

A Record of Castaways in Tartary, 1646 (excerpts)

Takeuchi Tōemon of the village of Shinpo at Mikuni Harbor in Echizen Province and his son, Tōzō, took two boats, together with Kunita Hyōemon on a third: fifty-eight people crammed aboard and sailed off to Matsumae [Hokkaidō] to trade. At sea, they met with a violent wind that blew them ashore in Tartary. They were summoned to the capital of said land, and from there sent to the Northern Capital of the Great Ming [Peking], thence to the Chosŏn [Korean] capital, where they were handed over to the Governor of Tsushima, His Lordship, Sir Furukawa Iemon, and whence they travelled to Tsushima.

Memoranda on the above lands.

On the 1st day of the 4th month of Kan'ei 21 [1644], we left Shinpo at Mikuni Harbor in Echizen Province. We arrived at Hekura Island in Noto Province. We waited for clear skies about 15 days. From there, we arrived at Sado Province. We waited for clear skies for more than 20 days, and on the 10th day of the 5th month, we left Sado, and that night we encountered a violent wind. On about the fifteenth or sixteenth day, we arrived at a completely unfamiliar place. Since there were no people, and only mountains were visible, we lowered a small boat and went in search of [fresh] water. We stayed there for about ten days. We felled trees in the mountains and made provisional tools, worked on the boat's base, and the like. We knew we needed to return to Japan; having met with ill winds, we had been blown more fifty leagues westward from the point of our boats' departure.

At a point about one league away from the shore, around sixty or so one-manned boats of about four-and-a-half meters in length appeared. Although we hailed them, since we could not understand each other's speech, no one was able to respond. As a result, everyone returned to shore

or [our] three boats, respectively. As for the deliberations of us Japanese, since we had had no formal exchange, we concluded that we needed to invite some of them aboard; we made gestures summoning them to come aboard, and three people boarded. We offered them rice wine and food, but they did not eat. Realizing that this was certainly out of gallantry, we began to eat, and when they saw this, they, too, ate. After that, they boarded each of the boats. They brought three bunches of ginseng, and when they saw our cooking pots, they traded the ginseng for them. At that time, we said to one another that there might be a place where there were lots of such things, and when we asked this via gestures, it was signaled to us that there were lots of such things in yon mountains. We discussed amongst our selves and concluded that regardless of where we went, trade was our purpose, so we ought to ingratiate ourselves with those people and have them tell us where the ginseng was, and then we could go get it. When we let those people take rice and then told them to show us where the ginseng was, they agreed. At cock's crow, they would report here, and imitating the sound of a rooster, they went home. At dawn, those three people arrived, so we again gave them rice wine and food, and then we set off with them into the mountains. Fourteen people remained aboard the three boats, and forty-four went into the mountains. When we had first encountered the violent wind at sea, we had thrown our swords, short and long alike, into the sea as prayers to the Dragon God; as a result, we all ascended [the path] unarmed. When we had gone the distance of about ten city blocks, we arrived at mountains overgrown with grass. Just as we realized that there was no sign of ginseng anywhere, we heard people all around us. Just as we were thinking how strange it was to hear these sounds rising from the grass, they closed in on us Japanese, loosing arrows from

their bows and killing us. Since we didn't have any weapons, we couldn't stand and fight, and we scattered in every direction, but they shot and killed us everywhere. Among us, thirteen people who had hidden in the grass were taken prisoner. Their hands were bound, just like that. Although we thought that there were about five hundred of those people, later, when they all gathered in one place, there were really about a thousand. After that, they went to the Japanese boats, killed the people on board, and took all of their accouterments. Two people escaped from the boats. One was the captain, Kunita Hyōemon, and one was Takeuchi Tōzō's fourteen-year-old menial. Kunita Hyōemon threw kindling into his boat and set it ablaze, while he jumped into the sea. Arrows flew at him from all directions, and it seemed he would surely be killed; however, two of the people whom we had first had dine with us came running and saved him. After that, the two were brought to the mountains, where they were added to those of us who had been captured already so that there were now fifteen prisoners. Thereafter, we were taken one by one to villages and made to weed the fields, but we left the weeds and pulled up the crops: as a result, we were no longer made to pull up weeds. There were also some people who were good at weeding, though.

After that, a person who looked to be a warrior came from a place that was five days' journey away. He looked at us and after probably interrogating us about what was going on, he went away again. Twenty days later, ten of the people from before came once again. Choosing three people from among the locals, they made to set off. We Japanese, too, without exception were made to mount horses, and after thirty-five days, we arrived at a vast place. As we later came to understand, this was the Tartar capital.

