

Uraga Port between Manila and Acapulco

Kahoru Suzuki

Japan Society for Nautical Research

s-k20@nifty.com

Abstract

Uraga Port at the southern end of the Miura Peninsula, located at the entrance of Tokyo Bay, is formed as a deep cove from the Pacific Ocean; it is less susceptible to weather conditions and is suitable for the natural environment. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Japan opened three international trade ports. Holland and England is Hirado, Portugal is Nagasaki, Spain is Uraga. Ieyasu Tokugawa begins dispatching shipbuilding engineers and miners from Spain and as a result of negotiating with the Philippine Governor General, the Spaniards of Manila visited Uraga Port every year since 1604 and the Franciscan Monastery in the town was built. Ieyasu Tokugawa also sent British William Adams to Manila and negotiated to continue dealing with Spain. However, contrary to the intention of Ieyasu Tokugawa, Spain did not convey shipbuilding technology and mining technology. In 1611, Mexican envoy Sebastián Vizcaíno came to Uraga, but only the east coast of Japan was investigated. At the beginning of the Edo period Christianity was forbidden in 1613. Just before the death of Ieyasu Tokugawa, Diego de Santa Catalina came to Uraga, Ieyasu Tokugawa questioned Spain's attitude, banished him to Spain, and the transaction with Spain was completely completed. Japan took an isolation policy and only Uraga Port quietly disappeared as a trade port.

Key words: Galleon, port, Manila, Acapulco

Introduction

When Ieyasu Tokugawa appeared on the political front stage, Japan was isolated from East Asian countries being a disorderly situation both economically and externally. For him, therefore, it was natural trend to

revive the economic infrastructure and turn it into a way to open the country.

First of all, Ieyasu Tokugawa started the normalization of diplomacy in Spain, which had been severed by the San Felipe incident. In December 1598, Ieyasu Tokugawa contacted Franciscan missionaries and negotiated to invite a Spanish ship in Manila to Uraga. He sent a letter to the Spanish Governor of the Philippines to dispatch construction engineers of Galleon ship and innovative smelting engineers of Mexico. As a result, the Franciscan monastery was built in Uraga. Since 1604 a Spanish ship from Manila to Acapulco had entered to Uraga every year, which was opened as an international trade port.

It is worth noting that William Adams from England was closely involved in this Uraga diplomacy. Today, a number of studies on William Adams conducted by Japanese, Dutch, or British researchers, but on him as a diplomatic advisor of Ieyasu Tokugawa for Spain is not considered at all. Despite the fact that politicians did not usually hire foreigners in Japanese history, reasons why only William Adams was hired were not discussed among scholars. Although Nagasaki and Hirado trades have been investigated a lot, no survey on Uraga trade has been done. Why did Ieyasu Tokugawa abandon the deportation order of missionaries by Hideyoshi Toyotomi and accept Catholicism?

Request Spanish Miners and Shipbuilding Technicians

Ieyasu's negotiations with Spain are not limited to trade. He was trying to invite shipbuilders for western styled Galleon ships and miners. At that time Japan was using troublesome method, called *haihuki* method, for silver mining. Because of its immaturity, this method led lots of economical loss. On the other hand, Spain used a revolutionary amalgam method in Mexico and Peru that used 'lead'. This technology was discovered in Mexico in 1557 and was adopted in 1571, whereby Mexico gained a lot of silver. For Ieyasu's future perspectives on progress of economic policy, introduction of this technology to domestic silver mining had an important meaning. In addition, Japan did not have any construction technologies for large western typed sailing vessels to withstand trans-Pacific voyage, Ieyasu Tokugawa thought that its technological introduction from Spain was important as well.

To accomplish his two plans, in December 1598 Ieyasu Tokugawa summoned a Franciscan missionary Jerónimo de Jesús who had experiences of trade-negotiations in Japan since the era of Hideyoshi Toyotomi. Ieyasu Tokugawa proposed for Spain to use Uraga as a trading post and build big ships there. In order to avoid drifting alike the San Felipe issue, Jerónimo de Jesús considered that using another ports in the Far East between Manila and Acapulco passage was useful. To do so, he thought, it was essential to survey the east coast of Japan for safe voyage

around the Far East. Yet, Jerónimo de Jesús explained that he had to request these plans to the Spanish Governor of the Philippines.

