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THE GRAND INQUISITOR INOUE CHIKUGO  
NO KAMI MASASHIGE,  
SPIN DOCTOR OF THE TOKUGAWA *BAKUFU*

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**Introduction**

Terms like *'Turning points in history'* or *'Key figures in history'* are not very fashionable among historians nowadays. They tend to prefer to study large scale, long term, social-economic developments in which events and persons play only a subservient role. Yet the quite recent political events of 1989 and its aftermath – the fall of the Berlin wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union – tell us that there indeed are turning points in history and that these can hardly be understood without knowing the roles of the key figures involved in them. If we agree that sometimes turning points in history occur, then it is useful to focus on the persons who played an important role in those events for the simple reason that through their actions – and possibly through their words – we may gain a deeper insight into how and why these events actually happened at a certain moment in time. Next we may wonder whether these people brought about these changes or whether they were merely participants of a historical event 'swept along on the Great Wheel of History', as Karl Marx would have explained it. To answer such questions in the case of the epochal events of 1989, it would be useful to understand what the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl or for that matter the Russian strategist of Glasnost, Communist party secretary Michael Gorbachov were thinking and doing in those days.

In this paper I would like to discuss a turning point in Japanese history that occurred almost 400 years ago by focussing on the prominent role of one individual in that event. He may not have been a policy maker as such, but while he was carrying out policies, he also helped to mould them. When in the late 1630s the so-called seclusion of Japan or *sakoku* took shape, the *Ometsuke* Inoue Chikugo no kami Masashige, was appointed to carry out the *Shumon aratame*, or in other words solve the Christian question in Japan by weeding it out. Some twenty-five years ago, in 1975, this man was compared to Adolf Eichmann, the infamous Nazi who was responsible for the murder

on so many Jews during the holocaust, by the American historian of Japan's 'Christian Century', George Elison.<sup>1</sup>

I do not want to enter into the discussion whether the persecution of Roman Catholics in early Tokugawa Japan, whereby the murder of thousands of Christian believers was carried out in the most sadistic ways, should be compared to the Jewish holocaust or, for that matter, the Cambodian, Tutsi, and Armenian massacres of the twentieth century. That may be left to the discretion of the reader. Anyhow, in his position of *shumon aratame*, inspector general in charge of the anti-Christian campaign, the *ometsuke* Inoue was given the specific task to weed out Christianity in Japan.

### 1. The political background

Let us briefly review why the late 1630s and early 1640s indeed constitute a turning point in Japanese history. This is the decade in which the so-called isolation policy took shape that would characterize the foreign relations of the Tokugawa regime in the two hundred years that followed. After issuing a series of *kaikin* or maritime prohibitions Tokugawa Iemitsu progressively led the Japanese island empire into a long period of self reliance or autarky, which would continue until the arrival of Commodore Perry with his black ships in 1853.

As part of his active policy to weed out Christian influence the shogun promulgated in 1630 an edict forbidding his subjects either to import or possess books written in Western languages. In between 1633 and 1636 other edicts were issued prohibiting all further sailing of Japanese ships to overseas destinations. At the same time Japanese residing abroad were forbidden to return to the home country under penalty of death. As a result of these so-called *sakokurei* or *kaikin* the shogun steered quite a different course from his grandfather, the founding father of the Tokugawa dynasty, Tokugawa Ieyasu, who by handing out passes or *goshuin* had actually stimulated and Japanese commercial expansion overseas.

In 1639, after the ouster of the Portuguese in the wake of the Arima rebellion, Japan entered into a new political situation of autarky and economic self-sufficiency, which generally has been called *sakoku*. Of course all this was not achieved overnight. It took the *Bakufu* almost a century to gain a solid grip on foreign trade by imposing a ceiling on it. And even then there never was a total isolation, because Nagasaki continued to be open to Dutch

<sup>1</sup> George Elison, *Deus Destroyed, The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan*, Harvard, 1973, p. 208.

and Chinese traffic, while also via Kagoshima and Tsushima channels were kept open towards Ryukyu and Korea.

Several reasons have been cited for the seclusion of Japan: there were internal issues such as the gaining of political control over the extended island empire by the shogunal administration, but there were also external issues connected to this such as the threat of a foreign religion like Christianity to the new order. On hindsight we may agree that halfway the seventeenth century the Tokugawa *Bakufu* wrestled itself free from the Chinese World Order and created a world order of its own. The neighbouring kingdoms of Ryukyu and Korea came to serve as intermediaries between the Chinese and Japanese world orders because they were tributaries both to Tokugawa Japan and the Qing Empire.

The question may be posed whether the *Bakufu* ever developed a clear programme for directing the Japanese empire into this seclusion. This is very much an epistemological problem because it concerns a lack of sources. As Willem Boot has remarked, the *sakokurei* were really a set of promulgated regulations. Ronald Toby in turn maintains that the promulgation of these *sakokurei* should be understood against the background of the preservation of Japanese security and Tokugawa legitimacy. The historian, however, who would like to see how the decision making behind these edicts actually occurred is quite at loss, primarily because he does not have access to clear records of the discussions which occurred at the shogunal court prior to their promulgation, like we have for instance in the *Ming shilu* (*Ming jitsu roku*) or *Qing shilu* in the case of the Chinese empire.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The spin doctor of the Shogun

It is in this context that it may be useful to study the career and actions of the *ometsuke* Inoue Chikugo no kami while he was active at the court as Inspector General of the anti-Christian campaign, Shumon Aratame in the 1640s. If we understand what orders from above he carried out, and study his actions, we may perhaps gain some insight in the shogunal policy making of the 1640s. Chikugo no kami is by no means an unknown figure. In the past several scholars have already shown interest for him. George Ellison in his masterly study on the persecution of Christians in Japan, *Deus Destroyed* has focused on the persecution methods of the man who was ordered to eradicate Christianity in Japan. Rein Hesselning in his study of the so-called Breskens incident, *The Prisoners of Nambu*, has described and analysed how

