

A TRANS-PACIFIC CLASH? THE ROLE OF
DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN EARLY
U.S.–JAPAN RELATIONS

by

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DEDICATION

For Barbara Elizabeth Swyryn,

Anne Cale Jones,

Miss Kitty, Charli, Bingley,

and

Wilson Andrew Jones

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I. INTRODUCTION

A History of Conflict?

One of the great international conflicts of the twentieth century was between the United States and Japan. Both nations were upstart powers in a changing world that was less dominated by Europe, and from the beginning of the century, the two clashed over control of the Pacific. Initially, this took the form of traded barbs regarding racial tension and immigration. However, after World War I, Japan took a more militaristic approach to the Asia-Pacific region, seizing territory as the great powers squabbled.¹ In order to counter this threat, the US aligned with those same great powers and cut Japan off economically. The rest has been exhaustively documented by historians: Japan attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, and the two nations fought until the atom bomb brought the Japanese Empire to its knees. Defeat in war did not end the rivalry, however; once military confrontation ceased, the two nations sparred as the world's two commercial superpowers for the next four decades, only ceasing when Japan's bubble economy collapsed in the early 1990s.

Most of what scholars have written about the U.S.–Japan relationship from 1900-1991 focuses on this idea of conflict as its defining feature. Take, for example, Walter LaFeber's *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations Throughout History*, which, in the title

¹ The Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), while certainly representing an increase in Japanese militarism in the Pacific, represented more of a conflict between Japan and Europe than Japan and the United States. U.S. President Teddy Roosevelt privately supported the Japanese, and won a Nobel Prize for negotiating the Treaty of Portsmouth between Japan and Russia at the war's conclusion.

alone, makes this assertion.² The U.S. Office of the Historian makes similar claims in its diplomatic series *Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations*, noting that “in spite of the many efforts to reach agreements...Japan and the United States were...at odds.”³ And, of course, there is no end to the scholarly works detailing the military struggles between countries during the Second World War. Even when examining times of supposed collaboration, such as the U.S. Occupation of Japan (1945-1952), many scholars focus more on tensions and conflicts on display, including John Dower in *Embracing Defeat* and Michael Schaller in *The American Occupation of Japan*.

This underlying assumption of conflict is, by my estimation, the correct one – at least, in regards to the twentieth century. However, what is far less explored by scholars is the role of conflict at the *origin* of the U.S.–Japan relationship, which began in the nineteenth century. It is tempting to assume that these formative years were also centered around conflict. Doing so gives us a clear reason why the twentieth century was as messy and violent as it was: the United States and Japan fought, simply because they had always fought. Furthering this temptation is the expedition to Japan carried out by Matthew Perry in 1853, commonly cited as the first encounter between the two countries. Many scholars have identified this incident – traumatic for Japan – as a clearly imperialist act conducted by the United States navy against the shogunate, which set the groundwork for long-term mutual resentment.

This thesis takes another look at the early U.S.–Japan relationship, addressing whether or not it was actually based on conflict during its formative years. I posit that,

² LaFeber’s work encompasses the entire history of U.S.–Japan relations, beginning in the mid-1800s, but most of his focus is on the years after 1900.

³ Office of the Historian, “Japanese-American Relations at the Turn of the Century, 1900-1922,” *Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations*.

while Perry's endeavor did leave lasting scars and hostile feelings between the nations, the following two decades saw the transformation of Japan into a proto-world power with boundless confidence that wanted to collaborate with, not compete against, the United States. This culminated in former President Grant's voyage to Japan in 1879, during which there was a genuine, albeit brief, realization of *détente* between nations. Conflict as the main element of the U.S.–Japan relationship did not reemerge until the 1890s, when clashes over immigration became more frequent.

The way I illustrate this shift toward *détente* is by analyzing major diplomatic encounters from the 1840s to the 1870s. I begin with Perry and his predecessors. The next chapter focuses on the mid-1840s voyages of James Biddle and James Glynn to Japan, with the failure of the former generating anti-Japanese hostility among the American public. The third chapter focuses on the diplomacy of the Perry Mission; here, I agree with the scholarly consensus that this voyage represented a deepening gulf between the two societies. However, it was not long before tensions decreased. In the fourth chapter, I look at the 1860 mission of the Tokugawa government, which sent a delegation of samurai to visit the United States as part of the ratification process for the Harris Treaty. At this point, the United States wanted to act in more of a mentor role for Japan, and behaved in a less hostile way. Then, in the fifth chapter, I discuss the American phase of the Iwakura Mission (1871-1873), during which a delegation representing the new Meiji Government visited the United States to renegotiate Japan's earlier agreements. These delegates behaved in a more self-assured and confident manner, and sought out greater collaboration with the United States. To conclude, I discuss former President Grant's 1879 trip to Japan. While it will be addressed in less

detail, I believe that Grant's visit represented a moment of mutual respect between nations. By the late 1870s, conflict actually looked unlikely between the United States and Japan – or at least, no more so than between any two other nations.

II. U.S.–JAPAN RELATIONS BEFORE 1853

Introduction

It may seem appropriate to begin any discussion of the diplomatic history between the United States and Japan with Commodore Perry's expedition in 1853. The voyage of his terrifying "Black Ships" marks an easily identifiable turning point in Japanese history. Before the arrival of Perry's fleet, Japan was isolated and relatively stable, and had been for two hundred years. After Perry's departure, the country fell into chaos and the Tokugawa Shogunate had to negotiate with the same foreign powers that it previously shunned. Due to the landmark nature of the voyage, it remains the most well-known event in the early U.S.–Japan relationship, and historians have given the mission the most scholarly attention out of any Japanese diplomatic topic, pre-twentieth century.

Given Perry's ubiquity, the natural question that any scholar should begin with is this: *is* the Perry Expedition really the best place to begin our discussion of the U.S.–Japan relationship? It was not the first interaction between Americans and Japanese. In fact, since the late 1700s, American sailors and whalers had come into contact with Japanese fishermen and, if they found themselves shipwrecked, with villagers on Japanese soil. American merchant ships had already attempted their own openings of the sealed country, but Japan's harsh seclusion laws rebuffed them. Perry's expedition was not even the first official delegation representing the United States government: that entity had already conducted two earlier missions, under Commodore James Biddle in 1846 and Commander James Glynn in 1849. Taking this history into consideration, we

can start to re-frame the debate. Instead of viewing Perry's expedition to Japan as the *beginning* of an arc of diplomatic relations between the countries, we can instead see it as the *end* of one. This arc began in the late 1700s and continued until 1853, during which Japanese seclusion laws came into conflict with American trade interests. This period also saw a shift from a conciliatory American policy toward Japan, to an aggressive one. Since this aggressive policy informed Perry's approach in 1853, it is first necessary to discuss this pre-1853 arc of diplomacy to gain context for the Commodore's actions.⁴

Early Clashes

American and Japanese interests were primed to collide at some point during the nineteenth century. Trade with China was a massive source of income for U.S. merchants, and whaling was essential to satisfy the American demand for whale oil. As the waters around the Japanese archipelago were a convenient resupply route for China-bound vessels, and were aflush with whales, more and more American ships began to appear there in spite of Japan's isolation policy. The first recorded contact took place in 1791, when an American named John Kendrick landed off the coast of modern-day Wakayama Prefecture.⁵ Kendrick departed before speaking with any locals, but he left a note explaining that he was traveling from America to China and had been blown off-course. American merchants made subsequent attempts at contact in the first two decades of the 1800s during the Napoleonic Wars. The Dutch, who were at war with the British,

⁴ For a scholarly work that addresses the U.S.-Japanese relationship before Perry in more detail, see Foster Rhea Dulles, *Yankees and Samurai: America's Role in the Emergence of Modern Japan* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

⁵ Dulles, *Yankees and Samurai*, 1.

were the only Westerners with whom the Japanese government conducted trade.