However, the Spanish side did not intend to accept Ieyasu's request at all. Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberrucia mentioned this issue in his *An Account of Japan, 1609* that there were abundant of silver veins in Japan; even though they did not have a good smelting technology, production is surprisingly vast. He also remarked that if Japan had had foreign miners and mercury for production of silvers, wealth of Japan might have become a threat for Spain.

As for shipbuilding technologies, Antonio de Morga, an aide of the Spanish Governor of the Philippines remarked about this issue in his *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, he said that giving technology of shipbuilding to Japan was not a wise decision. Manila did not receive any attacks from Japan before that time because only because Japan did not have any technologies to build large sailing vessels. If Japan became to possess such technologies, Japan would come to Manila by ship to attack the Spanish territories. If those trading posts were attacked by Japanese troops, 500 Spaniards in a castle have no power to fight back.

Japanese Laws Regarding Shipwrecks and Extinction of Yawata Ships

In Japan it was believed that shipwrecks were caused by Gods of the sea since the ancient times, and cargos and trade goods of the wrecked ships

were legally confiscated by the owner of the coastal land. To ease the anger of the sea gods, thereafter, new temples or shrines were built using sales-profits of such goods from the wrecks. No captain of the ship had any rights to repair the ships or to retrieve properties and cargos from the wrecks. The substantial loss of the San Felipe confiscated by Hideyoshi Toyotomi exceeded 1 million pesos. Therefore, the Spaniards from Manila to Acapulco had to avoid getting stranded in Japan.

Ieyasu Tokugawa was concerned that this Japanese custom regarding shipwrecks was a biggest obstacle against the negotiations with Spain. In 1602, Ieyasu Tokugawa noted to the Spanish Governor of the Philippines that 'in the future we would not confiscate any cargos and trading goods of drifting ships from your country, and Japan should also provide some foods and places to repairs Spanish ships'. The similar political statements were written in the trade patent form with the Netherlands and with England later.

In a letter of July 1599, the Spanish Governor of the Philippines requested three issues to Ieyasu Tokugawa, viz. control and punishment of the Yawata ships (Japanese pirates) in the Philippine Sea, prohibiting Japanese from visiting Manila without permission, and not dispatching more than three vessels each year (*Ikoku Nikki*). Spanish asked for a proof or an insurance of a public trade to Japanese side, and requested as many permission documents (Watanai Seal Imprint) for trading with Ieyasu Tokugawa. According to a study by a Japanese scholar, Ieyasu

Tokugawa enacted an order that any ships having neither seal nor permission document should not be allowed to go to the Philippines. This new regulation or red seal system was executed from 1600; the origin of the red seal trade system was born from the Uraga diplomacy by Ieyasu Tokugawa.

Two Spanish Vessels Drifted into Kanto

There were two records of drift incidents of Spanish ships from Manila to Kanto. The first one is commander Don Juan Esquerra drifted to Otaki Kazusa in the fall of 1601. At this time, Ieyasu Tokugawa provided a sailing ship built by William Adams in Japan and provisions. He successfully returned to Luzon in 1604 (*Ikoku Nikki*). After that, an ambassador visited Uraga in May 1606 to display their appreciation for Ieyasu's treatment of commander Don Juan Esquerra. This visit was recorded as "Sagami-kun to Miura Odori Hanedai" in 1606.

The second wreck occurred in September 1609. The Spanish Governor of the Philippines Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberrucia or Don Rodrigo wrecked at Kanto Iwawada on his return trip to Acapulco. This time, Ieyasu Tokugawa sent William Adams to Iwawada. In *An Account of Japan, 1609*, Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberrucia mentioned 'Ieyasu's favorite British officer William Adams brought a passage-permission "salvo conducto" and a red seal "chapa"'. At this opportunity, Ieyasu Tokugawa tried re-negotiating with Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberrucia, regarding the dispatch of miners. The agreements of this negotiation between them were listed below:

1. Providing provisions and foods for Spaniards.
2. Repair for ships shall be provided by Japanese shipbuilders with normal wages.
3. Ambassadors shall be treated respectfully in Japan, and accommodations are provided to them.
4. Between 100 and 200 Spanish miners shall be dispatched to Japan. When a vein was discovered by Spanish, half of the smelted silver will be divided among miners, and the remaining half shall be divided into Ieyasu Tokugawa and King Felipe.
5. Priests have to be allowed to stay in Japan for the Spanish miners, and all jurisdictions for them were controlled by Spanish side.
6. When Spanish were attacked by Japanese, the Japanese king shall punish the offenders.
7. Expel Dutch from Japan.
8. Permit Spanish to survey on east coast of Japan.

