a supposition based on comments made after the expedition had been canceled.⁴⁹ That figure would have been twice the estimated number that Matsukura Shigemasa had planned for 1630, so other *daimyō* would have had to be involved as well. The *bugyō* were, however, astute enough to realise that once again naval power would be a serious weakness, so a guarantee of Dutch naval support would ensure that the army could be transported. It also would reduce the costs of the operation, which was another positive point to place before the shogun.

The *bugyō* did not approach the matter as supplicants. Instead they broached the subject in an assertive manner by challenging the Dutch to explain why, if they had the command of the sea, as they so often claimed, Manila had not become theirs already. Was it not also true that they had made an attack on Macao in 1622 and had been repulsed? Caron replied with a long and not entirely

accurate account of the 1622 expedition that sidestepped the reasons for the defeat. The inclusion of Japanese mercenaries in the Dutch attacking force was not mentioned; the *bugyō* were unlikely to have heard of it, and the Dutch would not have admitted that Japanese were involved on the losing side.⁵⁰

As for attacking Manila in 1637, it was by then one of the most heavily fortified places in East Asia. Caron had no desire to assault it, nor even to transport samurai to do so, and he finished by suggesting meekly that the Dutch were now more merchants than soldiers. Besides that, he said, their fleet was already fully committed to existing responsibilities. One of the *bugyō* seemed to accept Caron's excuses, while the other kept shaking his head, but neither was inclined to give up. The next day Heizō Ietsugu, the *daikan* (magistrate) of Nagasaki, presented a document for the Dutch to sign that would commit them in no uncertain terms to supporting an invasion:

Recently we have understood that the people of Manila are breaking the emperor's prohibitions and are sending priests, who are forbidden in Japan. As a result, they are viewed as criminals by Your Honours. If the High Authorities decide to destroy this place, the Hollanders, who bring a good number of ships to Japan every year, are always ready, in time or opportunity, to present our ships and cannon for your service. We ask that Your Honours trust and believe that we are, in all matters without exception, ready to serve Japan.⁵¹

The text of the document contained such a firm commitment to act that Caron could not have signed it there and then; it would have to be passed up the Company's chain of command. The *bugyō* were not surprised by that response, but before taking their leave they took pains to remind the Dutch that their reputation for loyalty was regarded as akin to the fidelity pledged to the shogun by his own *daimyō*. That point was not lost when the document came to be discussed by the Dutch at a higher level, where the choice was clear. They had to decide between abandoning their reputation as servants of the shogun, with all the implications for trade such a move would have, and the huge dangers of committing men and resources to an overseas military expedition that could result in the destruction of the Company's entire fleet. They chose danger, and agreed to convey the Japanese army of invasion to the Philippines on six Dutch vessels.

Dutch support having been pledged, the matter was placed before the shogun, who agreed that the invasion should go ahead. His decision may have been influenced by the recent arrival of another group of missionaries from Manila under Father Marcello Mastrilli.⁵² No mention was made of who would supply the invading army.

Matsukura Katsue was the obvious candidate, but he soon became involved in a serious development that would sound the death knell for the entire expedition. An uprising on the nearby Amakusa Islands quickly spread to the Matsukura

territory of Shimabara. The predominantly Christian rebels barricaded themselves inside Hara Castle, the dilapidated fortress that Matsukura Katsui's father had replaced with Shimabara Castle. The quelling of what became known as the Shimabara Rebellion soon proved to be beyond the capabilities of Matsukura Katsui. It sucked in all the military resources of the Tokugawa shogunate for well over a year, and the Dutch naval support promised so loyally for the Philippines expedition was used instead for a reluctant and largely ineffective bombardment of the rebel castle.⁵³ There was no spare military capacity for an invasion of the Philippines, and even less of a stomach for one.