However, Dutch ships could not sail openly in Asian waters, due to the risk of being fired upon by the British. American vessels who were willing to take the risk subsequently took advantage of the Dutch absence, and flew the Dutch flag to conduct covert trade in Nagasaki.

It was not until the administration of President Andrew Jackson (1829-1837), though, that American sailors and traders tried a more direct approach towards “opening” Japan. Charles King, a merchant with ties to the China trade, made the first attempt. In mid-1837, King sailed aboard his ship, the *Morrison*, alongside missionaries such as Samuel Wells Williams, and headed for the shogunate’s seat of power in Edo.⁶ King brought with him a group of Japanese sailors who had shipwrecked near Washington state in order to repatriate them, thereby adding a humanitarian component to the mission.⁷ His logic for undertaking this adventure was straightforward: King wanted to spread Christianity and arrange some sort of trade between his home country and Japan.⁸ In terms of methods, King aimed to be as conciliatory to his hosts as possible. The *Morrison* brought no weapons and, despite the presence of missionaries like Wells Williams, no religious literature. King sailed directly to Edo Bay where local fishing vessels soon approached him. These fishermen were initially responsive to their

⁶ Peter Booth Wiley, *Yankees in the Land of the Gods* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 32.

⁷ Wiley, *Yankees*, 31-32. The story of how the Japanese sailors got to America is an interesting one as well. These men were originally aboard a small ship making a domestic trip to Edo to deliver rice. Their vessel fell victim to the vagaries of ocean currents, however, and was dragged around the northern rim of the Pacific before eventually crashing at Washington’s Olympic Peninsula. Local Indians enslaved the Japanese, but the American government eventually freed them. See Wiley, *Yankees*, 10. The shipwreck victims may have not been happy at their repatriation, though. One of Japan’s most infamous seclusion laws prohibited the return of anyone lost at sea under penalty of death. This was due to the shogunate’s fear that shipwreck victims might become contaminated by Christian teachings during their time abroad.

⁸ This was not the first time that Japan had been exposed to Christianity: indeed, the faith was the primary reason why Japan went into self-imposed isolation in the first place.

American guests, but partway through introductions, Japanese soldiers on the shore fired upon the *Morrison*. Heavily damaged, the ship was forced to retreat. King's crippled vessel sailed southwest to the port of Kagoshima, the capital of the Satsuma domain.⁹ Again, local fishermen and peasants met the expedition positively; however, only a day after arriving, shore batteries once again fired on the *Morrison*. The ship barely escaped, and could not deliver the Japanese shipwreck victims back to their home country.

King and his crew returned to the United States, his conciliatory mission to Japan a failure. However, the merchant still believed that the closed country could be brought into the broader community of nations; it would just take a more substantial squadron than the unarmed *Morrison* alone. King wrote a book entitled *The Claims of Japan and Malaysia Upon Christendom*, in which he detailed his voyage for the general public. In it, he insisted that the mission's failure came about from an "absence of cannon," and that things would have been different "had the Morrison been well armed."¹⁰ By firing on his ship, the Japanese committed an "injury done to the American flag": therefore, King "propose[d], then that a small naval force...shall be directed to pass the summer of 1839 on the coasts of Japan."¹¹ The commander of such a force, King argued, should use American power to enforce an "ultimatum on the point of future intercourse."¹²

King published *The Claims of Japan*, but due to U.S. preoccupations in China and

⁹ Satsuma was the powerful fiefdom that controlled trade with the Ryukyus, and was located at the lower tip of Kyushu, Japan's southernmost main island. The family of *daimyo* who controlled Satsuma, the Shimazu, had a long-standing antagonism towards the *bakufu* in Edo. It is unclear if King had any knowledge of Japan's internal dynamics before his visit, but he may have been vaguely aware of Satsuma's disdain for the central government and believed that they would be more amenable to foreign engagement.

¹⁰ Charles King, *The Claims of Japan and Malaysia Upon Christendom, Exhibited in Notes of Voyages made in 1837, from Canton, in the Ship Morrison and Brig Himmaleh, Volume 1* (New York: E. French, 1839), 170-171.

¹¹ King, *The Claims of Japan*, 178-179.

¹² King, *The Claims of Japan*, 180.

general public disinterest, the appetite for coercive measures was not yet present in Washington.¹³ No further action was taken, and the stalemate with Japan continued throughout the 1840s, during which many American sailors were shipwrecked and detained by the shogunate. Two of the most well-known cases were those of the *Lawrence* in 1846 and the *Lagoda* in 1849. The *Lawrence* wrecked off Hokkaido, and the shipwrecked sailors were detained there before local authorities shipped them south to Nagasaki. After waiting a year, the magistrate eventually allowed the survivors to depart aboard a Dutch ship, thereby repatriating them. Upon their return, the sailors of the *Lawrence* complained about their treatment by both the Hokkaido and Nagasaki officials, contributing to a growing reputation in the United States of Japanese cruelty.

The *Lagoda* was a similar case, although the detained “shipwreck victims” were actually mutineers who left their vessel voluntarily. This group also landed off Hokkaido, and local authorities imprisoned them until Edo could determine their fate. However, unlike the *Lawrence* prisoners, the *Lagoda* mutineers attempted to escape from their confinement multiple times.¹⁴ Each time, their captors caught them and returned them to confinement and, according to later testimony from the sailors, these local officials subsequently treated them more harshly. Eventually, the imprisoned made their way to Nagasaki as well, where they stayed in poor conditions until the arrival of Commander James Glynn’s fleet in 1849.

¹³ In 1844, the U.S. secured the Treaty of Wanghia with China, which opened certain Chinese ports to American trade.

¹⁴ Wiley, *Yankees*, 29.

The Voyages of Biddle and Glynn

Occurring contemporaneously with the mid-1840s increase in the confinement of private American sailors, Washington finally conducted its first official expedition to extend relations to Japan. A resolution put before the House of Representatives on February 15, 1845 outlined the motivation for doing so: a more open relationship with Japan would allow “for the extension of American commerce,” since “the internal commerce of Japan...is very extensive.”¹⁵ The government chose Commodore James Biddle, an accomplished Navy man who had served in the War of 1812, to lead the expedition. His instructions from the Navy Department said that the Commodore was to persuade the Japanese to deal with Americans, but “not in such a manner as to excite a hostile feeling, or a distrust of the government of the United States.”¹⁶ This caveat may have been included because Washington was aware of how strict Japan’s isolation policy was, and did not seek to inflame tensions further in the way King’s voyage had.