2 Willem Boot, "Maxims of Foreign Policy," *Itinerario*, 24 (2000), no. 2: pp. 62-79.

Inoue helped to free captain Schaap and part of his crew, Dutch sailors who in 1643 were captured on the beach of Nambu, a bay along the Japan Sea coast, when they went ashore to fetch fresh water. The local authorities immediately arrested this landing party because they suspected them of being yet another group of Catholic priests trying to land in Japan. Finally there is a fine article by Nagazumi Yoko, published 25 years ago in *Nihon Rekishi*, where she sketches the various accomplishments of the man as the *protector of the Dutch*. She shows how this powerful figure could freely move in out the meetings of the *Roju* (老中) and had unique access to Tokugawa Iemitsu 徳川家光. According to Nagazumi's findings, Chikugo no kami actually orchestrated all Dutch affairs, by advising the Dutch how to behave at court, by selecting the presents they had to give, and by making sure that they kept certain privileges such as travelling by *norimono* during their yearly *sankin kotai* or *Edo mairi*, the court voyage.

Yet all these contributions leave us pretty much in the dark as to what Inoue's motives may have been to favour the Dutch so much.<sup>3</sup> In the case of Nagazumi Yoko's contribution we are presented with the picture of an amiable person who was mad about Western inventions and loved to purchase all kinds of exotic medicinal drugs from them, a kind of *Rampeki* before that term was even invented. If we look through the eyes of the diarists of the Dutch Deshima factory at Inoue's behaviour during the 1650s, professor Nagazumi may be right. When most foreign political and religious problems had been solved, Chikugo no kami could well afford to behave as a slightly eccentric elderly official. But during the 1640s, when the *Bakufu* was still dreading Portuguese retaliation for the cruel execution of the Portuguese emissaries from Macao, the situation was quite different.

In this contribution I would like to shed new light on this particular issue by closely following the reports of the Dutch *opperhoofden* (heads of the trading factories in Hirado and Nagasaki) who regularly met Chikugo no kami at the court or in Nagasaki. I hope to show that Inoue's main concerns really were different ones than this hobby of an old man for elixirs, fads and curios.

### 3. A Biographical Sketch

Let me first provide a very brief outline of Inoue's life so that the reader can understand a bit better the social and political background of the man. Inoue was born in 1585 as the first son of a family living in Totomi province.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 191-193, Nagazumi Yoko, Orandajin no Hogosha to shite no Inoue Chikugo no kami Masashige in *Nihon rekishi*, 327, 1975-8: pp. 1-17.

According to George Elison he may well have been a Christian in his youth. Inoue's career was that of a man of merit. He started out as a palace guard of Tokugawa Hidetada and during the siege of Osaka castle in 1615 he took his first enemy head. One year later he was placed close to Hidetada and in 1625 was appointed *metsuke*. In 1626 he accompanied Iemitsu to the emperor in Kyoto and on April 27 1627 was given the lower junior rank with the title Chikugo no kami. When he was appointed *Ometsuke* in 1633, the size of his fief had risen to four thousand *koku*. According to the *Tokugawa jikki* he was sent in 1638 during the *Shimabara no ran* as shogunal envoy to Kyushu and on July 30, 1639 he was appointed *Shumon aratame no yaku*, Grand inquisitor or Inspector General of the anti-Christian campaign and presented with an extra annual income of 6000 *koku*. During his lifetime Chikugo no kami actually advanced from a stipend of 200 *hyo* to the daimyo status of 13.000 *koku* of rice.

On August 4, 1639 the final *sakoku-rei* was issued forbidding any further traffic with Japan to the Portuguese ships, *Galliot*s, from Macao. The shogunal edict warned that anybody who would dare to transgress this edict would be decapitated. When a Portuguese embassy arrived in 6 July 1640 to appeal these measures, which threatened the economic survival of Macao, everybody on board was arrested and one month later, on August 4, all 61 Portuguese members of the embassy were beheaded.

Inoue Chikugo no kami Masashige was closely involved in all these affairs. Prior to this he had actually visited Hirado and had ordered the Dutch factory head, François Caron (on the order of the shogunal authorities in Edo) to demolish all their trade factory buildings in Hirado, because the shogun thought the newly erected stone buildings too grand and had taken offence at the *Anno Domini* 1638 gable stone, which seemed to flaunt the Japanese dynastic reign period. In the sixth month of Kanei 17 (1640) Chikugo no kami ordered the crews of the Chinese junks visiting Nagasaki that they should be wary of taking catholic priests or catholic objects on board and in the same month the *Shumon aratame yaku* was installed as an office. In his new function Inoue had to deal with the various attempts by Portuguese priests to secretly land in Japan and continue to spread the gospel. George Elison has described in detail how the *Ometsuke* used rather unique methods to force the captured priests to apostatize and to turn them into Buddhists. In all cases in which these Catholic priests and their followers did not give up the Christian religion, Chikugo no kami ordered to torture them to death. But he preferred an apostatized Christian to a dead Christian.

