

## THE NAMAMUGI INCIDENT: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE INCIDENT AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS

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The Namamugi Incident (otherwise known as The Richardson Affair or Namamugi Jiken in Japanese) occurred on September 14th, 1862. It is described as follows by Sir E. M. Satow in Chapter V of his personal memoirs of the years 1861-9, "A Diplomat in Japan":

"On the 14th September a most barbarous murder was committed on a Shanghai merchant named Richardson. He, in company with a Mrs. Borrodaile of Hongkong, and Woodthorpe C. Clarke and Wm. Marshall both of Yokohama, were riding along the high road between Kanagawa and Kawasaki, when they met with a train of daimio's retainers, who bid them stand aside. They passed on at the edge of the road, until they came in sight of a palanquin, occupied by Shimadzu Saburo, father of the Prince of Satsuma. They were now ordered to turn back, and as they were wheeling their horses in obedience, were suddenly set upon by several armed men belonging to the train, who hacked at them with their sharp-edged heavy swords. Richardson fell from his horse in a dying state, and the other two men were so severely wounded that they called out to the lady: 'Ride on, we can do nothing for you'. She got back safely to Yokohama and gave the alarm. Everybody in the settlement who possessed a pony and a revolver at once armed himself and galloped off towards the scene of the slaughter."

It is not difficult to visualise the consternation in the foreign settlement at this fresh outrage. There had already been a number of attacks on foreigners. Satow mentioned several in the previous chapter of his memoirs, including the

murder of Heusken, the Secretary of the American Mission, (January 1861)<sup>1</sup> and an attack on the British Legation at Tozenji (July 1861).<sup>2</sup> Satow's comment is revealing of the feelings of the foreign community at this time:

"This was a considerable catalogue for a period of no more than two years since the opening of the ports to commerce. In every case the attack was premeditated and unprovoked, and the perpetrators on every occasion belonged to the sword-bearing class. No offence had been given by the victims to those who had thus ruthlessly cut them down; they were assassinated from motives of a political character, and their murderers went unpunished in every instance. Japan became to be known as a country where the foreigner carried his life in his hand, and the dread of incurring the fate of which so many examples had already occurred became general among the residents."

Satow goes on to explain that he bought a revolver before leaving England in 1861:

"The trade to Japan in these weapons must have been very great in those days, as everyone wore a pistol whenever he ventured beyond the limits of the foreign settlement, and consequently slept with one under his pillow. It was a busy time for Colt and Adams."

By Satow's account Dr. Willis of the British legation was the first to reach the scene of the murder: "He proceeded onwards to Namamugi, where poor Richardson's corpse was found under the shade of a tree by the roadside. His throat had been cut as he was lying there wounded and helpless. The body was covered with sword cuts, any one of which was sufficient to cause death."

The reaction of the foreign community is described as follows:

"The excitement among the foreign mercantile community was intense, for this was the first occasion on which one of their number had been struck down. The Japanese sword is as sharp as a razor, and inflicts fearful gashes. The Japanese had a way of cutting a man to pieces rather than leave any life in him. This had a most powerful effect on the minds of Europeans, who came to look on every two-sworded man as a probable assassin, and if they met one in

the street thanked God as soon as they had passed him and found themselves in safety.”

A meeting was called in the settlement in which a motion to request the foreign naval authorities to land 1000 men in order to arrest the guilty parties at nearby Hodogaya was discussed and rejected. Colonel Neale — British chargé d'affaires and senior diplomat in the absence of Sir Rutherford Alcock — met with a deputation of merchants and “declined to authorise the adoption of measures, which . . . would have amounted virtually to making war on Japan”.

Satow felt in hindsight that Neale was right: “Looking back now after the lapse of nearly a quarter of a century, I am strongly disposed to the belief that Colonel Neale took the best course. The plan of the mercantile community was bold, attractive and almost romantic.” Even if foreign sailors had succeeded in capturing a leading Japanese nobleman this might well have precipitated the downfall of the Tycoon (Shogun) before there was any alternative government. “In all probability the country would have become a prey to a ruinous anarchy, and collisions with foreign powers would have been frequent and serious. Probably the slaughter of the foreign community at Nagasaki would have been the immediate answer to the blow struck at Hodogaya, a joint expedition would have been sent out by England, France and Holland to fight many a bloody battle and perhaps dismember the realm of the Mikados. In the meantime the commerce for whose sake we had come to Japan would have been killed. And how many lives of Europeans and Japanese would have been sacrificed in return for that of Shimadzu Saburo ?”