When the shogun's advisers reviewed the Shimabara Rebellion a few months later, a comparison was drawn between the efforts needed to take flimsy Hara Castle and the plans to transport a similar-sized army with similar naval support many hundreds of miles through occupied territory to take on the European fortifications of Manila. The comment was made that the ten thousand men they had earmarked for the Philippine invasion should have been one hundred thousand—the number of troops that had to be deployed against Hara to overcome one-third that many rebels.⁵⁴ Yet such a calculation was now only an academic point, for no further attempt would be made against the Philippines for over three hundred years.

The shock caused by the Shimabara Rebellion then brought about the worst fears for the remaining Portuguese in Japan: the shogun decided they should follow the Jesuits in being deported. With the Sakoku Edict of 1639, all contact was cut off from Catholic Europe, and even the loyal Dutch were confined to the artificial island of Deshima in Nagasaki Bay.

Of the three schemes for invading the Philippines between 1593 and 1637, the vast armies at Hideyoshi's disposal in his 1593 plan could well have succeeded against the meagre garrison of Manila had he not been humiliated already in Korea by a woeful lack of naval support. Two seaborne attempts against Taiwan in 1609 and 1616 were also failures, and an annexation of the Ryukyus in 1609 was to be contemporary Japan's only overseas gain.⁵⁵

The 1630 effort against the Philippines was to be led by someone who was committed to the scheme, but there was apparently no improvement in the seaborne capacity. The chances of success also were reduced because the defences of Manila were by then stronger than in 1593 and Taiwan had a Spanish fort on it instead of a Japanese one. These points alone may well have led to the cancellation of the project if the Matsukura spies had ever had the chance to report back to Shigemasa.

The popular view of the 1637 attempt gives the impression that a fleet was ready to set sail and was stopped only by the Shimabara Rebellion, but this does

not appear to have been the case. The Dutch made a commitment to provide naval support and the shogun approved the scheme, but there is no evidence that Matsukura Katsuie was waiting for the go-ahead. It is more than likely that the invasion plans had advanced no further than the two Nagasaki officials with their ill-informed “back of an envelope” calculations. The subsequent experience at Hara Castle then betrayed a huge Japanese deficiency in siege artillery.⁵⁶ The walls of Manila would have been safe even if the Japanese had succeeded in getting beyond fortified Taiwan.

The issue of Japanese naval capacity would not be resolved until the twentieth century, so when the Shimabara Rebellion forced the cancellation of the 1637 Philippines expedition it marked a point in time when Japan turned its back on the notion of an overseas empire for three hundred years. As for the problem of Christianity, an invasion of the Philippines would have cut off the supply of subversive secret priests, but the flow was always only an ideological annoyance, never an armed flood. Instead Japan responded to this minor threat by its dramatic and fateful decision in 1639 to isolate itself from European nations.

Throughout the decades under discussion, the Spanish took the Japanese threats seriously and always responded on the basis of good intelligence. Their exposure of Matsukura’s spies shows that their considered response to a notional Japanese threat was managed as carefully in 1630 as it had been in 1593. Their preparations always involved the monitoring of a potential fifth column of Japanese residents in Manila, but even when brief uprisings occurred, other Japanese could be found fighting loyally for their Spanish masters elsewhere, so the Spanish never feared any great threat from that quarter. Their defensive actions were prompted only by rumours of war, not war itself.

NOTES

1. Miguel López de Legazpi to Felipe II, 23 July 1567, in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803*, ed. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Cleveland: Oxford Univ. Press on behalf of the American Historical Association, 1903–1909), vol. 2, p. 238. Most of the references from the Spanish side used in this article are taken from this monumental (fifty-five-volume) work.
2. Gregorio F. Zaide, *Philippine Political and Cultural History* (Manila: Philippine Education, 1957), vol. 1, p. 40.
3. *Memorial to the Council*, 1586, in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803*, ed. Blair and Robertson, vol. 6, p. 183.
4. Antonio de Merga, “Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas,” 1609, in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803*, ed. Blair and Robertson, vol. 15, p. 67.
5. Governor Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas to the ruler of Japan, 11 June 1592, in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803*, ed. Blair and Robertson, vol. 8, p. 264, note 45.
6. Henri Bernard, “Les débuts des relations diplomatiques entre le Japon et les Espagnols des Iles Philippines (1571–1594),” *Monumenta Nipponica* 1, no. 1 (1938), p. 120; Kiichi Matsuda, *Hideyoshi no Nanban gaikō: San Feripe Gō Jiken* (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1972), p. 132.