Because Yoko Nagazumi and Reinier Hesselink have already referred to the extensive help, which in 1643 and 1644 Chikugo no kami gave to the

Dutch sailors of the Breskens while he was at the same time interrogating catholic priests in Edo I shall not describe this in detail. Chikugo no kami was also closely involved in dealing with a second attempt by the Portuguese to send in 1647 another ambassador to Japan. As a result of the sudden arrival of this ambassador, Don Gonzales de Siqueira, Chikugo no kami actually briefly lost favour at the court. He was reproached with not having warned for this visit. As soon as the Portuguese galleon had left the bay of Nagasaki without causing any more incidents he was reinstated in his former position. It is not surprising that Chikugo played less and less an active role in state affairs in the years that followed: he was very old by now and his anti-Christian campaign seemed to have succeeded, apart from a few pockets in the outer islands it was effectively weeded out. At the end of his career, in 1658, he wrote the instructive *Kiristo kyo ki* to initiate his successor, Hojo Awa, to the task that was awaiting him. In 1662 Inoue Chikugo no kami Masashige died at the age of 72.

Having introduced Chikugo no kami and his career, let me briefly explain why I became especially interested in this man. Over the past ten years we have been editing at Leiden University the so-called *Marginalia* of all diaries kept by the Dutch *kapitan* or factory heads of Deshima during the eighteenth century.

Recently Cynthia Viallé and I have turned to the seventeenth century and because the diaries of the Hirado factory had already been completely edited and translated by both Nagazumi Yoko and the staff of the Historiographical Institute of Tokyo University, the *Shiryō Hensanjo*, we have decided to start in 1641, when the Dutch had to remove to Deshima. When we were writing the introduction to the first volume dealing with the decade of the 1640s, it struck me that that this period really should be styled 'Chikugo no kami's decade'.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4. Chikugo no kami appears on the stage

It is well known that the momentous visit by Inoue to Hirado in 1640 led to the removal of the Dutch from Hirado to Nagasaki. Three years later Inoue's handling of the Breskens incident would shape Japanese-Dutch relations for the years to come as Reinier Hesselink has shown. But also in the years afterwards the Dutch merchants continued meeting with Inoue every winter during the *Sanjin Kotai* or tributary trip to Edo, and often also during the summer in Nagasaki when he inspected the southern regions as

<sup>4</sup> Cynthia Viallé and Leonard Blussé, *The Deshima Dagregisters*, Vol. XI, 1640-1650, *INTERCONTINENTA* series, No. 23, Institute for the History of European Expansion, Leiden 2001.

persecutor of the Christians. Especially during their stay in Edo Inoue used to interview the Dutch extensively prior to their audience with the *Roju* or with the Shogun. It was after all his task to introduce the visiting *Oranda kapitan* at the court. It is striking how Inoue was continuously debriefing the Dutch and it is really the kind of questions he posed that I would like to review below.

It is rather ironic that the man whom the Dutch should call ‘their protector’, was the same person who had ordered the demolition of the Dutch trading factory at Hirado and who supervised their removal to the restricted quarters of Deshima in Nagasaki, where they became virtual prisoners and were completely at the mercy of the local authorities. The friendly relationship that may spring up between the captor and his hostage – the bonding between the captor and his hostages – has been named by psychologists the “Stockholm syndrome”. Also the Dutch of Deshima and *Ometsuke* Chikugo no kami seem to have taken a liking to each other, whatever the complaints of the first may have been about seeing their carefree existence in Hirado turned into a prison-like life in Deshima.

On June 10 1641 the chief merchant of the Dutch trading factory in Japan, Maximiliaan Lemaire, on his way back from his visit to the court in Edo, arrived in Nagasaki to inform the local governor that the Dutch after a stay of more than thirty years in Hirado had been ordered to move to Nagasaki. He was thereupon shown the little island of Deshima (Tsukishima) where the Portuguese had been lodged before until their ouster in 1639. Lemaire was not at all happy when he saw how small the warehouses were and how ill equipped they were against fire. When Lemaire tried to discuss how business affairs should be regulated on this tiny island he was told to await further instructions by the *Ometsuke*, Inoue Chikugo no kami Masashige, ‘to whom all affairs concerning the Dutch were referred.’<sup>5</sup>

## **5. The Dutch have to adjust themselves**

The Dutch soon found out that life was going to be very difficult. They were not allowed to leave the island. They could not observe religious practices. Their contact with the other sex was from now onwards restricted to the prostitutes of Maruyama. Because ‘a Christian’s dead body was not worthy of being buried in the earth’, the corpses of Dutchmen who died on Deshima had to be covered with straw mats and tied up with several

<sup>5</sup> *Deshima Dagregisters*, Vol. XI, p. 11.



heavy stones to be dumped in the sea at a distance of four to five miles from the coast.<sup>6</sup>

'Who has ever heard of such barbarous cruelty or in what region will one find such an example when the dead are refused the soil?' Lemaire wrote in his diary. Even the Japanese interpreters who were known for their aloofness found it 'an unfair matter, 'we believe' some of them said, 'the Turk, who, we are told, is a cruel person, and also a great enemy of that nation, would not refuse a dead Christian to be interred.'<sup>7</sup> But higher officials thought differently, a *Bugyo* sneered: 'Do not think you are in Hirado, where everyone bowed for you because of your gifts' and the governor of Nagasaki himself sarcastically remarked that 'even if the Dutch were treated ten times worse than the Portuguese they would not leave Japan but would keep coming'.<sup>8</sup>

Finally on August 10, 1641. Inoue arrived in Nagasaki. 'Have faith', he said during an interview, 'do not be concerned about the change of location; the Dutch will do as well in Nagasaki as they have in Hirado, rest assured.'<sup>9</sup> These words were further commented upon by his underlings who remarked that like a father taking care of his children, Inoue's personnel wanted the Dutch to accustom themselves so much to Japanese customs that they would observe them properly. The Dutch were hardly consoled, witness Lemaire's remark in his diary that there was no justice for the foreigner to be found. At the same time the chief merchant made sure that good manners were kept. Inoue was invited on board one of the anchored East Indiamen, "de Koningin" and on 2 October he visited with his retinue the house of the Lemaire, 'very curious about Dutch furnishings, touching everything while emitting strange loud groans'.<sup>10</sup>

At this occasion, Inoue told Lemaire why the shogun had ordered the destruction of the Hirado factory. He told the Dutch merchant to inform the Governor General in Batavia as follows: 'Brick warehouses and beautiful houses were built by the Dutch in Hirado in a manner unknown to Japanese custom. Furthermore the Dutch were celebrating the seventh day like the Portuguese do'. Inoue expressed how satisfied he was that his orders to demolish the Company's buildings had been obediently carried out by Caron and he expected that the Governor General of the Dutch East Indies in Batavia would nonetheless continue sending richly-laden ships to Japan

6 *Ibidem*, p. 15

7 *Ibidem*, p. 14

8 *Ibidem*, pp. 16, 18.