The reason why 'shipbuilders and Galleons' was not a part of this agreement was that Ieyasu Tokugawa already owned sailing vessels which were built by William Adams and their construction techniques. To Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberrucia, Ieyasu Tokugawa gave a 120 ton ship which was designed and built by William Adams for his return trip. This ship was named San Buena Ventura and, in August 1610, Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberrucia left Uraga port for Acapulco. In the maritime history of Japan, the first ship crossed the Pacific Ocean was this vessel built by William Adams.

William Adams' Negotiations with Manila

Since 1604, Uraga Minato in the Kanto area had been used as a trading post by Spanish mercantile ships every year. On the other hand, Portugal

tried to prevent Manila from its trading with China and Japan. According to Lorenzo Pérez's *Apostolado y martirio del Beato Luis Sotelo en el Japón*, following this notion, in May 1606 the Spanish Roundtable Conference was held at the Kingdom of Spain, and the king ordered the Spanish Governor of the Philippines to stop Manila from its trade with Japan. To mitigate and solve this problem, Spanish captain Francisco Moreno Donoso together with a missionary Beato Luis Sotelo visited Ieyasu Tokugawato in order to seek a solution. Beato Luis Sotelo suggested Ieyasu Tokugawa to send William Adams to Manila as a negotiator with Spain. As a result, William Adams visited the Spanish Governor of the Philippines Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberrucia on 15th June 1608 at Manila. This was thirteen years before the beginning of Japan's commerce with England, i.e. Adams' home country. This was also one year before Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberrucia drifted to Kanto Iwawada on his return voyage to Acapulco in 1609.

Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberrucia understood the potential of profits that the Philippines gained from trade and relationships with Japan. On 9th July 1608, he released all Japanese prisoners in order to finish, or get rid of, issues related to Yawata ships (Japanese pirates) which had been pending. Then, Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberrucia wrote a letter to Ieyasu Tokugawa on the same day. This letter in *Ikoku Nikki*, which was translated by one of Ieyasu's personal scholars, is as follows:

捧 前將軍家康尊公書云

本国伊須波二屋之帝王 当国呂宋為守護拙夫被仰付 今度致渡海候。然者、前々於守護人 御懇意之段令承知候。到我等、無御異議候様可恭候 縦雖隔雲山万里候。心中者非其儀候。彌々可申談候。次又拙夫、此国參着砌 当所数年逗留之日本人徒者共候而所之騷ニ罷成候之間 当年者壹人も不相殘帰国之儀申付候。雖然毎年渡海之商客 何も無疎意人等候之間 致馳走候。向後別儀有間敷候。如例年 今年も黒船差渡候。則到關東可乗入之旨 安子申付候。併海路不任雅意候へは 日域中者、皆以御国之儀候之間何所へ成共 風次第可入津之由申付候 此加飛丹同船中者共 御馳走奉仰候。兼又貴国居住之ふらて之儀 如前々被加御哀憐候様是又奉仰候。少進物以目錄申上候。奉表寸志而已。恐惶敬白。

慶長拾三年五月廿七日

鈍、ろちりこで

朱印

びへいろ 判也

謹上

日本国御主、大御所様

(Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberrucia, who arrived in Manila was the Governor of the King of the Spanish Kingdom. In order to strengthen the bond for long-lasting relationship with your country (Japan), Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberrucia released all the Japanese prisoners who had been imprisoned in Manila for several years. Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberrucia believed that two nations shall have good relationship and conflicts in

such will not reoccur. This year, Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberrucia will send one ship, and he will give an order the ship to enter Kanto, and Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberrucia has already mentioned so to 'Ange' and requested provisions and other hospitality for its captain.)