7. Toyotomi Hideyoshi, "Letter from the King of Japan," in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803*, ed. Blair and Robertson, vol. 8, p. 261. A slightly different translation of the letter and the reply can be found in Yoshi S. Kuno, *Japanese Expansion on the Asiatic Continent* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1940), vol. 1, pp. 308–309.
8. Juan Sami, statement incorporated in report by Governor Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas to the king of Spain on the second embassy to Japan, April–May 1593, in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803*, ed. Blair and Robertson, vol. 9, p. 45.
9. M. T. Paske-Smith, "Japanese Trade and Residence in the Philippines," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* 42, no. 2 (1914), pp. 696–97.
10. Faranda Quiemon (Harada Kiemon), statement incorporated in report by Governor Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas to the king of Spain on the second embassy to Japan, April–May 1593, in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803*, ed. Blair and Robertson, vol. 9, p. 27.
11. Francisco de Lorduy, statement incorporated in report by Governor Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas to the king of Spain on the second embassy to Japan, April–May 1593, in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803*, ed. Blair and Robertson, vol. 9, p. 39. The reference may be to Kiemon's close associate Hasegawa Sōnin instead.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 39–41.
15. Lorduy statement, pp. 47–48.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 51–53.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
19. Governor Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas, "Luzon Menaced by Japanese—Precautions Submitted to the War-Officials and Certain of the Cabildo of the City," 1591, in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803*, ed. Blair and Robertson, vol. 8, pp. 284–85.
20. "Memorandum of Troops Required in the Philippines," [1593?], in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803*, ed. Blair and Robertson, vol. 9, pp. 74–75.
21. Park, Yune-Hee, *Admiral Yi Sun-shin and His Turtleboat Armada* (Seoul, S. Kor.: Hanjin, 1978).
22. Martín de la Ascensión to Doctor Morga, 28 January 1597, in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803*, ed. Blair and Robertson, vol. 15, p. 125.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. The most detailed account of the 1630 venture is Seiichi Iwao, "Matsukura Shigemasa no Ruzonto ensei keikaku," *Shigaku Zasshi* 45, no. 9 (1934), pp. 81–109.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
27. Dennis O. Flynn, "Comparing the Tokugawa Shogunate with Hapsburg Spain: Two Silver-Based Empires in a Global Setting," in *The Political Economy of Merchant Empires: State Power and World Trade, 1350–1750*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), pp. 332–59.
28. Antonio de Morga, "Report from the Council of the Indies," 31 March 1607, in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803*, ed. Blair and Robertson, vol. 14, p. 229.
29. *Nagasaki-ken shi* [History of Nagasaki Prefecture] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, Shōwa 48, 1973), pp. 242–43.
30. Senkichi Hayashi, ed., *Shimabara Hantō-shi* (Shimabara, Japan: Minamitakaki-gun Shi Kyōikukai, Shōwa 29, 1954), vol. 2, p. 980.
31. C. R. Boxer, "The 24th June 1622—A Portuguese Feat of Arms," in *Estudos para a história de Macau: Séculos XVI a XVIII (Obra Completa I)* (Lisbon: Fundação Oriente, 1991), p. 49.
32. C. R. Boxer, "Portuguese and Spanish Rivalry in the Far East during the 17th Century," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 2 (1946), pp. 158–59; Iwao, "Matsukura Shigemasa," pp. 87–89.
33. Father of This Residence of Manila, "Relation of 1627–28," 1628, in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803*, ed. Blair and Robertson, vol. 22, p. 193.
34. The *machidoshiyori* had responsibility for affairs in the inner wards of Nagasaki and was equivalent to the *daikan* (magistrate) who covered the outer wards.