Biddle’s forces arrived off Japan in July of 1846. Based on research he conducted beforehand, Biddle concluded that “the Japanese officers at Nangasacki [Nagasaki] are without authority to treat with foreign officers; they could not accede to any propositions.”¹⁷ Therefore, instead of going to Nagasaki (the only place where the Japanese conducted foreign trade), Biddle sailed directly to Edo to deal with the shogunate, as Charles King had attempted a decade earlier. On July 20, Biddle anchored

¹⁵ Extension of American Commerce – Proposed Mission to Japan and Corea, 28th Cong., 2d sess., 1845, Doc. 138, 1-2.

¹⁶ Millard Fillmore, Executive Document 59, “Message from the President of the United States, Communicating, in Compliance with a Resolution of the Senate, Certain Official Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan, and Serving to Illustrate the Existing Relations Between the United States and Japan,” (April 12, 1852): 64.

¹⁷ Fillmore, “Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan,” 64.

in Edo Bay with both of his ships. “A vast number of boats belonging to the government” – Japanese scouts – quickly surrounded the vessels. The Shogun’s representatives wished to board in order to ascertain the Commodore’s reason for being there, and Biddle “permitted them to come on board in large numbers, that all might be convinced of our friendly disposition.”¹⁸

The next day, a higher-ranking representative visited Biddle, explaining that precedent dictated the American ships surrender their “guns, muskets, swords, etc.”¹⁹ Biddle rejected this demand but continued to insist that his intentions were friendly. Over the coming days, the Japanese supplied the foreign warships with provisions and water but maintained a refusal to allow the Commodore to disembark. Finally, on the 27th, another Japanese ambassador arrived with a letter from the Emperor, addressing Biddle.²⁰ The letter insisted that trade and intercourse between the United States and Japan was impossible, reiterating the standard justification that “according to the Japanese laws, the Japanese may not trade except with the Dutch and Chinese.”²¹ The letter concluded, bluntly, by stating that because of these restrictions, “you must depart as quick as possible, and not come any more in Japan.”²²

Biddle did not protest the letter of rejection. There is little doubt that he could have, given the armaments of his fleet, but the Commodore appears to have taken seriously his mandate not to give the Japanese any reason to distrust the U.S.

¹⁸ Fillmore, “Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan,” 64.

¹⁹ Fillmore, “Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan,” 65.

²⁰ This letter was likely from the Shogun in Edo, instead. Americans were generally aware that there were “2 Emperors” in Japan, one material, one spiritual, but they had little understanding of the practical differences in power that existed between the Emperor in Kyoto and the Shogun in Edo. At this time in Japanese history, the Emperor in Kyoto had no ability to conduct foreign relations.

²¹ Fillmore, “Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan,” 65.

²² Fillmore, “Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan,” 65.

government. His only other option at this point was retreat, which he did on the 29th, leaving Edo Bay. Biddle's departure, however, did not come before the most embarrassing event of the voyage took place, in terms of lost American prestige.

On the 27th, the same day when the Japanese ambassador delivered the letter to the Commodore, there was a minor scuffle, which Biddle characterized as "an occurrence of an unpleasant character."²³ During the presentation ceremony, Biddle was under the impression that the Japanese invited him to board one of their ships. When he attempted to step onto the deck, Biddle described a Japanese soldier who "gave me a blow or push, which threw me back into the boat."²⁴ This was a direct physical assault on an officer of the U.S. Navy, dressed in full uniform, in front of a large crowd of American sailors and Japanese officials. Incensed, Biddle called for the soldier to be apprehended by the Shogun's delegation. The Japanese complied and offered an apology, expressing "the greatest concern at what had occurred."²⁵ However, the damage was already done. The commissioners asked the Commodore "in what manner I wished him punished," to which Biddle replied, "according to the laws of Japan," thereby relinquishing any authority he had to dictate terms.²⁶ When the American squadron subsequently tried to leave Edo Bay, the ships were unable to move due to a lack of wind and had to be towed by Japanese boats.²⁷ This further embarrassed Commodore Biddle in front of the Shogun's envoys.

By the time Biddle returned to the United States, news of his failure had become

²³ Fillmore, "Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan," 66.

²⁴ Fillmore, "Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan," 66.

²⁵ Fillmore, "Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan," 66.

²⁶ Fillmore, "Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan," 66.

²⁷ Biddle's ships were the U.S.S. *Columbus* and *Vincennes*, two classic vessels of the U.S. navy, a ship-of-the-line and sloop-of-war, respectively. The construction of both pre-dated steam technology in American naval vessels, rendering them dependent on the wind and sails. Had the vessels been steam-powered, this embarrassment could have been avoided.

public. The press published two lithographs about the trip, which depicted the ships of Biddle's squadron anchored at Edo Bay. The accompanying text theorized that Japanese forces could not have posed "much difficulty" had the navy engaged them in combat.²⁸ However, because of Biddle's more conciliatory diplomacy, the Americans could only "hasten their departure," leaving the Japanese "rejoicing that they had rid themselves so easily of such a number of Barbarians."²⁹ A.H. Everett, a diplomat, observed that the whole affair had been "an offence," and that the Japanese rejected American overtures "not only with decision, but with rudeness and incivility."³⁰ He later concluded that the Biddle mission ultimately "placed the subject [of peaceful inter-national relations] in a rather less favorable position than that in which it stood before."³¹ Washington endured additional embarrassment when the sailors of the *Lawrence* returned aboard the Dutch ship the following year. They explained that they were held captive in Nagasaki simultaneously with Biddle's negotiations, but Biddle neglected to free them.³²

The failure of the Biddle Mission's conciliatory approach to diplomacy with Japan was not lost on the U.S. government or navy, and the second official expedition sent to Japan took place under a different set of motivations. Instead of trying to open the country to trade and foreign intercourse, Commander James Glynn was solely tasked with recovering the "shipwrecked" mutineers of the *Lagoda*.³³ His orders stated he was "to demand the release of these prisoners," and accordingly, "they will doubtlessly be

²⁸ Wagner & McGuigan, Lithographers, *The U.S.S. Columbus and Vincennes in Japan: Departure of the U.S.S. Columbus and Vincennes from Jeddo Bay, July 29th, 1846*, 1846.

²⁹ Wagner & McGuigan, *The U.S.S. Columbus and Vincennes in Japan*.

³⁰ Fillmore, "Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan," 68.

³¹ Fillmore, "Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan," 69.

³² An account of their imprisonment was published from Batavia in December 1847. Biddle was not aware of the *Lawrence* sailors' plight during his voyage, but this did little to placate the public.

³³ These orders came from East Indies Squadron Commander David Geisinger.

surrendered to him at once.”³⁴ Further instructions clarified that Glynn was to be “conciliatory, but firm,” but if the Japanese persisted in obstruction, he had the “discretion and ability to guard the interests as well as the honor of your country.”³⁵ These powers were decidedly more forceful than what the Navy Department had given Biddle.

Glynn arrived at Nagasaki in April 1849 in order to proceed with negotiations directly.³⁶ A similar entourage of scout boats met the Commander’s squadron, aboard which were local officials trying to determine the object of his mission. Once they met, Glynn asked how many Americans were confined at Nagasaki, and the chief official (unnamed in the record of the conversation) replied that there “are fourteen.”³⁷ The Commander pressed the official, asking if they were “properly taken care of,” to which the chief replied “everything that we could do was done to revive them.”³⁸ The Nagasaki officials then tried to interrogate Glynn themselves, but he was more resistant. An official asked the Commander why his government was sending ships to the waters around Japan, and Glynn cryptically offered that “my government has many reasons for sending men-of-war all around the world.”³⁹ A follow-up question asked how many ships Commander Glynn had access to: Glynn exaggerated, insisting that he had “sixty, or seventy, or a hundred. It is impossible for me to particularize how many.”⁴⁰ In a later interview, the Commander stated ominously that, if he was unsuccessful in repatriating the *Lagoda*

³⁴ Fillmore, “Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan,” 6.