9 *Ibidem*, p. 20.

10 *Ibidem*, p. 33.

as he had done in the past. Finally Inoue asked Lemaire to transmit to the Governor General one more advice. Given the conditions under which the Dutch had to live on Deshima he advised him 'to send agreeable and steady men who know how to live according to Japanese customs'.<sup>11</sup>

Soon Inoue showed he was not only thinking about commercial matters: he came over to ask about the present strategic situation of the Dutch in Formosa, where the Dutch were planning an attack on the Spanish fortresses Tamsui and Kelang on the northern point of the island. He asked for a map and inquired what the fortifications of the Spaniards were like, saying that he would rather have the Dutch than the Castilians as his close neighbours, saying 'If the attack fails this year, you should try again next year'.<sup>12</sup>

When Lemaire bade goodbye to Inoue on 28 October 1641, the latter told him that the Dutch from now onwards should inform the Shogun about the situation of the Portuguese and the Castilians in Asia. This is how the custom of presenting every year the so-called *Fusetsu gaki* or 'News of the World' was introduced. A few days later, on 6 Nov. 1641, Lemaire showed the Governor of Nagasaki the pass, which Tokugawa Ieyasu had given to the Dutch many years earlier, promising them free trade. He thereby hoped to show how unjust the Dutch were treated on Deshima. He was only partly successful in this. The Governor was indeed greatly impressed: 'After he had washed his hands and face and had dressed up immaculately, he took the pass with great deference from the box' but, apart from this demonstration of respect for the writings of the founder of the Tokugawa regime, no relaxation of the strict rules followed.

When Lemaire's successor Jan van Elseracq visited Edo on January 14, 1642, he and his followers were lodged in very cramped quarters with the landlord Gen'emon. The four Dutchmen had two eight tatami rooms, one for sleeping and one for eating. Two assistants were put in a room so small that they couldn't even stand up, and two others had even worse accommodations. As if to console them Inoue sent one of his secretaries telling them that he would have bread baked for them because he knew that 'the Dutch would rather eat bread than rice' and excused for the fact that they were housed so poorly, but this was done, he said, in their own interest. The restrictions were only imposed on them because they were Christians. And as if he had not made his views clear enough on earlier occasions Inoue once more explained why the Dutch were treated so harshly. Five years ago Captain Caron had presented the shogun with a large chandelier, that could bear thirty candles. Because the Shogun had been delighted with this present the

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 36.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 37.

Dutch had started to behave too proud, and had started 'building some large houses in Hirado, which resembled castles and towers in Japan, the like of which had never been seen before'<sup>13</sup> It was clear: the Japanese authorities were teaching them a lesson how to behave.

Later that year, in the summer and autumn, two groups of Catholic priests were caught who stealthily tried to smuggle themselves into Japan. When *Ometsuke* Inoue tried to make these captives apostasize with the help of the renegade priest Sawano Choan (Cristóvão Ferreira), the Catholic priests defied these attempts and shouted at Choan: 'Thou villain, what tiger, pig serpent or vile animal has thou produced that you ask us such questions!'<sup>14</sup>

## 6. European affairs

It so happened that one year earlier the Dutch government had concluded in Europe a ten years truce with Portugal which shortly before had regained its independence from Spain. When the tidings of this truce were made known in Japan upon the arrival of the Dutch ships in the summer of 1642 they understandably caused great consternation among the Japanese authorities. One of the reasons why they had allowed the Dutch to stay was that they were seen as the archenemies of the Portuguese and therefore reliable allies of the Shogun. Fortunately another piece of news made a good impression on the Japanese. Inoue was happy to hear that in the meantime the Governor of Formosa had sacked the Spanish forts on that island. He sent on November 9 a letter to the new Chief merchant Pieter Overtwater asking him whether the East India Company intended to raze the Spanish fortress on Formosa or would conduct trade from it. Overtwater answered that the Dutch would stay there as a sign of their victory over the Castilians in order to prevent these or any other nation from settling there again.<sup>15</sup>

When Overtwater arrived in Edo in January 1643 he had a lot to explain. He told Inoue that the States General, the government of the Netherlands, had entered the truce with Portugal so as to fight the Castilians together. He stressed that the armistice had not been made out of love for the Portuguese. Considerations of security forced the Dutch to team up with Portugal because they both were at war with Spain. This answer seemed to please Chikugo no

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 56.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 75.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 90.

kami. Later that year he would show that he trusted the Dutch when the Breskens incident occurred on 29 Juli 1643 and Skipper Schaap and his men were arrested at Nambu. In September Inoue informed Overtwater on what had happened and insisted that his successor Van Elseracq appear as soon as possible in Edo to discuss what should be done with skipper Schaap and his crew members. When Jan van Elseracq arrived at Inoue's lodgings on December 3, 1643, the issue had already been resolved and his host was now clearly interested in other matters.