While avoiding hasty and probably fatal retaliation against the Japanese daimio, the British did not let the matter rest. A complete account of the murder of Richardson and the failure of the Japanese government to afford satisfactory redress was sent home to the Foreign Office, and “in March 1863 Colonel Neale received instructions to demand ample reparation from both the Tycoon and the Prince of Satsuma.” (Diplomat in Japan, Ch VII)

On April 6th he sent Eusden up to Yedo on board the gunboat "Havoc" to deliver a Note, demanding the payment of 100,000 pounds "as a penalty on the Tycoon for allowing an Englishman to be murdered in his territory in open daylight without making any effort to arrest the murderers." The Council were given twenty days to consider their reply, since the Tycoon and his chief advisers had left for Kioto three days earlier. "If at the conclusion of the term allotted no answer was returned, or an unsatisfactory one was given, coercive measures would immediately be taken." It was also intended to send the "Pearl" to Kagoshima to demand of the Prince of Satsuma the trial and execution of the murderers of Richardson in the presence of English officers and the payment of 25,000 pounds to be distributed to the relatives of Richardson, to Marshall, Clarke and Mrs. Borrodaile.

On April 26th the Council requested an extension. Fifteen more days were granted. On May 1st the Council asked for another delay of fifteen days. Finally an extension was accorded until May 23rd, "in order that the personal consent of the Tycoon, who was expected to return by that date, might be obtained to the English ultimatum."

The Tycoon did not, however, return to Yedo until some months later. By the 14th of June matters were coming to a head. At last on the 24th the Japanese Government sent a message that they would pay the Indemnity, which they duly did at the legation in dollar coins (counted and checked by Chinese "shroffs")<sup>3</sup> over the next three days.

After the successful completion of the first part of the instructions from London with regard to the Indemnity, there remained only the exaction of reparation from the Prince of Satsuma. "Marshall and Clarke had recovered from their wounds, which in the case of the latter were serious enough . . . and Mrs. Borrodaile, who was not wounded, had returned to China." (Diplomat, Ch VIII)

It was finally decided that a squadron of seven ships under Admiral Küper (HMS Euryalus) should transport the whole staff of the legation, including

Colonel Neale and E. Satow, down to the Bay of Kagoshima, which it reached on the afternoon of August 11th. The next morning the squadron proceeded up the bay, and anchored off the town.

A letter stating the British demands in imperfect Japanese was delivered. In the afternoon of August 13th officials led by Ijichi Shoji visited the flagship, and stated that it was impossible to say when the answer would be given. "He and his retinue of forty men came on board, after having exchanged a parting cup of saké with their prince, with the full design of making a sudden onslaught upon the British officers, and killing at any rate the principal ones among them; they intended in this way to make themselves masters of the flagship." This bold plan was thwarted by the British: "Only two or three were admitted into the Admiral's cabin, while the marines kept a vigilant eye upon the retinue who remained on the quarter deck. While they were still on board another boat arrived, whether with reinforcements or orders to countermand the intended slaughter I do not know, but Ijichi, after communicating with the men who came in her, said he must return to shore."

In the evening a written reply to the British demands was delivered: it said that the murderers could not be found, blamed the Tycoon for having made treaties without inserting a clause to prevent foreigners from impeding the passage of the prince along the highroads; spoke of delay until the criminals could be arrested and punished, after which the question of an indemnity could be discussed, and practically referred the British Chargé d'Affaires back to the Yedo Government.

The messenger returned the next morning (August 14th) to be told that the reply was unsatisfactory, and that no further communication would be held with the Japanese except under a flag of truce.

A plan was then made to take possession of three Satsuma steamers, including the "Sir George Grey" purchased from Britain. This plan was carried out on the 15th at dawn. At noon all the Satsuma batteries opened fire on the squadron anchored by Sakura Jima. Although it was raining and blowing like a typhoon,

the Admiral at once gave orders to engage, and burn the prizes which was done after due plundering.