³⁵ Fillmore, “Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan,” 7.

³⁶ He still had orders to sail to Edo if the Japanese in Nagasaki were uncooperative.

³⁷ Fillmore, “Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan,” 31. According to the official, originally there were sixteen prisoners, but two had died before Glynn’s arrival.

³⁸ Fillmore, “Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan,” 31.

³⁹ Fillmore, “Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan,” 32.

⁴⁰ Fillmore, “Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan,” 32. In reality, the East Asia Squadron only had two ships for Glynn to call upon.

crew, he was “ordered by my superior officer ‘to do something else.’”⁴¹

The Japanese were willing to return the prisoners to the Americans. After all, their confinement had been a nuisance due to their many escape attempts. The issue was timing, however: how long was appropriate to deliberate about an answer before giving it to the Commander? The Japanese delayed, insisting vaguely that Glynn would receive an answer “in a ‘short time’.”⁴² Further clarification came after pushback from the Americans, becoming “thirty or forty days” instead.⁴³ The long timeframe was largely out of necessity, as officials at Nagasaki wanted to hear back from Edo before proceeding. Delay was also a tactic to exercise control over Glynn, perhaps in the hope that inconvenience would cause the Americans to simply leave. Unlike Biddle though, Glynn did not agree to this demand; he insisted that “I have already waited five days – four days too long; and now I want to know something more,” before insisting that the official “give a direct reply to my question, and I will do the thinking.”⁴⁴ In unambiguous terms, he then stated that “I will stay three days – certainly no longer – but you must promise me now that in three days you will deliver up the men. Do you promise?”⁴⁵ The local officials of Nagasaki did promise, and produced the sailors shortly after.

To say that Glynn’s success and Biddle’s failure were due to polar opposite approaches in diplomacy would be an exaggeration. Glynn’s tone was more aggressive, but he stopped short of actual intervention by alluding to vague threats instead. One should also remember that Biddle’s tone was not entirely conciliatory either: he certainly

⁴¹ Fillmore, “Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan,” 33.

⁴² Fillmore, “Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan,” 33.

⁴³ Fillmore, “Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan,” 34.

⁴⁴ Fillmore, “Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan,” 36.

⁴⁵ Fillmore, “Documents Relative to the Empire of Japan,” 36.

did not appear so when demanding punishment for the soldier who pushed him. However, what matters for the conduct of the subsequent Perry Mission is what the U.S. government *believed* was successful. When Glynn returned home, both the government and general public lauded his mission as a success because of its supposedly more aggressive tone, while Biddle's endeavor remained a failure due to a perceived lack of strength. Taking into account these two missions, we can come to a clearer picture of the diplomatic context leading into Perry's expedition. Over the course of the past half-century, the American government came to understand that a conciliatory Japan policy was not effective, regardless of the reality of that fact. This led to a twist in demeanor, favoring aggression, which began with Glynn and ended with Commodore Perry.

The American Perspective, 1849-1853

The point made in the previous section – that both the U.S. government and general public supported a more robust Japan policy after Glynn's expedition – is one that deserves more analysis before continuing. The years between 1849 and 1853 were critical for cementing American opinion in favor of aggression. One of the strongest voices was Commander Glynn himself. Upon his return to the United States, Glynn lobbied Washington for another mission to secure a commercial treaty with Japan. In his mind, this process was less of an option and more of an inevitability: "soon a commercial treaty between the two Countries will be demanded by our people," he wrote in a letter to President Fillmore in 1851, "and if not peaceably then by force."⁴⁶ In his proposed

⁴⁶ James Glynn, "Letter to Millard Fillmore," in *The Papers of Daniel Webster, Diplomatic Papers 2, 1850-*

mission, Glynn indicated that “our only object [should] be free trade and its necessary accommodations.”⁴⁷ He did admit that “it would be an error to treat with the Japanese as being less civilized than ourselves”; however, he remarked on the necessity to impart a “character of ‘bruskness’ [sic]” to the tone of the expedition.⁴⁸ This would be based on his own precedent. In order to accomplish this, the mission needed a leader with “spirit to repel every attempt to exact from him any humiliating act of ceremonial deference to the native authorities.”⁴⁹

Glynn’s lobbying also highlighted his indignation towards Commodore Biddle’s earlier conduct. He remarked in the same letter to President Fillmore that “I have reason to believe that the effect of [Biddle’s] visit upon the people of [Japan] has been very unfavorable to the interests of the United States.”⁵⁰ The methods used by the Japanese to turn Biddle away were “so much more objectionable” than Biddle originally presented them, and the Commodore’s refusal to more actively punish the Japanese sailor was “represented as evidence of a want of energy and decision” by Americans in the eyes of the Japanese government. This helped “foster the contempt of the guards over our countrymen in Nagasaki,” making his own job more difficult, three years later.⁵¹

Contemporary American newspapers echoed similar frustrations, with the plight of the *Lagoda* survivors being something that particularly enraged the public. One article, published after Glynn’s return, spoke of how the prisoners were “kept for more than a

1852, ed. Kenneth Shewmaker and Kenneth Stevens (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987), 292.

⁴⁷ Glynn, “Letter to Millard Fillmore,” 293.

⁴⁸ Glynn, “Letter to Millard Fillmore,” 293, 296.

⁴⁹ Glynn, “Letter to Millard Fillmore,” 294.

⁵⁰ Glynn, “Letter to Millard Fillmore,” 295.

⁵¹ Glynn, “Letter to Millard Fillmore,” 297.

year in captivity by the jealous and tyrannical government of that country.”⁵² Their confinement was one of “true Japanese rigor,” which caused “one of them being driven by despair to the commission of suicide” after being “confined in prisons and cages.”⁵³ Because of this poor treatment, the paper argued, “it becomes a very serious consideration, worthy to be weighed by the government in Washington, whether it is proper for us to permit their jealous people to treat our American wrecked sailors with...gross inhumanity.”⁵⁴ To correct this problem, “another expedition, and one of sufficient strength to create a suitable impression, ought to be sent to Yedo [Edo].”⁵⁵

Other papers enflamed tensions generally, publishing outlandish stories to highlight the weak American policy toward Japan. One such piece was a satirical letter originally distributed in the *Cleveland Plaindealer* by “some wag,” which hypothesized what the Japanese actually thought about Americans. In it, the Emperor of Japan, called “Twang Twangky, Emperor of the Faithful,” mocked the American ambassadors that Washington had sent thus far: “I and my six thousand wives have been laughing all the morning at his queer bob-tailed coat, his stovepipe hat, and awkward looking boots.”⁵⁶ This “Emperor” then wrote that he had “taken pity on [the] heathenish condition” of these ambassadors, by making “a Christian of him, and send[ing] him back to his own country as a missionary.”⁵⁷ This implied that even the anti-Christian nation of Japan could spread Christianity better than the bumbling Americans. However, the Emperor preferred to instead spread the mysterious religion native to his own land. Since Americans were

⁵² “American Sailors in Japan,” *North American and United States Gazette*, August 22, 1849, 705.