35. Father of This Residence of Manila, "Relation of 1627–28," p. 193.
36. Michael S. Laver, *Japan's Economy by Proxy in the Seventeenth Century: China, the Netherlands and the Bakufu* (London: Cambria Press, 2008), p. 72.
37. Juan Niño de Tavora to Felipe IV, 1 August 1629, in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803*, ed. Blair and Robertson, vol. 23, p. 65.
38. James Murdoch, *A History of Japan* (London: Kegan Paul, Trubner, 1903), vol. 2, p. 631.
39. Iwao, "Matsukura Shigemasa," p. 98. The Nagasaki *bugyō* were the chief representatives of the Tokugawa regime in the city. Following Hideyoshi's confiscation of Nagasaki from the Jesuits in 1587, the place was not given to a *daimyō* (the normal procedure elsewhere in Japan) but retained as "crown property" under the *bugyō*, a word best translated as "commissioners." For most of the period under discussion there were two *bugyō* in office at the same time. As part of their duties involved the supervision of international trade, it was only appropriate that Takenaka was involved in the espionage.
40. Hayashi, *Shimabara Hantō-shi*, p. 980; *Nagasaki-ken shi*, p. 246.
41. [Antonio Yxida?], "Events in Filipinas, 1630–32," 2 July 1632, in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803*, ed. Blair and Robertson, vol. 24, pp. 229–30.
42. Arcadio Schwade, "Matsukura Shigemasa no Ruzonto ensei keikaku," *Kirishitan Kenkyū* 7 (1964), p. 345.
43. Iwao, "Matsukura Shigemasa," p. 101.
44. Hayashi, *Shimabara Hantō-shi*, p. 980; the theory about his assassination is discussed in detail in Schwade, "Matsukura Shigemasa," pp. 346–48.
45. Hirofumi Yamamoto, *Nihon Rekishi Sōsho*, vol. 39, *Kanei Jidai* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1989), pp. 54–55.
46. François Caron and Joost Schouten, *A True Description of the Mighty Kingdoms of Japan and Siam: Reprinted from the English Edition of 1663 with Introduction, Notes and Appendices by C. R. Boxer* (London: Argonaut Press, 1935), pp. xlii–lv.
47. The perceived status of the Dutch as the shogun's "loyal vassals" is brilliantly analysed in Adam Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun: The Dutch Encounter with Tokugawa Japan* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2014).
48. Caron and Schouten, *A True Description*, p. xlv.
49. *Ibid.*, p. xlv.
50. The twenty Japanese had in fact been recruited in the Philippines to defend Macao against the expected Dutch attack. The Spanish ship had been involved in a fight with the Siamese and the vessel was destroyed. The Japanese were saved by the Siamese and offered their services to the Dutch, who willingly enlisted them to attack Macao instead of defending it! Boxer, "The 24th June 1622" p. 49.
51. Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, pp. 123–24.
52. C. R. Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1951), p. 373.
53. C. R. Boxer, *Jan Compagnie in Japan, 1600–1850: An Essay on the Cultural, Artistic and Scientific Influence Exercised by the Hollanders in Japan from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950), p. 29.
54. Caron and Schouten, *A True Description*, p. xlv.
55. For a full account of the Taiwan expeditions, see my article "Onward, Christian Samurai! The Japanese Expeditions to Taiwan in 1609 and 1616" *Japanese Studies* 30, no. 1 (2010), pp. 3–21. For the Ryūkyūs, see my *The Samurai Capture a King, Okinawa 1609* (Oxford: Osprey, 2009) for a good introduction.
56. Within a year of the Shimabara Rebellion the Dutch were demonstrating mortars to the Japanese. Mortars, with their higher trajectory, could have been useful at Hara and against Manila. For a full description of the trials see Boxer, *Jan Compagnie in Japan, 1600–1850*, pp. 32–37.