In the ensuing battle the "Euryalus" was hit on her main-deck by a 10-inch shell, killing seven men and wounding an officer. The "Racehorse" ran aground and had to be towed off.

Satow seems to have enjoyed the battle: "I shall never forget the interest and excitement of the whole affair." Five Loochooan junks ("Loochoo" being another name for "Ryukyu", or Okinawa) were burned. "Rockets were fired with the object of burning the town, in which we were only too successful." The gale fanned the fires making it impossible to extinguish the flames.<sup>4</sup>

On Sunday August 16th the bodies of Captain Josling, Commander Wilmot and nine men were buried at sea. "In the afternoon the squadron weighed anchor and proceeded down the bay at slow speed, shelling the batteries and town at long range until we left them too far behind. We anchored for the night at some distance from the town, and on the 17th proceeded to return to Yokohama. Most of us . . . came away bitterly discontented."

Satow speculates that differences arose between Colonel Neale and Admiral Küper which prevented a landing and a victorious outcome. Questions were asked in the House of Commons by Mr. Bright about the unnecessary act of severity in destroying the town. Satow disputes Neale's claim that the conflagration was accidental.

A month later the Legation was agreeably surprised by the visit of two high officers of Satsuma, "who undertook to pay the indemnity of 25,000 pounds and gave an engagement to make a diligent search for Richardson's murderers, who upon their arrest were to be punished with death in the presence of British officers, in accordance with the original demand."

As far as punishing the murderers was concerned, Satow notes: "We may

give Colonel Neale the credit for knowing that there was no genuine intention on the part of Satsuma to carry out this promise, but on the other hand there was strong reason to suppose that Shimadzu Saburo himself had actually given the order to cut down the foreigners, and it could hardly be expected that the Satsuma men would ever consent to do punishment upon him. The actual doers of the deed were merely subordinate agents."

Whether Satow is right that Saburo gave the order is open to doubt. At any rate: "The Satsuma envoys, however, formerly acknowledged that their countrymen had been in the wrong, and they paid the fine demanded by the British Government. No one therefore can blame the British Chargé d'Affaires for having made peace on these terms. It should be mentioned, however, that the Satsuma men borrowed the money from the Tycoon's treasury, and I have never heard that it was repaid."

All of the above quotations are from Satow's memoirs. They clarify the outline and many of the details of the Namamugi Incident. However, other sources can give us a fuller picture of what happened.

Satow gives no indication as to the character of Richardson. Sir Frederick Bruce was British Minister in China at the time. He clearly believes that Richardson brought about his own downfall:

"Mr. Richardson rides out for pleasure, he meets the procession of a Japanese noble accustomed from childhood to certain marks of respect — If Mr. Richardson objected to paying them why did he not do as he was urged by his more sensible companions and turn back or leave the road? I knew the unfortunate man, for I had to support the consul in Shanghai in inflicting upon him a heavy fine for a most brutal and unprovoked attack upon an unoffending coolie in his employ. He was a type too often found among our middle class, with the brutal courage of a prize fighter, unchecked by a single chivalrous instinct."

(Elgin Letters, Broomhall, Fife, Scotland. Private, Sir Frederick Bruce to Earl Russell, Peking, 15th April 1864).<sup>5</sup>

The “marks of respect” referred to are the dismounting and lowering of the head as the Daimio passes by. Richardson failed to observe these points.

Another version of the Incident from the Japanese viewpoint is given by Professor Tarou Wakamori and Shirou Ozaki in Chapter 7, Volume 10 of “Nihon Rekishi Zenshuu” published by Shuueisha in 1961. The following is translated from pp. 214-239:

*Shita ni Ore* (Look downwards in respect)

In August (sic) 1862 a daimyo procession was going down the Tokaido from Edo Castle to Kioto. The daimyo was Shimazu Hisamitsu of the Satsuma clan in Kagoshima. Hisamitsu had been protecting Oohara Shigetomi, an envoy charged with giving Imperial orders to the Shogun Iemochi from the Emperor Koumei.