Inoue showed Van Elseracq two large detailed maps of Manila and Cavite on Luzon where the Spaniards had fortresses. He detailed that the Spaniards possessed 300 pieces of canon and 3000 muskets and estimated the total population at 3000 Castilians and Portuguese (including wives and children), of whom 800 were soldiers, and some 7000 Chinese sojourners in the nearby Parian China town. The place was obviously difficult to conquer, and Inoue wondered what advice the Dutch could give him on this.<sup>16</sup> In the weeks that followed it became clear what the Japanese had in mind: they wanted to conquer Luzon with the help of Dutch ships.

On 24 October 1644, Chikugo no kami, "great friend of the Company and main instigator of all the favours and honours which have been bestowed" arrived in Nagasaki. Two weeks later on 11 November, Inoue sent Uma-no jo to ask Van Elseracq some questions in his name. Because no other interpreters could be found the renegade priest Chuan was sent for to interpret. As a result Uma no jo was able to pose questions without risking to be misinterpreted – as often happened with Japanese interpreters. After some discussion about Dutch relations with the Chinese, Uma no jo remarked that he had been told that the truce with Portugal was over and that Dutch were at war again with the Portuguese. He wondered whether the Governor General in Batavia should 'not endeavour to take Macao and destroy that nation'. Elseracq answered that the Macao Portuguese were in decline anyhow and growing poorer, so that 'in a few years' time they would probably fall into Dutch hands by themselves.' Thereupon the Ometsuke asked about the political power and the names of the "Dutch king" in Holland and the Governor General in Batavia. It must have been very difficult for the Japanese to understand the Dutch political situation. The Dutch republic with a *stadholder*, the Prince of Orange, was already seventy years at war with its former ruler, the king of Spain. This republic was represented in Asia by the Dutch East India Company with a Governor General as its top executive. Interestingly enough Elseracq downplayed the Governor General's role as the chief executive of a business enterprise by saying that he, the

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 133, December 3, 1643.

Governor General in Batavia, on behalf of the States-General and Frederik Hendrik, the Prince of Orange, was representing the power of the Netherlands in the Indies, with the same power and authority as is common in Holland, but that he *did not* concern himself with the trade – other than issuing orders what should be taken where – ‘because this was the responsibility of merchants and others who have been appointed to take care of this’. He obviously tried to show that the Governor-General had a higher rank than just being a merchant as the *Rojū* at the shogunal court had said in the past. Thus the discussions concerned international security issues but also further investigation into the actual power structure in Holland itself.

## 7. Military affairs

In January 1645, Overtwater who had again been appointed chief of the Deshima factory, paid the annual visit to Edo. On January 8, Commissioner Chikugo-no-kami sent for him because he was free from other engagements, and asked several questions such as, whether the sailors of the Breskens (the men who had been captured at Nanbu) had safely returned home; how many Dutch ships would sail to Tayouan this year; whether the Dutch still were in possession of the town of Malacca after they had captured it from the Portuguese; how many Dutchmen were living in Batavia; whether the Portuguese and the Spaniards were still at war with each other and so. It was clear that Chikugo no kami reported all this to the court, because when at last the audience was granted they were asked again about their fighting against the Portuguese. Overtwater replied that the war was even more intense than before and told him of the latest happenings in Ceylon and off Goa. This greatly pleased the court, and the *Oranda Kapitan* was allowed to meet with the Shogun in person.

Late in the evening of February first, Chikugo-no-kami sent a messenger to ask how fast one could sail from Batavia to Nagasaki and also from Goa to Macao and if there was another passage than through the Straits of Malacca. Here again he was comparing the Dutch and Portuguese military situation. He was answered that one could also enter the China Seas from the Indian Ocean by way of the Sunda Straits and the Bali Straits.

Two days later Chikugo-no-kami broached the subject of a possible return of the English to Japan and asked Overtwater whether he thought that the Portuguese would try to run their business in Japan through them. He replied that he did not know for certain, but that they might consider this and discuss all matters with the Portuguese and enter into a contract with

them. Without doubt the majority of the goods the English would import into Japan would not be their own but belong to the Portuguese and the two would be combined.

Thereupon Inoue inquired about the relationship of the Prince of Orange with other European royalty and asked if he was related to the English king and if the Dutch and the English in Europe were friends or foes and what the relations had been before. During the discussion, he had two maps brought out, one of just the Indies, the other of the whole world on a Japanese screen, and asked about the distance between many countries.

On the morning of February 6, Inoue asked Overtwater to come and see him and continued his queries. He now started a discussion about sea battles and wanted to know whether small ships could seize large ones and how this was done; whether the ships grappled alongside each other or if they wore each other out first by artillery fire; how they could best destroy each other; with what kind of cannon the ships were armed; whether they tried to set fire to each other's sails and many similar questions. Soon it turned out that there was a hidden agenda behind these opening questions. He was very concerned about the English who had recently sailed to Macao and were expected in Japan next summer.

Overtwater had great difficulty to explain the relationship between the Dutch prince and the English king for a variety of reasons. He had to be very precise, because Inoue could rely on his spies in Nagasaki, but also gather information through the captured priests and 'that Godforsaken troublemaker', Choan. First of all he admitted that the son of Frederik Hendrik, Prins Willem, was engaged to an English princess. Secondly he had to show somehow that close relations between royal houses did not necessarily mean that therefore countries had to be allies. The Dutch *kapitan* sensed that the Japanese could not understand the boundaries of the prince's power in Holland. Inoue thereupon had a long discussion with the interpreter about the English in Macao and how this news had become known in Nagasaki. He then asked Overtwater whether he believed whether the English would seek revenge on the Japanese if the English ships, which possibly intended to sail to Japan, would be captured by the shogunal forces government and the whole crew killed.