We were taken to what I thought was the magistrate's office there. "What sort of people have you brought?" [he]

asked with visible suspicion. At that time, he summoned the three [locals], but although he seemed to be interrogating them about various things, we couldn't understand what was being said. Also, by means of assorted gestures, he asked us about the matter. That much, we more or less understood. In response to the statement that we Japanese had come as thieves and, as such, had been killed, we said that we had been blown off course by a great wind and that we were in no way thieves. When we communicated this, too, by means of various gestures, it was communicated to us that [our version of events] was accepted. Then, the three of the people who'd [originally] taken us were fetched from the aforementioned place, their clothing was removed, and they were made to lie facedown. He stripped a rod of bamboo and fiercely struck their buttocks fifty times. Their flesh tore, and blood came out, and they look half-dead. In Tartary, the severity of the crime determines the number of strokes we Japanese were told afterwards, and we were treated extraordinarily kindly. We were given clothing to wear, and we stayed in the Tartar capital for more than twenty days. After that, we were again called to the magistrate's office, where we made to mount fifteen saddled horses. In the company of people I took to be lords—one to every two or three Japanese—we were led from the Tartar capital, and on the thirty-fifth day [thereafter], we arrived at the Ming capital of Peking. While we were in the Tartar capital, morning and evening, we had cooks; for lofty and lowly alike, in Tartary, the meals were of millet. There was no rice.

We were summoned to the magistrate's office in the Ming capital of Peking, and thence to [the magistrate's] house.

[...]

It was the 5th month of the *akaru tori* year. We consulted with one another and decided that no matter how we had been taken care of, we wanted to return to Japan.

Even if it meant we might be killed, we wanted to press our case to return to Japan. Knowing the 5th day of the 5th month to be a festival day for the Great Ming, we went to the magistrate's office and pressed our case, asking to be returned to Japan. At that time, we more or less understood what was being said. The aforementioned that we related was also satisfactorily understood. We were told to wait until the 11th month of the same year and that on the 5th day of said month, we would all be summoned and given sheepskin robes, underclothes, leather trousers, hats, and travel footwear, and around the 10th day, we would be able to return to Japan. Thus, on the tenth, we were given mutton jerky from 12 sheep, and many delicacies. On the 11th day of the same, fifteen horses were brought, and people who seemed to be attendants welcomed us. We fifteen were made to mount the horses and brought to magistrate's office. With two great banners bearing five-clawed dragons, eight small white banners, four small red banners, three umbrella-canopies, and twelve pikes, and an escort of one hundred Chinese, we were seen as far as the Chosŏn border. We boarded at various places. Everything was wondrous, and we visited various places, too. We saw many people. We reached the Chosŏn border on the 9th day of the 12th month.

Thereupon, two hundred Chosŏn people assumed responsibility for us, and together with ten of those who had been dispatched by the Great Ming, we went to the Chosŏn capital. We arrived on the 28th day of the same month.

During this, our allotted escort guilelessly attended upon us. In Chosŏn, we were treated to things in various ways—it's impossible to relate them. At night, we were bestowed with sleeping robes made of pongee and a sash apiece, three sets of cotton-blend pillows, three ink sticks, five brushes, and five booklets of paper. That year, we passed the New Year in Chosŏn. On the 7th day of the 1st month of the

following Year of the Dog, we left the capital. After ten days, we were fêted by the military lord (*daimyō*) for the region at a place called *Shinsatsu*.

We were summoned to the lord's residence, and since he wanted to hear Japanese music, Kunita Hyōemon, Uno Yosajirō, and others sang. Also, one of us fifteen was originally a native of Edo, and when he sang *kouta* ballads [literally, "short songs"], the assembled Chinese were moved and shed tears, proclaiming the songs to be fascinating and delightful. On the whole, from the time we had left Tartary, the songs were all Chinese songs, and not at all good. We were bestowed with five booklets of paper, one bag of sweets, one bundle of medicine, and five catties of tobacco. We departed from that place, and on the 28th day of the same month, we arrived at a place called *Tōnenki*. The steward there was also a military lord, and he fêted us. He bestowed two booklets of paper apiece, fifteen skewers of jerky, five bales of rice, two hundred sheets of dried cod, alcohol and side-dishes, *miso* [fermented bean paste], and salt. After that, a group of retainers from Governor Sō of Tsushima brought us to Lord Furukawa Iemon, and that happiness was beyond words. When they heard the tale of Tartary and the Great Ming, the governor of Tsushima added to his directive to his household staff, and we were given a barrel of saké, a peck of shitake mushrooms, one hundred sheets of squid, fifteen sheaves of paper, twenty bundles of seaweed weighing ten catties, and a chest containing five catties of tobacco.