The author believes that, together with one captain and one navigator of the ship, William Adams was onboard this ship to Japan in 1608. A person, who was described as 'Ange' in the letter, was also known as Miura Anno. Indeed, his person was William Adams. His presence onboard was also described in Lorenzo Pérez's letter, saying that he ordered William Adams to enter the Kanto area. The Minister of State of Mexico for Japanese and Chinese affairs, C. A. Lera also mentioned and described William Adams as 'Anjin'. In the book of *Ikoku Nikki*, additionally, William Adams was written and named as 'Anza', 'Anji', 'Ann', or 'Anzin', and in *Japanese Travel Book* written by John Saris, William Adams was named 'Ange'.

William Adams' trip to Manila, indeed, solved the problems related to Yawata ships (Japanese pirates) that had been causing problems in Philippine waters, and he managed to resume the Uraga trade. In the same year, to avoid unnecessary conflicts, an ordinance was enacted in Uraga that was to forbid Uraga residency to do any violence activities against Spanish people. According to *Apostolado y martirio del Beato Luis Sotelo en el Japón*, written by C. A. Lera, this ordinance was created based on William Adams's advice. In Uraga, a Franciscan monastery was constructed in the same year as well which was also based on advice of

William Adams. These generous treatments toward Spanish people in Uraga were not because Ieyasu Tokugawa mitigated his attitude against Christianity but because rather Ieyasu Tokugawa needed to withhold his negative opinions toward Christianity in order to make his business with Spain more successful.

Importance of William Adams

Why Ieyasu Tokugawa did heavily trust William Adams as a diplomatic adviser? In the history of Japan, his case was extremely exceptional because there were no other cases, except for William Adams. Japanese emperors, shoguns, or important authorities have never used foreigners as their important consultants before. Presumably, indeed, this happened because of the Uraga diplomatic and trading policy by Ieyasu Tokugawa.

1. When William Adams visited Ieyasu Tokugawa first time in April 1600, he asked Ieyasu Tokugawa to give him permission to start business in Japan like other Portuguese or Chinese merchants, but Ieyasu Tokugawa did not give him any permissions, which William Adams recorded in his journal. If Ieyasu's interest had been to use William Adams for trade purposes with England or the Netherlands, he might not have had been allowed by Ieyasu Tokugawa to trade with Spain. Ieyasu Tokugawa would have asked William Adams on the early stage to look for Dutch or British trading partners as soon as possible. However, the trade with the Netherlands established later in August 1609, nine years after Adams came to Japan and that one with England was established in October

1613, thirteen years after his arrival. In addition, trading agreements were established with the Netherlands and England because these countries needed Japan for their international competitions. Their positive attitudes toward trades with Japan were so much different from the passive or rather negative attitude of Spanish. Ieyasu Tokugawa himself was the person who eagerly invited Spain to Uraga to establish a good economic relationship with Manila or Acapulco.

2. Indeed, Ieyasu Tokugawa never invited any mercantile vessels from the Netherlands and England to enter Uraga. Both nations were only permitted to build commercial halls in Hirado. If Ieyasu Tokugawa wished, Ieyasu he could easily have invited or ordered mercantile vessels from the Netherlands and England to establish trading posts in Uraga, which is very close to Edo, in order to make Kanto as an international economic center. However, only Spain was frequently asked and invited to use Uraga by Ieyasu Tokugawa.

3. Another interesting fact was that Ieyasu Tokugawa gave William Adams a house at Edo, as well as at the village of Hemi where close to Uraga. Ieyasu Tokugawa gave even a fief near Uraga to William Adams, too. These facts clearly indicate that William Adams was expected to work as an Ieyasu's diplomatic advisor for Spanish issues, not for a simple trading advisor with England and the Netherlands. This is obvious because another Dutch diplomatic advisor Jan Joosten only received a house at Edo from Ieyasu Tokugawa.

4. On 15th August 1615 when the ambassador Diego de Santa Catalina, who was sent by the Spanish Governor Mexico, arrived in Uraga on Masamune's ship, *San Juan Bautista*, Ieyasu Tokugawa summoned William Adams from Hirado to Uraga. This event also indicated that William Adams was especially expected to work on diplomatic negotiations, in particular, with Spain.

It is clear from the above that William Adams was a heavily specialized person for Ieyasu's Spain diplomacy.

Relationship between Masamune's European Ship and Sebastián Vizcaíno.