⁵³ “American Sailors in Japan.”

⁵⁴ “American Sailors in Japan.”

⁵⁵ “American Sailors in Japan.”

⁵⁶ “A Jeu D’Esprit,” *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 28, 1852, 217.

⁵⁷ “A Jeu D’Esprit.”

filled with “besotted ignorance” and had not heard “of the precious book of Snickisnacky, nor bathed in the forgiving stream of Chum-dow-chum,” Japan would “take measures immediately to bring [them] to the true faith.”⁵⁸ In regards to trade, he asked, “why do you bother yourselves with worldly ambitions?”⁵⁹ Finally, the Emperor concluded by commanding President Fillmore to “kiss all your wives for me. Ah, you only have one. Poor d[evil], I have six thousand.”⁶⁰ Aside from being poorly informed about Japan, the real American author of this letter believed that his country’s weakness was highlighted in recent interactions with the Japanese, and that their mocking would continue unless Washington made a display of strength.

The effect of these and other articles, along with Glynn’s activism, was if not entirely securing national *enthusiasm* for another foreign expedition to confront Japan, then at least *acquiescence* from a broad swath of American society. This left wealthy American merchants and government officials with the necessary cover to organize such an adventure, forming the foundations of what would become the Perry mission in 1853.

The Japanese Perspective, Pre-1853

American decision makers believed they had implemented a conciliatory policy toward Japan prior to 1853, but in the face of multiple perceived Japanese insults, their policy changed towards a more aggressive stance. However, only looking at the American context prior to Perry’s endeavor is restrictive. On the other side of the Pacific,

⁵⁸ “A Jeu D’Esprit.”

⁵⁹ “A Jeu D’Esprit.”

⁶⁰ “A Jeu D’Esprit.”

the Japanese people and their government – the *bakufu* and the Shogun – saw a very different reality. It was a reality in which aggressive Western expansionism threatened to bring their country into a pseudo-colonial orbit, much like what had already befallen Japan’s neighbors. Even in the face of these pressures, the Japanese policy toward foreigners was not nearly as antagonistic and inflexible as Americans perceived it, especially in the 1840s. In reality, the Edo *bakufu* actually implemented the opposite process to what Washington had done: a shift from aggression to accommodation, which ultimately made the country vulnerable to American intrusion in 1853.

On the surface, the Japan of the mid-1800s appears to have been little more than a military dictatorship. The Emperor, cloistered in Kyoto and rendered powerless by the shogunate, could not influence any proceedings beyond conducting Shinto rites.⁶¹ The Shogun, theoretically in charge, ruled directly in the years following the Battle of Sekigahara (1600), but like the Emperor, by the 1800s, the position had become a figurehead. Real power was concentrated in the *roju*, the Shogun’s governing council of senior advisors. Japanese society was organized hierarchically, with four hereditary social classes: samurai, farmers, artisans, and merchants, in descending order of the respect each commanded. But while the Tokugawa government did exert substantial control over its subjects’ lives, people still found ways to display autonomy within that system. The lasting legacy of the Tokugawa Period (1600-1868) was its flourishing art and culture, as well as the sense of national identity that developed out of domestic tourism.⁶² Still, while

⁶¹ Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 5. Gordon aptly describes the Imperial institution, after the Heian Period (794-1185) but prior to the Meiji Restoration (1868), as being “of little political consequence.”

⁶² For an excellent analysis of the role of domestic tourism in Tokugawa Japan (as well as a translation of the *Ryoko Yojinshu*, a Japanese travel manual from 1810), see Constantine Vaporis, “Caveat Viator: Advice to Travelers in the Edo Period,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 44, no. 4 (Winter 1989).

Pax Tokugawa was not a traditional totalitarian system, commoners in Japan exerted little influence over the *bakufu*'s policies. This contrasted with the more active role played by American public opinion in U.S. foreign policy.

Japanese perceptions of the “foreign” during the Tokugawa Period remained consistent with the views their ancestors held, which themselves stemmed from the Chinese context. Going back to Japan’s antiquity, the country was part of the Chinese tributary system, in which art, culture, philosophy, and other aspects of life flowed from the more-advanced China. As a result, the Japanese saw the world through an Asia-centric lens. The Chinese were cultured, as was Japan itself, along with other nations within that tributary system. People outside the system – such as Europeans – were viewed as “barbarians”: morally bankrupt beings that were little better than beasts, with no understanding of the essential relationships that governed humanity.⁶³ White foreigners were also physically different from the Japanese. Many of the Europeans who visited Japan had beards, smelled bad due to lack of bathing and their meat- and dairy-heavy diet, and struggled to grasp their host country’s system of social norms and politeness. All of this reinforced preexisting biases that the barbarians were a malignant force whose presence was undesirable.

By the nineteenth century, several authors wrote influential texts espousing these anti-foreign beliefs. One of the most famous of these philosophers was Aizawa Seishisai, whose *New Theses* (1825) argued that Japan was the “Divine Realm” which “rightly

⁶³ Much of this was based on traditional Confucian beliefs, which had also spread to Japan from China over the past millennia. By the time of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the government cemented its legitimacy through a modernization of those beliefs known as Neo-Confucianism, which placed a heavy emphasis on hierarchy and decorum. Western nations frequently did not acknowledge the importance of Neo-Confucian concepts like filial piety, which caused friction in negotiation with the Japanese.

constitutes the head and shoulders of the world and controls all nations.”⁶⁴ The “loathsome Western barbarians” sought to challenge this position of divine authority, “unmindful of their base position as the lower extremities of the world.”⁶⁵ Aizawa then plainly posited in response: “What manner of insolence is this?”⁶⁶

Complementing and enhancing the Neo-Confucian view of foreign barbarians was the Tokugawa government’s policy of *sakoku*, the “closed country,” referring to national isolation. Originally implemented in the 1630s by Tokugawa Iemitsu, *sakoku* was conceived as a way to restrict Christianity. The religion of the barbarians came to Japan a century prior via the Portuguese, during a period of civil war. By the late 1500s, the warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi cracked down on the influence of Roman Catholicism, as he feared his subjects would be more loyal to the Pope than himself. After Hideyoshi’s death, the subsequent Tokugawa dynasty continued his suppression of Christianity, culminating in the anti-foreign edicts passed by Iemitsu in the 1630s. By 1638, the shogunate had expelled the last of the Catholic European powers from Japanese soil.⁶⁷

The shogunate’s system of isolation from the majority of the world persisted more-or-less intact for almost two centuries; by the start of the 1800s, however, cracks in that system began to show. Specifically, the problem came from Czarist Russia, which had systematically expanded into the Far East. Russian territorial claims stretched to the Kuril Islands and Sakhalin, immediately north of Hokkaido, which itself was only nominally controlled by Edo.⁶⁸ The Czar sent multiple expeditions to make diplomatic

⁶⁴ Aizawa Seishisai, “Shinron (New Theses),” in *The Japanese Discovery of America: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Peter Duus (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1997), 52.

⁶⁵ Aizawa, “New Theses,” 52.

⁶⁶ Aizawa, “New Theses,” 52.

⁶⁷ Owing to the fact that they were Protestant, the Dutch remained in Nagasaki and continued a limited trading role there.