On the 17th day of the 3rd month, we reached Tsushima's Crocodile Bay. On the 22nd of the same month, we arrived at headquarters, and we were given further provisions by the Lord Governor of Tsushima—the ways in which we were taken care of are beyond words. We were given fifteen reversible cotton robes, fifteen inner sashes, and fifteen cloth hats. On the 2nd day of the 6th month, we left

Tsushima, and on the 16th day of the same, we touched ashore at Ōsaka.

[... Various observations follow....]

Also, when we went to Tartary, we were unable to understand the language. Although both sides communicated with each other via gestures, it was impossible to converse in detail. Later, they gradually grew accustomed to the language and remembered words and were able to understand what we Japanese said, so we could freely converse. Nevertheless, we were unable to speak the Tartar language. Despite this, later, we were basically able to deploy it. We were mostly able to remember the names of things and words of exchange. Since two of us, Kunita Hyōemon and Uno Sa[ji]rō, were made to speak in Tartary and Peking, and because they were fairly at ease, they wrote it down. However, since it was impossible to distinguish between clean and dirty language, they just put the names for things at the end of this memorandum.

Also, we know that Tartary is to the north of Echizen Province.

Also, while we were on the road for thirty-five days from the place in Tartary where our fellow Japanese were killed to the capital, there was not a single rice paddy. As for two kinds of millet and other assorted grains, they were just the same as in Japan. There were mountain roads, including some that went deep into the mountains. The big trees were largely the same as those in Japan, except that the pine trees were five-needle. There were also trees that we don't see in Japan. Outside of [those areas] deep in the mountains, there were mountains covered with fields of pampas grass. There were also open areas of land in the mountains. Five days' journey from the aforementioned area, there weren't even roads. There were just swaths cut through the grass. Since there were no lodgings en route, we mostly just slept in the

mountains. Horses carried our food, and it was prepared whenever we stopped for the night. No matter how many we were, lofty and lowly alike rode on horseback. Three days before we reached the capital, commoner homes also appeared along the roadside.

Also, their bodies are bigger than Japanese bodies. Lofty and lowly alike shave their heads, other than a one-square-inch area at the crown, which is left. It is grown long and plaited. Moustaches are left as is. Beards are shaved. From the great lords to the minor lords even on down to the commoners, all use the same roads.

Also, women divide their hair down the middle and gather it into two buns, front and back.

Also, lofty and lowly alike have head coverings: in the winter, they cover their heads in a round, edged hood. The great lords edge their hoods in brocade and mouse-grey fur. That pelt is expensive. They attach tufts of various things at the crown. The common people have hoods of the same shape, but they do not attach anything to the crowns. The edging is wolf- or sheepskin. There are also other types of pelts. In the summer, lofty and lowly alike wear hats. These hats are the same size and shape as the [winter] hoods. Their quality appears to vary between lofty and lowly. We brought a headscarf back to Japan to display. As for their clothing, while it varies in quality in accordance with status, in style, it is all the same—from great lords to minor lords down to the common people. We also brought some of this back to Japan to display. As everyone can see, the sleeves are quite narrow and they are long enough to cover the back of one's hand. They are wider at the hem than at the base.

[...]

Also, as for cooking, they boil many animals in water: fish, fowl, mutton, and beef. They add sauce and salt to make stock. Sometimes, they add soy sauce to their food boiled in

water and eat it. It is also possible to boil things with *miso*, but their *miso* tastes different from Japanese *miso*, so it was not to our liking. Their alcohol is distilled [from grain]. In Tartary, it is made from millet. In the northern capital of the Great Ming, Peking, it is made from rice or millet.

Also, when they eat, they put the food into a pot on top of a table with legs. They put soup and vegetarian food into the pot, too. Two or three people eat from the same bowl. There is one spoon and set of chopsticks per person. Most people eat this way. We did not observe the etiquette of the great lords.

Also, summer is hot. In both Tartary and Peking, there is no difference from the Japanese summer. Because the winter is colder than in Japan, there is snow in Tartary. When the cold in Peking is piercing, there is a little bit of snow.

[...]

Also, the hearts of the [Chinese] people in the northern capital are different from those of the Tartars. There are thieves and liars. It seemed as though there was no compassion. However, at present, the Tartar King has entered Peking, and there are many other Tartars there now, too. The Tartars say that as there are official orders to do all things as in Tartary, the hearts of the [Chinese] people will improve.

Also, in the Northern and Southern capitals of the Great Ming [Peking and Nanking], those who are taken shave their heads save for the one long patch, just like the Tartars.