Shigetomi had given Imperial orders for Yoshinobu to assume a guardianship role and surmount the current crisis. However, it had been at Hisamitsu's prompting; he had great influence in Kioto. Now he was returning with great pomp to Kioto.

There were 400 retainers in the procession in a state of excitement.

At the front of the procession Kaieda Taketsugu was in a palanquin. Hisamitsu's palanquin was in the centre with Narahara Kizaemon escorting it, walking alongside. They were both of the anti-foreigner persuasion, approving of the ideas of Fujita Touko of Mito, and ready to pounce on any insults by foreigners.

The day was very hot. At the call of “Shita ni ore” people performed “dogeza”, kneeling with foreheads touching the ground while the procession passed.

Just after leaving Edo and before joining the Tokaido, a foreigner (American) approached heading for Edo on horseback. His name was Van Reed. He

dismounted well before the procession, removed the bit from his horse's mouth, went to the side of the road, and took off his hat. He bowed politely as Hisamitsu's procession passed, then remounted and rode on towards Edo.

At length the procession came to the village of Namamugi. (It is in Tsurumi Ward, Yokohama City and is now called Namamugi-cho.)

It was about 2.30 pm. Now four foreigners on horseback were approaching. "Shita ni Ore" was shouted in a loud voice. Yet the foreigners showed no sign of dismounting. They approached haughtily on horseback. One of them was a woman.

### *The Incident Occurs*

It was a Sunday. The four foreigners were British visitors from Hongkong. They were on their way to visit Kawasaki Daishi, a Shingon temple.

When they were about to leave they were stopped by friends and advised not to go that day because the daimyo's procession was expected to pass by. There had been a message from the Kanagawa Magistrate's Office to the Consulate. It would be foolish to cross such a high-ranking and dignified procession.

But the four visitors disregarded the advice, saying:

"What do you mean? We have been in China for a long time and are used to dealing with Orientals. It will be all right."

So the four set out happily from the foreign settlement to enjoy a day of sightseeing. Their names were: Richardson, Marshall, Clarke and one lady, Borrodaile.

When they finally were in front of the procession they did not dismount.

Kaieda Taketsugu warned them sternly to dismount, and that it was Shimazu Hisamitsu's procession. However, none of the four apparently spoke Japanese. They tried to pass by the procession on the left side.

Narahara Kizaemon (attendant of Hisamitsu) then lost his temper. The foreigners were coming close to Hisamitsu's palanquin. At this point for defensive reasons the procession was especially wide, so the foreigners were soon sur-

rounded. The guards told the foreigners sternly to retreat. However, they did not understand.

Narahara Kizaemon took out his sword and advanced towards Richardson. The latter was surprised, and tried to turn his horse to the right. However, Narahara's blade had already cut his left shoulder. Blood gushed forth. Then the sword struck his side.

The complexions of the three companions went pale. Then they were threatened by other samurai. Marshall's back was cut, and Clarke's left shoulder. A sword was also swung at Mrs. Borrodaile, but fortunately only her hat and part of her hair were cut. The four foreigners became desperate. They fled towards Yokohama, pursued by Narahara and the other guards.

Kukimura Toshihisa of the gun-bearing group struck Richardson again on the left thigh and the back of his hand with his blade. He almost fell from his horse, but escaped.

Meanwhile the attendant in the vanguard (Kaieda Takeji) had realised the commotion was happening. He ran to the spot with sword in hand. Others shouted to him to intercept Richardson, who was heading for trees by the seashore. Richardson fell off his horse and died by the seashore.

Marshall and Clarke fled to the American consulate in Kanagawa (Honkakuji) and sought help. They received treatment. Mrs. Borrodaile fled to the house of Mr. Gower in the settlement.

Throughout this time Hisamitsu remained undisturbed in his palanquin. He merely nodded when the affair was reported to him, though he must have known the consequences. The procession continued on its way.

The Bakufu (Shogunate) and Kanagawa magistrates were not so calm. First the foreigner Richardson had been killed by Shimazu, a great lord of Satsuma. This was different from previous incidents. How would the foreign powers react?