Overtwater replied that in that case the English would surely be inclined to seek revenge, but their power was so small and weak that the *bakufu* need have no fear that they would be able to inflict any damage on the Japanese empire, because there were no more than a hundred Englishmen in the whole of the Indies – apart from the seven to ten ships at the most with their crews, which were required to conduct the trade from one place to the other – who were divided over various places where they traded and could

not be spared without suffering the loss of trade. This answer drew a laugh from Chikugo no kami but he asked if the English and the Portuguese conspired, whether they might not be able to inflict damage to Japan. Overtwater did not believe so: Portuguese power was on the wane in the northern regions, they were occupied by the war with the Dutch off Goa and Ceylon and no help could be expected from Europe because of their war with Spain. The power of the English was too small to wage war and therefore their union posed no threat.

The commissioner then went on to ask if the Governor-General might perhaps send some ships from Batavia to seize any English ships trading to Japan? Overtwater said he would not. It was true that the Governor-General was a great man, but he was just a governor for the prince of Orange and the Dutch government and, therefore, he could not go against their orders and start a war against such old friends and allies of the Dutch in Europe for no other reason but their sailing to Japan to trade. This made sense to Inoue: he said that the governors (*daimyo*) of the Shogun could not commit the slightest action against the will of His Majesty, much less start such a violent war. He then guaranteed that the Dutch if they continued to comply with the Shogun's orders, would never suffer any harm, having lived and traded in Japan during the reigns of three Shoguns: those of His Majesty's grandfather, his father and now his own reign. Then he asked for the number of ships the Portuguese had in Goa and off Ceylon, and how many soldiers and ships the Dutch had and divided over how many places? He asked the same questions about Malacca, Batavia, and Tayouan.<sup>17</sup>

The next morning Inoue sent one of his retainers with a map of the Indies to ask for more information about Batavia, the population, the island of Java, who ruled there, 'who were our friends or enemies there, and the same kind of questions about Ceylon, Tayouan, Malacca, the Moluccas, our possessions and those of the Spaniards, about the islands of Sumatra, Borneo, Celebes, Bali and so on.' All the answers were duly noted down. Thus Inoue carefully mapped out the Dutch situation in Asia. On the 6<sup>th</sup> he had more questions in store: he was wondering whether there were any galleys in Holland or other small vessels, what they were called and what they looked like, how were they propelled, by sails or by oars, could they carry heavy pieces of ordnance, could they be used on the oceans, whether the Dutch could perhaps send him a model of such ship, and so on.

17 *Ibidem*, pp. 199-200.

## 8. Lessons in political affairs

Overtwater then made use of a lull in the conversation and explained what the family relations between the House of Orange and the King of England were through the marriage of the young Prince (Willem II) with the Princess of England, and what the present ties between the English and the Portuguese were like. He pointed out that the Dutch republic was not similar to other European kingdoms because of the exceptional nature of the Low Countries that were made up of seven provinces, which according to him could be compared to *han* in Japan, which were ruled by the higher nobility. Representatives from these provinces formed a general assembly, the *Staten Generaal*, which constituted the highest authority in the country. Without their consent the prince could not start a war or terminate old alliances with emperors, kings, or rulers of any country, so that the Shogun should not worry that the new relationship of the house of Orange with the English crown could harm the Japanese empire in any way. Overtwater's report of course was only partly true. He did not mention that the nobility in Holland had lost its power and that the country was actually ruled by a *burgher* patriariate. As if to show that the position of the Prince of Orange was not very different from his equals in other countries, he gave a few more examples of European rulers whose power was also curtailed and legally defined. Although he did not say so, Inoue must have been thoroughly puzzled by all these kinship relations between the European royal houses, or perhaps he may not have been puzzled at all. In Japan intermarriage between the daimyo and court nobility of course was usual practice and indeed used to cement the mutual relations among power interests.

When *Oranda Kapitan* Reinier van Tzum visited Edo in February 1646, he met Chikugo-no-kami on the 12<sup>th</sup> and was again asked many questions about military affairs but also about the possible sending of a Dutch ambassador to thank for the release of Skipper Schaap and his men. Because all this has extensively been dealt with by R.H. Hesselink in his superb study *The Prisoners from Nambu*, I will not further expatiate on this, but this issue would not be solved until finally in 1649 a Dutch ambassador was sent, who nonetheless died on the way to Japan and thus arrived salted in a coffin. After Inoue had asked him some more questions about the distance from Holland to Batavia and about the war with Spain, he suddenly asked whether Van Tzum had heard that a Portuguese ambassador might be possibly sent to Japan? He then handed over a written statement in which the shogun admonished the Dutch not have any intercourse with the Spanish or the Portuguese.<sup>18</sup>

18 *Ibidem*. p. 227.



When Willem Versteeghen visited Edo in January 1647, bringing lots of rarities for Chikugo no kami, he once more was during the audience asked many questions about the relations with the Portuguese and the war with Spain. Thereupon Inoue also broached the subject of the political position of the Dutch *stadhouder*, Prince Frederik Hendrik. When the answer was that he represented the third generation in the dynastic line of the House of Orange, Inoue was satisfied. Then he asked about medicine, about the longevity of the Dutch people (answer “sixty, seventy, eighty, a hundred and older”) he returned again to strategic issues. A few days later Inoue asked whether the Spaniards could defeat the Dutch. Versteeghen answered that the Spaniards would sooner be defeated than that the Dutch would be subjected, whereupon the Ometsuke ‘burst out laughing with all others who were present’ He seemed to be in a particularly good mood and elaborated on the Spanish efforts, which were continuing to this day, to convert the Japanese to Christendom. ‘Almost a quarter of the Japanese had been Christians, and in order to prevent further harm, the Shogun had ordered a great number of people to be executed’, he said. These executions were being carried out daily and many were still in prison. Although the Dutch also were Christians, Inoue said, ‘their brand of Christianity was tolerated by the Shogun and it was known that the Hollanders – as the Netherlanders are now generally called here – were sincere folk.’