⁶⁸ George Lensen, *Russia’s Japan Expedition of 1852 to 1855* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press,

overtures toward Japan, but the shogunate rebuffed these in 1805. Insulted, the Russian government authorized the use of more coercive measures, and from 1806 to 1807, Russian ships conducted raids along the coast of Hokkaido.⁶⁹ These terrorized the Japanese colonists living there and, feeling vulnerable, the government in Edo consolidated its direct control over the island. These intrusions, coupled with an increasingly visible and threatening British presence in Asia, forced the *bakufu* to redouble its isolation policy to keep the foreigners at bay.⁷⁰

Important to note is that, in the face of these Russian and British intrusions, the shogunate in Edo did not have a foreign policy apparatus that was prepared to deal with them. Theoretically, under *sakoku*, diplomats – as understood by Westerners – were not necessary. Japan’s relationships with other Asian countries (primarily China and Korea) were long standing and well defined: therefore, diplomacy largely consisted of sending embassies to notify these countries of changes in the shogunate’s leadership, followed by a resumption of trade.⁷¹ As for Edo’s relationship with Holland, the Dutch traders were confined to a small artificial island at Nagasaki, and only numbered some “eight or ten Netherlanders.”⁷² The trade between Japan and Holland was described as a “courtesy barter trade,” the rules of which were established back in the 1630s.⁷³ Once again, this

1955), XXIV.

⁶⁹ Lensen, *Russia’s Japan Expedition*, XXII.

⁷⁰ In 1808, roughly contemporaneous with the Russian expeditions, the British warship *Phaeton* attacked Dutch representatives at Nagasaki. The Japanese government was unable to respond due to a lack of firepower, embarrassing the government. See “A Bakufu Expulsion Edict,” in *The Japanese Discovery of America: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Peter Duus (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1997), 57.

⁷¹ Tashiro Kazui and Susan Downing Videen, “Foreign Relations During the Edo Period: Sakoku Reexamined,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 8, no. 2 (Summer 1982), 286. Kazui and Videen even go so far as to state that these relationships persisted unchanged since “the time of Queen Himiko’s rule over the ancient state of Yamatai,” placing the origins of this trade at around 400-500 CE.

⁷² C.T. Assendelft de Coningh, *A Pioneer in Yokohama: A Dutchman’s Adventures in the New Treaty Port* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2012), 4.

⁷³ de Coningh, *Pioneer in Yokohama*, 5.

trade was consistent, long standing, and clearly defined, which largely negated the need for diplomats to manage day-to-day business. Edo did not have anyone that Westerners would understand to be a formal diplomat until 1858, when Hotta Masayoshi created the rank of *gaikoku-bugyo* (commissioner of foreign affairs) in Perry's wake.⁷⁴

In 1825, the shogunate published a new expulsion decree, popularly known as the "Shell-and-Repel" law.⁷⁵ This policy codified proper procedure in the event that a foreign ship approached "any point on our coast."⁷⁶ An early English translation stated that "should any foreigners land anywhere, they must be arrested or killed, and if the ship approaches the shore it must be destroyed."⁷⁷ The order was certainly draconian in nature. It also accounted for why the Japanese fired on the *Morrison* in 1837, which had so baffled Charles King. While previous Japanese laws strove to keep foreigners out of Japan, it was the "Shell-and-Repel" edict that redoubled the government's commitment to violent enforcement of *sakoku*.

The violence required to enforce "Shell-and-Repel" was not sustainable, however, and the officials of the *bakufu* quickly became aware of this reality. In 1842, the British navy won the First Opium War against the Great Qing government of China. Such an outcome was long considered an impossibility by the Eastern world as historically, Chinese economic, military, and cultural might made it the suzerain power in Asia. Now the barbarian English, after "rampaging willfully and arbitrarily in countries far across

⁷⁴ W.G. Beasley, ed. *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 322.

⁷⁵ George Feifer, *Breaking Open Japan: Commodore Perry, Lord Abe, and American Imperialism in 1853* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 71.

⁷⁶ "A Bakufu Expulsion Edict," 57.

⁷⁷ James Murdoch, *A History of Japan, Volume III* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1903), 528.

the sea,” managed to defeat Japan’s powerful neighbor.⁷⁸ In turn, this exposed Japanese weakness. No longer was it safe to pursue antagonistic policies against the West: doing so would invite similar interventions, potentially resulting in Japan’s colonization and the forcible opening of ports. One notable scholar, Sakuma Shozan, commented on the situation in his *Kaibosaku* (“A Plan for Coastal Defense,” 1842), stating that if Japan persisted with its policies, “the English will take a closer look at the unlawfulness [of the Japanese] who earlier fired on the ship[s] that brought back...castaways.”⁷⁹ The *roju* acknowledged the threat, and repealed “Shell-and-Repel” that same year. Ultimately however, because the *Morrison* had already fallen victim to the law’s uncompromising nature, the damage had already been done to Japan’s reputation in the United States.

The law that replaced “Shell-and-Repel” was drastically different in tone and substance. While it still insisted that, in accordance with Japan’s tradition of seclusion, “all foreign vessels must be driven away,” it stated that interactions with foreigners would henceforth “be taken in a humane spirit.”⁸⁰ No longer would Japanese batteries indiscriminately fire at approaching vessels. Instead, officials would “supply them with food and fuel,” and “act in accordance with the gracious principles of humanity.”⁸¹ In the view of these decision makers, the replacement of “Shell-and-Repel” was a conciliatory policy to the West. Trade was still forbidden, but local officials would resupply ships in a way that was just according to Japan’s Neo-Confucian philosophy. If the West behaved justly in return, foreigners would not return to seek trade, thereby avoiding the problems

⁷⁸ Sakuma Shozan, “Kaibosaku (A Plan for Coastal Defense),” in *The Japanese Discovery of America: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Peter Duus (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1997), 59.

⁷⁹ “A Plan for Coastal Defense,” 59.

⁸⁰ Murdoch, *History of Japan*, 530.

⁸¹ Murdoch, *History of Japan*, 530.

faced by China.

Even though “Shell-and-Repel” was replaced by a more palatable law, the previously mentioned *Lawrence* and *Lagoda* incidents show that tensions between the United States and Japan were still high in the mid-to-late 1840s. The reason for this centers around the fact that the shipwrecked sailors exaggerated the story of how harshly they were treated. The testimony of Ranald MacDonald, another American who was imprisoned in Nagasaki at the same time as the *Lagoda* prisoners, suggests as much. Throughout the diary he maintained in captivity, MacDonald wrote about how he was never abused by his captors and even that he valued their “comfort and sustaining companionship.”⁸² MacDonald stated that he was “well fed, kindly attended, and amply supplied with all conveniences,” and that he even befriended an official named Moriyama Einosuke, whom he taught English.⁸³ The *Lagoda* prisoners certainly suffered more than MacDonald, but this was because they repeatedly made escape attempts, earning the ire of the guards in the process. From the Japanese perspective, these men broke seclusion laws by escaping confinement; therefore, they lost the privileges afforded MacDonald and were treated as criminals instead. The Japanese guards were not saints, and MacDonald did attest that some abuses were inflicted on other Americans, but these were just that, abuses not intended as official policy. Perhaps MacDonald’s interpretation of Japan could have become the prevailing one back in the United States. However, upon his release, he took a side trip to Australia before returning, while the *Lagoda* prisoners immediately went home and published their experiences.

