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Jesuit annual report for 1619-1620

Sources: RAH Jesuit Tome 112 (new n° 9/3685), n° 153; translated in B&R 19: 42-70.

Relation of events from July 1619 to July 1620

In the same style and order in which I last year reported the various events in the Philippine Islands, and in neighboring kingdoms and provinces upon which the welfare of the Philippines depends, I will now write what has happened this year. There have not been so many and various warlike occurrences as in former years, for it has been somewhat more peaceuf here. I will relate briefly what has happened as occasion may require.

Of the Kingdom of Japan.

I will begin my account of the affairs of this kingdom with the cruel and bloody persecution against Christianity which is now at such a height, and in which they put so many to death for the faith that, to me, it seems a picture of what happened in the primitive church during the early persecutions by the [Roman] emperors. What I have said may be realized from part of a letter dated in Nangasaqui 14 October 1619, from Father Mateo de Curos, provincial of Japan, to Father Valerio de Ledesma, provincial of these islands.¹

...
Although so many in Japan have thus become blessed martyrs, two persons bent the knee to Baal and miserably recanted for fear of torture. A Japanese religious who was in Rome and Spain, and who is now an apostate, did the same thing. He often says that when he was in Madrid he knew that certain religious were persuading the king to conquer Japan, but that our Fathers dissuaded him from this. He adds that, although it is a fact that religion is our primary motive for entering Japan, yet it is our intention through religion to prepare matters for conquering the country. With this and other

1 Ed. note: The news is also taken from another letter from the same Father Curos, dated 10 November. They provide a proof that the Japanese embassy had returned to Japan in 1619.

lies this apostate has done great harm to Christianity. The governors and principal men of Japan are so thoroughly convinced of our evil intentions that they say that one of the principal reasons for keeping the Dutch in Japan is for their own greater security and to annoy us. They even have begun to discuss the possibility of conquering the Philippines, in order not to have the Spaniards so near. On the other hand, it is said that in Japan they are thinking of driving out all Europeans from that kingdom—Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese and English. If this is done it will not be possible for any of our Fathers to remain there. At present they escape notice among other Europeans by wearing European dress—I mean that of Spaniards and Portuguese; but if the Europeans are driven from Japan this will no longer be possible.

Passing from spiritual affairs to those temporal affairs of Japan that concern these islands, let me say that on 12 July 1619, there arrived at Firando, a port of Japan designated for the trade of the Dutch, four of their ships, which, as I informed you last year, have been off the coast of Manila. When our fleet prepared to sally out, the Dutch ships withdrew in good order, carrying with them a great many sick, besides the large number who had died from disease and from an infection which they say was given them in Vigan, a village on the coast of Manila. Since this is not known here, it must be their own imagination. Many of their people were drowned, also. In one ship which sank suddenly many people were drowned, among them a large number of Japanese, who were brought from Japan in the service of the Hollanders. These ships plundered nothing but three Chinese vessels of little value, which were coming to this city.

[The Dutch capture the San Buenaventura]

This year Don Luis de Bracamonte was sent from this city of Manila as governor of the military posts in the Moluccas. He took with him two galleys and 4 or 5 pataches, loaded with a great quantity of supplies and more than 200 infantry-men. When the galleys and the pataches had entered our fortress of Ternate, one of them, called the **San Buenaventura**, remained behind as rearguard. A Dutch ship well supplied with artillery attacked it, and in sight of our own fortress overpowered it. Our galleys then sailed out and attacked the Dutch ship; but the wind arose, and thus the enemy had an opportunity to take shelter under their fortress at Malayo. This victory was felt by us, because the enemy took from the patache a quantity of money, 3,000 fanegas of rice, and other provisions and munitions belonging to his Majesty. The worst of all is that they took over 100 men—Spaniards and Indians—and the capture cost them nothing. May God remedy this by giving us some great victory by means of which the loss may be repaired.

Of these Philippine Islands.

...
This year there was completed in these islands one of the strongest and most remarkable galleons ever built here. It was at once equipped, along with another very large galleon, two [smaller] ones, and a patache. In March 1620, this fleet set out for the port

where they are accustomed to go to watch for the Chinese ships that bring merchandise to this city. They went to protect the Chinese; for, although it was not known that there were Hollanders there, it was thought best to take timely precaution, lest they come to commit robberies, as they have done in previous years. The galleon which went as *almiranta* sprang such a leak that it was forced to return to port, but when it had arrived there the rest of the fleet continued their journey. They were in this place [where they meet the Chinese] until the beginning of May, when they returned to Cavite. Don Luis Fajardo, brother of the governor, went as general of the fleet, and, as he was very young,¹ other captains, brave and experienced in war, were assigned to him as companions and counselors.

The number of ships which have come this year to these islands from all parts of the world with rich merchandise has been great. Some four or five have come from Japan, although some of them were lost on the coast of Manila with all their large cargoes. Some of the Japanese in them were drowned, but others escaped to land. From Macao ten Portuguese ships have come with much valuable merchandise.

Last year the Governor of the Philippines sent to Macao to buy a very handsome galleon which was there. Those who went for the purpose bought it, loaded it with merchandise, and left Macao for the Philippines on 2 July 1619. They encountered such violent storms that at the end of two months, after having been in great danger of shipwreck, they returned to Macao without masts, and with a large part of their merchandise so wet and rotted that it was worthless—damages frequently sustained under such circumstances. They once more equipped themselves, and this year left Macao in the month of May. They had a very difficult voyage, but at the end of more than 20 days they succeeded in making port in Cavite, on 7 June, the first day of Pentecost. The galleon is a very fine one, and it will be very useful when occasion arises. It brought much very rich and valuable merchandise.

From Great China also have come many ships with silks and other merchandise. All these goods have been necessary, and indeed they have not even sufficed to supply the lack of merchandise which, because of the wars of the past years, has been very extreme in this city of Manila. There have been, moreover, some losses. If the wars with the rebellious Dutch should entirely cease, the wealth and grandeur of these islands would be remarkable. Indeed, in spite of these wars and the losses that have been sustained, Manila is a very grand city; and there are few cities in Europe that surpass it in trade and traffic, for almost the whole world comes to these islands.

Since writing this, I have learned that a large junk (a certain kind of ship) set out from Japan with a large quantity of provisions and munitions of war, and with 500 infantry, whom the Hollanders were bringing to supply and reinforce their strongholds in the Moluccas. But God was pleased that they should run aground on the coast of Japan, where everything was lost, and nearly all the people were drowned. A galleon likewise set out from Japan with a Dutch patache to come to these coasts, to steal

1 Ed. note: He was only 15 years old, as the Audiencia remarked in a complaint to the King in 1620.

whatever they could, as they have done in years past. But God frustrated their attempts by running the galleon aground on Hermosa [i.e. Taiwan] Island, which is between Japan and this country. It is said that all those on board were drowned. Although this is not known surely, it is a fact that many were lost.

May God confound their arrogance, in order that this land may raise its head; and that the faith of Christ may be spread throughout many provinces and kingdoms into which the holy Gospel would enter were it not hindered by these heretics, who have hitherto been such a stumbling-block and so great an obstacle in these parts.

It has occurred to me to write this to your Reverences as a consolation to many people who wish to know about affairs here. May God keep all your Reverences, to whose holy sacrifices and prayers I earnestly commend myself.

Manila, 14 June 1620.