When asked to produce the murderer by the magistrate Abe Masasoto, Hisamitsu responded that the man was Okano Shinsuke, a masterless samurai

(roushi) of the Satsuma clan. Also if the British Minister should complain then Satsuma would bear the responsibility, not the Bakufu.

However, there was no such person as Okano Shinsuke. Hisamitsu had as much power as the rising sun, and stated these things with great authority. Some samurai in the party were expecting the foreigners to seek immediate revenge, and urged a pre-emptive strike.

Anyway, in view of the gravity of the situation, Abe the magistrate at Kanagawa ordered the Odawara clan to escort Hisamitsu's procession as far as Hakone. This surprised the Bakufu which felt he did not have the authority to give such orders, but anyway the Bakufu supported the order. (Satsuma and the Court were more powerful than the Bakufu). After staying the night at Hodosaya the procession continued under a hot sun to Hakone, crossing the Ooigawa on its way to Kioto.

At this point we should pause to make two brief points. First, the Japanese account above states that the Incident occurred in *August*, 1862 whereas Satow's account states that it happened in *September*. This discrepancy can be explained if the Japanese account used the old calendar (kyuureki), rather than the Western one (seireki). Secondly, another point of difference is that Satow refers to Shimazu *Saburo*, whereas the Japanese account speaks of Shimazu *Hisamitsu*. There is no doubt that they are one and the same man. It was very common in this period for a Japanese to have two or three names by which he was known: e.g., Ito Hirobumi was also known as Ito Shunsuke. This clarified we may return to the Japanese narrative:

#### *Britain Gets Angry*

Mrs. Borrodaile's treatment and Richardson's murder caused anger and calls for revenge on Shimazu in the foreign settlement.

Lieutenant Colonel John Neale immediately reported the incident to London. In response twelve British warships were sent to Yokohama, arriving in February

1863.

The following strong demands were made of the Bakufu and Satsuma. The Bakufu should apologise and pay 100,000 pounds compensation. Shimazu should receive British warships in Kagoshima Bay and execute the wrongdoer there. 25,000 pounds should be paid in compensation by Satsuma.

. . . The Shogun ("Tycoon" in Satow's narrative) left Edo on February 13th, 1863 for Kyoto. Then the British warships arrived at the end of February in Yokohama. An urgent message was sent to the Shogun to return to Edo. However, the Court officials refused to allow the Shogun to return until he promised to pursue a policy of expulsion of foreigners.

#### *The Indemnity Is Paid*

Edo was now in uproar from top to bottom. War was expected. In place of the Shogun (still in Kyoto) Ogasawara Nagayuki and Tokugawa Yoshiatsu came to Edo to negotiate with the British, consulting first with Inoue and Matsudaira. (Ogasawara was a member of the Shogun's council of elders; Tokugawa was the head of the Mito clan).

They worried about how to answer the British demands. The guns of the twelve warships were trained on Yokohama.

. Finally Neale said Britain would wait no longer. So the Bakufu representatives answered that the indemnity would be paid in full on May 8th.

. Through the Kanagawa magistrate the 100,000 pounds was handed over to Neale on May 9th.

. Then the British prepared to sail down to Kagoshima to negotiate with Satsuma. Some Bakufu elders thought the Bakufu should settle the matter for Satsuma, but others were happy that the British were going to suppress one of the great clans which was disobeying the Bakufu.

#### *Satsuma and Britain*

Meanwhile to settle the Namamugi Incident seven British warships left Yoko-

hama on June 22nd for Satsuma. Admiral Küper commanded the fleet and John Neale was on board.

On June 28th the fleet arrived at Kagoshima. Hisamitsu noted the arrival: "So they've finally lost patience and come here." His attitude had not changed at all since the incident.

Hisamitsu immediately called Narahara and Kaieda, instructing them to attack the British. They assembled 400 fighting men ready to die. Then they made the following strategy: Machida Rokuzaemon would carry Hisamitsu's note refusing to comply to the British demands. He would board the British flagship with the chief negotiator, Enatsu Kizou. Narahara and Kaieda would join them with some of the warriors. They would hand over the note to lull the British into a false sense of security, but then Neale would be attacked with a sword. Two boats would be provided for this purpose. The rest of the warriors would be divided among six other boats and would approach the remaining six British ships. They would pretend to sell fruit and vegetables, waiting for the moment to attack. A signal gun from the shore would start the attack. The British would be totally destroyed and the six ships would be captured.