⁸² Ranald MacDonald, *Narrative of the Life of Ranald MacDonald* (Spokane: Inland-American Printing Company, 1923), 232.

⁸³ MacDonald, *Life of Ranald MacDonald*, 173.

Self-Delusion Before Perry

The main precaution the *bakufu* made against foreign incursion was the repeal of “Shell-and-Repel.” Multiple figures urged a more comprehensive approach. The previously mentioned Sakuma Shozan wrote that Japan needed to significantly bolster its coastal defenses with gun batteries “to return fire against the aggression of foreign enemies.”⁸⁴ This was necessary because future Western encroachment was inevitable. Even outsiders offered their opinions. In 1844, William II, King of the Netherlands, sent a letter to the Shogun encouraging him to voluntarily open Japan to foreign trade, or risk the advances of “mighty England...restlessly seeking new channels for...trade.”⁸⁵

The *roju* rejected both approaches: William’s proposal outright, and Sakuma’s in spirit. The Shogun sent a response back to the Netherlands, thanking the King for his concern but reiterating that Japan would not change her ancestral laws at his request. The *roju* did approve the development of some minor coastal defenses, but they did not fully fund the project and construction was slow. This was out of concern that Edo might inadvertently fund rebellion in distant provinces. Several faraway feudal lords may have sworn fealty to the Shogun, but they would have also jumped at the chance to increase their own power at the expense of the national government.⁸⁶ Thus, the capital viewed

⁸⁴ “A Plan for Coastal Defense,” 61.

⁸⁵ William II of the Netherlands, letter to Tokugawa Ieyoshi, February 15, 1844.

⁸⁶ These rebellious *daimyo* were known as *tozama*, and Edo had historically kept them at arm’s length. The *tozama* were the descendants of those families that fought against Tokugawa Ieyasu at the Battle of Sekigahara (Ieyasu’s allies were known as *fudai*). Instead of destroying these powerful clans outright, Ieyasu allowed them to keep their land so long as they pledged loyalty to himself and his successors. The *tozama* had no representation in the *roju*, but made up for this by having full control over their respective territories, which were usually quite distant from Edo. Satsuma (governed by the Shimazu family) and Choshu (governed by the Mori) were two of the most famous examples of domains governed by *tozama*. See Romulus Hillsborough, *Samurai Revolution: The Dawn of Modern Japan Seen Through the Eyes of the Shogun’s Last Samurai* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 2014), 13.

providing arms and defenses to those domains skeptically.

Japanese policy towards Western encroachments, post-1842, seems to have been mostly based in self-delusion. The government in Edo, reeling from the shock of the Opium War in China, was paralyzed by competing visions of how to proceed, all of which would have required massive social upheaval. Being passive looked like a good option. Without the deliberately combative “Shell-and-Repel” in place, Japan could politely but firmly turn away Western countries. It worked in 1846 with Commodore Biddle, which renewed the *bakufu*’s hope that the foreign barbarians could be managed indefinitely. Dissenters, like the “students of Dutch learning” (*rangakusha*) who were self-educated about the West through Dutch books, and samurai reformers like Sakuma Shozan, were silenced by the government to preserve an illusion of unity. This precarious sense of peace and false sense of invulnerability were the context of the Japanese experience before Perry’s arrival in 1853. In an inversion of the American perception, the Japanese decision makers acknowledged that they had first pursued an overly aggressive policy toward foreigners, but also genuinely believed that policy had changed toward accommodation after 1842. Unfortunately for the shogunate, the United States did not see the situation similarly.

III. THE PERRY EXPEDITION

Introduction and Historiography

The expedition of Commodore Matthew C. Perry to Japan is more accurately described as two separate missions. The first, taking place in 1853, was one of initial contact, in which the Commodore's primary task was to deliver a letter from President Millard Fillmore to the Emperor of Japan that outlined American objectives. The second intended to follow-up on that contact: Perry returned in 1854 with a larger fleet to obtain the Japanese government's response, and to negotiate a treaty between the two nations.

Further subdivision of the expedition, based on geography, is possible as well. Neither mission simply consisted of Perry meeting with Japanese officials at a single, fixed location. Instead, there were multiple points of contact, including the Ryukyu Islands, Edo Bay, and the remote ports of Shimoda and Hakodate. At each location, members of Perry's crew interacted with diverse swaths of Japanese society, from high-ranking officials to lowly peasants. For the modern reader, this means that there are numerous interactions that can be explored to determine American and Japanese approaches to diplomacy at this key phase in their relationship.

Commodore Perry's diplomacy – and, by extension, broader American policy – centered around coercion and intimidation, stopping just short of military confrontation. While his warships afforded the Commodore a superior negotiating hand, he stumbled at key junctures and failed to press his advantage, especially during the 1854 voyage. When pushed back by his Japanese counterparts, he adopted more conciliatory measures or

backed down from certain demands entirely. Nevertheless, the power imbalance in Perry's favor allowed him to achieve many of his goals by the time his "black ships" departed. Conflict, it appears, was integral to the American approach.

Japanese methods centered around a delicate balancing act of pacifying the Americans, while keeping concessions to a minimum. When U.S. demands were too onerous or embarrassing for the government in Edo, the Shogun's negotiators delayed as long as they could before answering. This strategy was predominant throughout the expedition, although in 1854 the Japanese reclaimed some agency through the use of persuasive moral arguments. Still, their overall diplomatic strategy centered around limiting conflict, stemming from a power imbalance that worked against the shogunate.

The Perry Expedition has an extensive historiography. One of the earliest English works was Ernest Satow's translation of the *Kaikoku Shidan*, entitled *Japan 1853-1864, or Genji Yume Monogatari*, which viewed Perry's arrival through the lens of the *bakufu*.⁸⁷ This included the testimonies of key figures like Tokugawa Nariaki and Abe Masahiro, who served on the *roju*. In 1891, Nitobe Inazo, a Japanese scholar and diplomat, discussed Perry's voyage in his book *The Intercourse Between the United States and Japan*. Other key works include Arthur Walworth's *Black Ships Off Japan* (1946), published in the aftermath of World War II, and Peter Booth Wiley's *Yankees in the Land of the Gods* (1990), which was critical of American motivations for visiting Japan in the first place. Samuel Eliot Morison's biography *Old Bruin* (1967) contrasts with Wiley, presenting a more sympathetic portrayal of the Commodore.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Satow served as a translator for the British Legation in Japan under Sir Harry Parkes from 1862-1869. He eventually published the *Genji Yume Monogatari* in the West in 1905, which is the version I am using.

⁸⁸ What this chapter contributes, then, is a modern interpretation of the Perry Expedition, providing context for the evolving U.S.–Japan relationship that is explored in later chapters.

One of the reasons for the focus on Perry in scholarly writing is due to the wealth of available primary sources. There are two accounts directly from the Commodore: his *Narrative of the Expedition to the China Seas and Japan, 1852-1854*, which was actually compiled by an author named Francis Hawks under Perry's supervision, and *The Personal Journal of Commodore Matthew C. Perry*. Both works were heavily edited after the fact, meaning their tone and language better reflect what Perry *wanted* the mission to have been, rather than what it actually was. Still, they remain an important window into the Commodore's mindset.