## 9. The uninvited Portuguese envoy

In the summer of 1647 an event occurred which almost cost Inoue his job. On July 26 a Portuguese Ambassador, Don Gonçalo de Siqueira de Souza arrived quite unexpectedly on the Nagasaki roadstead to request in the name of the new king of Portugal the reestablishment of trade relations with Macao. The Dutch on Deshima witnessed with astonishment how powerless and unprepared the shogunal forces actually were against the two powerful Portuguese galleons that anchored in the bay. Notwithstanding all the earlier queries about the construction of well-armed galleys, none had actually been built. Some two thousand boats and more than a hundred thousand men were gathered to attack and attempts were made to close off the bay. Yet nothing happened. ‘Thus one sees how the Japanese are defeated by two ships’, Versteeghen wrote, ‘even though they have been preparing against such an event for at least three years, and they had assembled all the forces of the nine and the four provinces, namely those of Shikoku and Kyushu.’ The bridge of ships at the entrance of the bay was dismantled and

they had to allow the Portuguese ambassador to leave – although empty handed - on 4 September 1647.<sup>19</sup>

After the affair with the Portuguese had been settled, Chikugo-no-kami took measures to regain as soon as possible the favours of the Court. He asked the Dutch to prepare presents for the shogun and personally inspected them very carefully. The detailed world maps, which the Dutch had assigned as presents for the Shogun, were rejected by Inoue because, according to the interpreter, Japan would look too small compared to the rest of the world in the eyes of the Shogun. Before he left for Edo Inoue sent a letter to Deshima in which he admonished the Dutch to send an ambassador to thank for the quick release of the crew of the *Breskens*:

‘Seven or eight years ago, Commissioner Chikugo-no-kami came to Hirado with the Shogun’s order that the Company’s lodge should be demolished. The reason was that Captain Caron had acted improperly in matters of trade, which caused the Japanese merchants to suffer great losses. Chikugo-no-kami ordered the Dutchmen to settle in Nagasaki. There they were ordered not to act like Captain Caron so that the Japanese would not suffer any losses. Four or five years ago, two ships appeared off Nanbu. They fired their cannons and raised doubts about their origin. Vessels were sent out to investigate. Ten Dutchmen were taken to Nanbu, and afterwards they were taken to Edo, where on the orders of the Shogun they were interrogated by Chikugo-no-kami. On questioning they said that they had been sailing to Tartary. They would have been thrown into prison and tortured, but because the Dutch had been granted freedom by Gongensama, the grandfather of the present Shogun, as they had done Japan some service, the men were pardoned. Out of compassion, they had also been clothed because it was cold. Captain Elseracq went to Edo that year and the men were handed over to him. This required an express ambassador to convey the Dutch gratitude for the Shogun’s benevolence, the more so because the previous Governor-General had died in the meantime and Elseracq had returned to the fatherland, which was the reason that they had kept quiet thus far. The Governor-General should send this ambassador separate from the ordinary captain. Both captains, the one who is leaving now and the one who is staying, are ordered to see to it that this is done.

Chikugo-no-kami and both governors declared this to be so.  
Nagasaki, 29 September 1647.’<sup>20</sup>

19 *Ibidem*, p. 296.

20 *Ibidem*, p. 206.

Inoue's troubles at the court weren't over yet as *Kapitan* Coyett found out when he visited Edo in December 1647. The rumor had reached the ears of the *Roju* that Governor General Van der Lijn in Batavia actually had helped the Portuguese ambassador on his journey to Japan. Inoue tried to find out whether this was true or not. Coyett said that indeed in 1644 two Portuguese ships under the command of a certain Antonio Fialho had been blown off course to Batavia and afterwards had been given a pilot to pursue their voyage to Macao. This however had nothing to do with the embassy. Coyett had more to deny. He protested that the rumours spread by the Chinese of Nagasaki that the Dutch had occupied Manila and that he was related to the Governor-General were mere fables. On January 16 Coyett was summoned to Chikugo-no-kami's residence, where he was told that the Shogun would neither grant him an audience nor accept the gifts from the Dutch, because they had not yet properly thanked for the release of the crew of the *Breskens*. He said he had done his best on behalf of the Dutch and had even spoken to the Shogun in favour of Coyett but all to no use. Later it became known that the Shogun had even dismissed him snarling at him: 'Chikugo-no-kami, you are the champion of the Dutch.' After this Chikugo-no-kami had not dared to show his face at Court for seventy days nor was he summoned by His Majesty.

Not until at the end of 1649 the long-expected embassy arrived were things sorted out. The appointed envoy had died on the way, but his replacement Andries Frisius thanked in the name of the Prince of Orange for the release of the crew of the *Breskens*. He also brought with him news that was bound to disturb the minds of the policy makers in the *Bakufu* government: the Dutch Republic had signed the peace treaty of West Phalia, which effectively bought the eighty years war between Holland and Spain to an end. When Inoue asked why the peace had been concluded, Frisius answered that the rulers in Europe had decided to end the hostilities, which had lasted for over eighty years, because of the tremendous bloodshed and to conclude peace for eternity. Yet one of the conditions of the treaty was that neither the Dutch nor the Spaniards were allowed to trade in each other's territories in the Indies, so that the Dutch could not trade in Manila and the Spaniards and the Portuguese and other nations could not trade in Batavia or any other place belonging to the Dutch.