Hisamitsu approved the plan with the modification that they should conceal small daggers in their clothes rather than take full-sized swords onto the British flagship.

On the 29th of June the plan was put into operation. At 3 pm two boats containing Machida, Kaieda and Narahara approached the flagship. The remaining six boats bearing water melons and vegetables approached the other six ships. The shore batteries awaited Hisamitsu's command to give the signal.

Machida reached the flagship and shouted that he had come from Hisamitsu with a note. However, he was not understood. Finally he was allowed on board. Only Machida and Enatsu were permitted to enter the meeting room. Narahara and Kaieda were made to wait outside. They waited anxiously for the signal gun from the shore.

However, for some reason the gun was not fired. In the meeting room

Machida and Enatsu very nervously showed Hisamitsu's note to Neale. It read: "The whereabouts of the perpetrator of the Namamugi Incident are unknown. When he is caught he will be severely punished. As far as damages are concerned we must ask the opinion of the Bakufu. Until their answer comes please withdraw to Nagasaki or Yokohama."

Neale became angry and said negotiations could not be continued in these circumstances.

Still there was no signal from the gun on land. Then suddenly a small boat appeared and told the Japanese to take the note back and return by order of the head of the clan. This they did without knowing the reason.

The reason was that the six other boats which had attempted to board the British warships under the pretence of selling fruit and vegetables had been turned away. This had stopped the signal gun from being fired.

There was a confusion over the note which was presented again unaltered to Neale in the evening causing him to become even more angry. He declared there was nothing left for it but to fight.

Three steamers in the bay were seized and burned. .

A general engagement between Satsuma shore batteries and British ships ensued. But that evening the wind was strong, so the aim from the ships was poor. However, the accuracy of the Satsuma gunners was good. The British withdrew to Taniyama for repairs. They had lost twenty men. Satsuma only lost one man and three wounded. However, one gun battery had been destroyed and part of the town of Kagoshima had been burned.

The British returned to Yokohama on July 1st. The Satsuma clan thought they had won. However, then a rumour spread that the British were assembling a much bigger fleet.

This worried the Bakufu who feared a war between Japan and Britain would result. They called the senior statesmen of Satsuma and told them to pay the money and execute the murderer when found. So finally the Incident was settled on September 28th, 1863.

### *Concluding Remarks*

It is doubtful whether in truth we should pity Richardson to the extent that Satow did in his rather one-sided account. He really should have known better, and perhaps was even looking for a confrontation. If so, then he got more than he bargained for.

A more positive result for the Satsuma clan and the British came out of the Bombardment of Kagoshima. The clan realised it was impossible to beat foreigners equipped with Western technology. Instead they decided to make an alliance with the British and learn as much as possible from them. They then sent clan members to study in England, positively absorbing foreign technology and deepening ties with Britain. These ties remained strong through the period of the Meiji Restoration and after it.

### NOTES

1. For a very full account, see "The Assassination of Henry Heusken" by Reinier H. Hesselink in the journal 'Monumenta Nipponica', Volume 49, Number 3 (Autumn 1994).
2. Described by Sir Rutherford Alcock in 'The Capital of the Tycoon' (Longman, London, 1863) Volume II, pp. 156-169.
3. "shroff" in the Far East, an expert employed to detect counterfeit or base coin (New Shorter Oxford Dictionary). A famous print of 'The Payment of the Indemnity' appeared in the Illustrated London News.
4. According to Haru Matsukata Reischauer in "Samurai and Silk" (p. 54): "More than 500 houses went up in smoke, and large areas around the factories and foundries were levelled." She lists the total casualties as "13 dead and wounded on the British side and 10 dead and 11 wounded on the Japanese."
5. Quoted in O. Checkland, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

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"Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan, 1868-1912" by O. Checkland (London, Macmillan 1989)  
"The Rise of Modern Japan" by W. G. Beasley (Tokyo, Tuttle 1990)  
"Samurai and Silk" by Haru Matsukata Reischauer (Tokyo, Tuttle, reprinted 1992)