In June 1611, thanks to hospitalities that Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberrucia received from Ieyasu Tokugawa during the wreck incidents on his way returning to Acapulco, Sebastián Vizcaíno, the ambassador of the Spanish Governor of Mexico, entered Uraga. Another mission of his was to survey the east coast of Japan and to discover a legendary island where produced fruitful amounts of gold and silver believed to exist near Japan, and to make this legendary place as Spanish new trading port in East Asia. Not surprisingly, Sebastián Vizcaíno did not manage to find a fictitious gold and silver island, repeatedly encountered storms, and his ship was destroyed eventually and returned to Uraga for repair on 7th November 1612. After Sebastián Vizcaíno returned to Uraga, he asked Ieyasu Tokugawa to lend his help for construction of a new sailing vessel to go home. However, Ieyasu Tokugawa received from him only some

nautical charts and maps of east coast of Japan, not any silver mining engineers. Then, Ieyasu Tokugawa began to realize that his attempt to invite Spanish miners to Japan to improve Japan's domestic mining system would not be materialized.

Instead, Sebastián Vizcaíno asked Masamune Date, a local lord of Oshu, for help. When he visited the east coast of Japan, such as coasts of Oshu, for surveying, he met Masamune Date who said to him that Masamune Date loved to invite mercantile vessels from Mexico. After that, Sebastián Vizcaíno offered a shipbuilding master to Masamune Date and, thanks to this goodwill, Masamune Date later dispatched his embassy to Europe.

Accordingly, Ieyasu's attempt to invite Spanish miners to Japan fell apart without any successes. It was 1st February 1614 that Ieyasu's new executive order to completely ban against Christian propagations throughout the country was enacted. Thus, his plan to transform Uraga into an international trade port was perished and ended.

Conclusion

Ieyasu's Uraga diplomacy was exclusively focused on relationship with Spain. Moreover, the port that Ieyasu Tokugawa used to invite Spanish mercantile vessels was always Uraga port. Other ports that Ieyasu Tokugawa used to invite other European nations such as England, the Netherlands, and Portugal were not Uraga but Hirado or Nagasaki. Ieyasu's true intention was to import and learn new profitable techniques of mining developed in Mexico. For Ieyasu Tokugawa, therefore, William

Adams was a very important diplomatic consultant to negotiate with Spain. To build a friendly relationship with Spain, Ieyasu Tokugawa answered to requests by the Spanish Governor of the Philippines to give permissions with red seals to the limited numbers of Japanese mercantile ships. In other words, the original concept of Ieyasu's red seal trade system was born from his Uraga diplomacy.

From the beginning, Spanish did not have any intentions to send their silver miners to Japan. Ieyasu's mistake was that he could not disclose their intentions. Failure of his Uraga diplomacy resulted in the complete ban on Christianity in Japan. Nearly 300,000 Japanese who believed in teachings of the Society of Jesuit and Franciscan were killed in the end. Consequently, Japan or Tokugawa-Shogunate decided to close the doors to any foreign countries, except for the Netherlands and for China. It could be said that Ieyasu's Uraga diplomacy with Spain also triggered the 250 years of Japan's national isolation.

References

Suzuki, K., 1994. Uraga port opening and intention of Tokugawa Ieyasu. *Kanagawa Chiikishi Kenkyu*, Vol. 12:1-17. .

Suzuki, K., 2010. *Diplomatic Relation between Spain and Japan by Ieyasu Tokugawa*. Shin Jimbutsuourai Sha, Tokyo.

Suzuki, K., 2014. Spain diplomacy and Uraga minato. *Regional Kanagawa*, Vol. 52: 1-20.

Biography



Kahoru Suzuki, born in 1946 at the Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan, is a specialized national public servant in the Japanese government, who was decorated with the Order of the Sacred Treasure, Silver Rays in 2016. She is a member of the Japan Society for Nautical Research and the Society of Japanese Historical Research. In 1993 she received her BA in Japanese History from Kokugakuin University. Her books include *The Sagami Miura Clan and their History* (Shin Jimbutsuourai Sha, 2007), *Diplomatic Relation between Spain and Japan by Ieyasu Tokugawa* (Shin Jimbutsuourai Sha, 2010), or *The Mukai Navy and its Surroundings* (Shincho, 2014).