When *kapitan* Van Brouckhorst took leave of the Edo court in April 1650, he was congratulated at the restoration of the relationship. Chikugo-no-kami actually told them: "Yesterday you and the ambassador were granted an audience by the Shogun and the prince. Our two-year difference on account of the Portuguese ambassador has now been set aside and forgiven. Let this not happen again. You are allowed free trade again as during the time of the

grandfather, of the father, and of this Shogun.' After Van Brouckhorst and his following had returned to their lodging in Edo Inoue had an interpreter tell them: 'When your superiors learn of any designs the Portuguese might have against Japan, they shall write to the Governors of Nagasaki.' And with those parting words he made clear why he needed them.

### **In Conclusion**

Inoue was said to be the protector of the Dutch. Why was he? We have seen that he personally was very interested in all kinds of *curiosa*, but that was not the main reason why he needed the Dutch. He needed the Dutch because he, the Great Inquisitor in charge of eradicating the Christian religion in Japan, could use them as his eyes and ears for whatever happened abroad. As a result he had them continuously debriefed at many occasions, checking whatever they said. He used for this the time honoured interrogation techniques, which without doubt also were used while interrogating Christian suspects. The interrogations were carried out at several critical moments during the 1640s: first the Rubino group in 1642, then the Breskens incident in 1643, and finally the visit by the Portuguese ambassadors in 1648.

It is indeed very interesting to see that at many instances the same questions were asked by different interrogators to look for discrepancies. The relations with the Dutch were basically dealt with in terms of security. This becomes clear from that ever returning question by the Japanese how the Portuguese enemy could be best held at bay? The Dutch were supposed to provide strategic and tactical information on this issue.

Paradoxically the Japanese agenda to use the Dutch against the Portuguese was frustrated by the political developments in faraway Europe. First a Dutch Portuguese armistice was concluded in 1642, and later on in 1648 the treaty of Westphalia was concluded whereby the Spanish crown and the Dutch republic made peace after eighty years of war. This peace treaty was applauded in Europe but not necessarily by the Japanese, who realized that they could not count on the Dutch any longer as allies in the ongoing struggle with Spain and Portugal. With dismay Inoue must have concluded that in ten years' time the Dutch allies had made peace with the two nations, which the shogunate considered its mortal enemies.

In the 1640-1650 period when Inoue was most active, various modifications were formulated for further traffic between the *Bakufu* and the Dutch merchants at Deshima. Yearly visits to the court, the presentation of *fusetsu gaki*, were used to gain the necessary strategic information about the over-

seas world. Most of the details surrounding this ritual were developed by the Ometsuke Inoue Chikugo no kami Masashige. He may have harboured some sympathy for the Dutch, and have collected his favoured foibles and *curiosa* through their services, but the main motivation for privileging them stemmed from his duty to ward off the largely imagined Spanish, Portuguese or English threat to Japan. Once all this had been fixed and brought under control, Inoue could focus on his hobbies and the *Bakufu* lost direct interest in the Dutch and their military potential as allies. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the Tokugawa administration again started to adhere importance to the Dutch information network when the Russians appeared at the coasts of Hokkaido.

### Abstract

When in the late 1630s the so-called seclusion of Japan took shape, the *Ometsuke* Inoue Chicugo no kami Masashige, was given the specific task to weed out Christianity. In the past decades several scholars have shown interest for his career and sketched the various accomplishments of this powerful man, who had unique access to Tokugawa Iemitsu. Inoue has been portrayed in widely divergent ways: as an amiable protector of the Dutch who was mad about Western inventions as well as a Japanese version of Adolf Eichmann on account of the persecutions he directed.

This contribution aims to analyze Inoue's dealings with the Europeans in Japan through the writings of the Dutch merchants, who frequently met with him during the 1640s. By studying his behaviour and his investigating techniques it is possible to get a clearer view on the aims and motives of this controversial figure whose main task it was to ward off the largely imagined Spanish, Portuguese or English threat to Japan.

### Resumo

Quando ocorreu o denominado "isolamento" do Japão, no fim da década de 30 do século XVII, o *Ometsuke* Inoue Chicugo no kami Masashige foi encarregado de eliminar o Cristianismo no país. Nas últimas décadas, numerosos investigadores mostraram interesse em estudar a carreira e os feitos deste homem poderoso, que tinha uma acesso privilegiado a Tokugawa Iemitsu. Inoue já foi representado das mais diferentes maneiras: desde um protector amigável dos holandeses, que tinha uma paixão pelas invenções ocidentais, até uma espécie de versão japonesa de Adolf Eichmann, devido às perseguições que dirigiu.

Este estudo pretende analisar as relações de Inoue com os europeus no Japão, através dos documentos escritos pelos mercadores holandeses que se encontravam frequentemente com ele durante a década de 40 do mesmo século. Através do estudo do seu comportamento e das suas técnicas de investigação, é possível ter uma ideia mais nítida das intenções e motivos desta personagem polémica, cuja principal tarefa era afastar a suposta ameaça ao Japão de portugueses, espanhóis e ingleses.

### 要約

日本のいわゆる鎖国政策が形成された1630年代の終わり、大目付であった井上筑後守正重がキリスト教を排除する役目を託された。徳川家光と特別に会見ができていたこの有力な人物の経歴に近年数十年間において何人かの学者が興味を示し、彼のなし遂げた様々な業績を大まかに記した。井上はかなり異なった風に描かれている。一方では、西洋の発明に熱狂していた、愛想のよい、オランダ人の庇護者のように、他方では迫害を指導したことから日本版アドルフ・アイヒマンのようにも描かれた。

この論文の目的は日本にいたヨーロッパ人と井上の交際をオランダ商人の文書によって分析するものである。スペイン、ポルトガルあるいはイギリスの日本への主に空想の脅威を防ぐという任務を任された彼の行動と捜査方法の検討によってその狙いと動機が明瞭に把握できる。