Also, there is a lot of rice in the Great Ming [Empire]. White rice is bought and sold. When we were there, the rate was one *momen* [roughly four grams] of silver for one catty of rice. We heard that the price has come up in recent years because of the chaos in the land.

Also, characters can be used for communication in Tartary and the Great Ming Empire alike.

Also, it is said that if one hurries, one can travel from the Northern Capital of Peking to the Southern Capital of Nanking in thirty days' time. There is said to be a great river between the two. Since Nanking was also [successfully] annexed by Tartary, the attacking troops returned to Peking. However, it seems that one unit has remained in Nanking. Thereafter, we actually witnessed people of Nanking making a ritual visit to Peking. All of the people from Nanking had shaved their heads just like the Tartars before coming. The Great Khan of Tartary touched upon the circumstances of the Ming Emperor. He seems to be a person of deep compassion.

Also, the New Year's customs are more or less the same as those in Japan. They also put up pine door decorations. They celebrate for three days. There is no celebration aside from then. People make courtesy calls on one another. During those three days, the people who came to the Imperial Capital to pay homage were especially numerous. As for their formal court attire, the great lords don something akin to Japanese hunting robes on top. In addition to that, they have on new daily-wear robes.

Also, for the three days between the 14th and 16th of the 7th month, there is a Buddhist festival. It is not in the least different from Japan. Wooden Buddhas are set up in the temples. In one temple, it is possible to see as many as ten thousand Buddhas, large and small. The great temples aside, people set up temporary rooms. They put Buddha images in them and set fragrant flowers and various offerings before them. Other than in the 7th month, there are no Buddhist matters. Just as in Japan, there are offerings of water for the spirits of the dead, as well as appearances of hungry ghosts.

[...]

Also, there were good roads from Peking to the Chosŏn border. Along the way, there was a river about two or three blocks wide, and both horses and men alike crossed the ice. We heard that in summer, they cross it by boat. Besides this, there were numerous small rivers. There were three large rivers between the border and the Chosŏn capital. These, too, we crossed on the ice. Within Chosŏn, we traveled mostly by mountain roads; wide-open spaces were extremely rare.

The Numbers 1-10 in Tartary

Amo, jō, ate, toi, sucha, nyuko, nada, chago, uyo, choe

The Numbers 1-10 in Peking

Ikko, ranko, sanko, shiiko, ukko, rikko, chiiko, hakko, kyuko, shuko.

Another Way in the Same Land

Itsu, chii, san, shii, go, ryu, shitsu, hatsu, kyu, jū

Also, in Tartary, “food” is called *hota*. The word for “eat” is *sebu*. In Peking, “food” is called *han*. The word for “eat” is *chii*.

Thus “eating food” is *chii han a*.

[...]

Also, we had someone who translated for us in both countries. Among us fifteen Japanese, there was one person who was at that time fourteen or fifteen years old. This person was the menial of Takeuchi Tōzō, who himself had been among the first killed. Since he was able to freely converse with the people of the Great Ming, those who were not part of the personnel of the magistrate’s office called him “Ajiki-tokusō.” “Ajiki” means “child,” and “tokusō” means “interpreter.” When we Japanese went to the magistrate’s office, as we passed the guard station or even when the guards were changed, we were regarded with suspicion. Therefore, we had this menial stand at the fore and communicate with the guards, so he would take care of everything. When the guards were suspicious of us, he

explained that as Japanese and by the grace of the Emperor’s permission we were allowed to go everywhere. Or, when we went to the magistrate’s office, the aforementioned translator would declare in their language that it was at the order [of the Magistrate]; when they heard that we had royal permission, they let us through most kindly and politely. We thought that it must have been thanks to divine aid that he was so at ease in that language, despite being but a young man.

As for this youngster, when he spoke in Japanese, he was completely without polish; he was incapable of speaking even of things he knew well. But when it came to exchanging words with the people of Tartary or the Great Ming and squaring away matters, there was nothing that was not managed for us 15, myself included. The other 14 of us joked with one another that perhaps this menial had been born in Tatar or the Great Ming in a previous life, only to be born in Japan in this one. We brought this person along to Edo, but when he realized that he would have to speak about many things in great detail, he went back to Echizen. We made countless inquiries, and he was told that there was a formal order. However, even had he been summoned and questioned here in Japanese, he nevertheless would have been thought an idiot. Yet when he encountered people from those other two lands, the words fluttered out. It was inconceivable.

As for the above affairs, of those fifteen who returned here from Tartary, the two known as Kunita Hyōemon and Uno Yosa[ji]rō were sent from Echizen to Edo; at that time, they were questioned at length and in detail, and their tattered testimony was as above.

The 3rd day of the 8th month of Shōhō 3 [1646], *tsuchinoe* [a designation for the year].