Other accounts of the expedition were also subject to Perry's editorializing. Once the ships had set sail, one of the Commodore's first orders required that "whatever notes or drawings may be prepared by the officers or other persons...will be...transmitted...to the Commander-in-chief, who will...lodge them at the Navy Department."⁸⁹ However, some members escaped censorship, either by keeping their diaries hidden or by having the Commodore's express permission to write what they wanted. Samuel Wells Williams, the same missionary from King's voyage, was among the latter, since he was brought on as a civilian. As such, his account spoke freely and critically of the Commodore. On the other hand, Edward Yorke McCauley, an acting-master aboard the *Powhatan*, kept his diary a secret. Looking at it today provides an unfettered account of a young officer who took the unfolding events less seriously than did his superiors.

Japanese sources are also numerous, with many relevant foreign policy documents translated in W.G. Beasley's *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (1955). Scholars have also preserved the impressions of average Japanese

⁸⁹ Matthew Perry, *The Personal Journal of Commodore Matthew C. Perry* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1968), 8.

people toward the visiting Americans, usually in the form of art created by amateur observers. Many of these are gathered in Oliver Statler's *The Black Ship Scroll* (1963).

This chapter re-evaluates the extant evidence to focus specifically on the diplomatic elements of the Perry Expedition. As part of the larger thesis, this chapter will illustrate the conflict and tension inherent in the Commodore's style of diplomacy, and how this was traumatic for the Tokugawa Shogunate. In turn, this will set the Perry Expedition as the baseline for how relations between the United States and Japan would eventually improve over the coming decades.

Origins of the Mission

In the wake of Commander Glynn's 1849 mission to Japan, popular sentiment had built to the point where another, more forceful mission to the country was a viable diplomatic option. The main push, though, still came from business interests. Perhaps the most important figure was Aaron Haight Palmer, a wealthy merchant from New York who aggressively lobbied for Glynn's vision of a Japan that was open to Western trade. Palmer was not interested in Japan exclusively; instead, he saw the country as one of many cogs in a larger scheme to profit off the wealth of Asia. His background was in the China trade, although he also sought to develop interests in India, Siberia, and Manchuria.⁹⁰ Japan represented a gate to those distant locales. Upon the Glynn mission's return, Palmer sent letters to his contacts in the State Department and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs praising Glynn's conduct, stating that he "appears to have

⁹⁰ Aaron Haight Palmer, *Documents and Facts Illustrating the Origin of the Mission to Japan* (Washington: H. Polkinhorn, 1857), 7-8.

accomplished his mission with the characteristic promptitude, energy, and determination of an American naval officer.”⁹¹ The U.S. government could capitalize on that momentum, and should send a squadron to push for “the opening of certain ports of the empire...to American commerce...the privilege of establishing coaling stations...and also to trade.”⁹² A treaty might then be pursued, modeled after the Treaty of Wanghia with China.

Palmer’s arguments were detailed and well-reasoned, indicating that this was not the passing fancy of a neophyte who did not understand the obstacles in his way. He called attention to Japan’s weak coastal batteries, stating that “most of their forts are of painted canvass...and they are quite inexpert in the use of artillery.”⁹³ Without “a single vessel of war,” the country would be powerless to stop American navy ships from taking rice-transporting boats hostage, thereby starving Edo into submission.⁹⁴ Palmer stated that he did not want things to come to that; however, he also argued that demands for trade should be considered an “ultimatum on the part of the shogun,” and “in the event of non-compliance” American ships could enforce “proceedings of a compulsory nature.”⁹⁵ Perhaps to give the government cover for such warlike action, he also insisted that “the people in Japan, in general, are known to be friendly and well disposed towards foreigners...but are prevented doing so openly for fear of their rulers and the law.”⁹⁶ Overall, Palmer’s arguments consistently circled back to the idea that Japan “must...be compelled...to succumb to the progressive commercial spirit of the age,” and that this

⁹¹ Palmer, *Documents and Facts*, 11.

⁹² Palmer, *Documents and Facts*, 12.

⁹³ Palmer, *Documents and Facts*, 13.

⁹⁴ Palmer, *Documents and Facts*, 13.

⁹⁵ Palmer, *Documents and Facts*, 13.

⁹⁶ Palmer, *Documents and Facts*, 19.

could only be guaranteed by the threat of American cannon.⁹⁷

Palmer and Glynn's lobbying efforts doubly pressured decision makers in Washington, most importantly Secretary of State Daniel Webster. The Secretary of State was in his twilight years (he would later die in office in October 1852) and was not particularly interested in Japan. He did seek coal and coaling stations, however, describing the mineral as "a gift of Providence, deposited, by the Creator of all things in the depths of the Japanese Islands, for the benefit of the human family."⁹⁸ By mid-1851, Webster's desire for Japanese coal caused him to support Palmer's plan, even though he doubted a treaty could actually be concluded with the reclusive nation. He was so hungry for the mineral that he was even willing to forego one: "should, however, the Government of Japan persist in following out its system of exclusiveness, you might perhaps induce them, to consent of the transportation of the coal...to a neighboring island...avoiding thus the necessity of an intercourse."⁹⁹

Webster approached Captain John Aulick, commander of the U.S. East India Squadron, whom he desired to lead the expedition. The two determined that Aulick would deliver a letter from President Fillmore to the Emperor of Japan, and would also bring some shipwrecked Japanese sailors in order to repatriate them. He would go "accompanied by an imposing naval force" but would behave in a way that assured "the kindly disposition" of the Japanese towards Americans.¹⁰⁰ In his instructions to Captain

⁹⁷ Palmer, *Documents and Facts*, 19.

⁹⁸ Daniel Webster, "Letter to John Aulick," in *The Papers of Daniel Webster, Diplomatic Papers 2, 1850-1852*, ed. Kenneth Shewmaker and Kenneth Stevens (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987), 291.

⁹⁹ Webster, "Letter to John Aulick," 291.

¹⁰⁰ Daniel Webster, "Letter to William Alexander Graham," in *The Papers of Daniel Webster, Diplomatic Papers 2, 1850-1852*, ed. Kenneth Shewmaker and Kenneth Stevens (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987), 288.

Aulick, Webster included no mention of coercion if the Japanese government refused to comply. Instead, their correspondence reads as though the outcome of open trade was a foregone conclusion: “the moment is near, when the last link in the chain of oceanic steam-navigation is to be formed.”¹⁰¹ Ambiguity governed the tone of President Fillmore’s letter to the Emperor of Japan: while the President called the Emperor his “Great & Good Friend” in his salutation, he also cryptically remarked that American ships “can now reach the shores of your happy land in less than twenty days,” due to recent advances in steam technology.¹⁰² The letter itself gave equal importance to commerce and the kindly treatment of American shipwreck victims, in terms of what the United States desired out of Japan.

Commodore Perry’s Entry

The Japan Expedition had already begun along the lines dictated by Webster and Aulick before Matthew Perry’s name ever entered into the conversation. Captain Aulick left aboard the *Susquehanna* on June 8, 1851, headed for China, where he intended to assemble his full fleet. However, upon arriving in East Asian waters, U.S. officials contacted him and informed the Captain that he was removed from command for an unrelated diplomatic mishap.¹⁰³ Abruptly, the Japan Expedition was left without a leader, and, unwilling to lose the momentum that had already been generated, the Navy’s high

¹⁰¹ Webster, “Letter to John Aulick,” 290.

¹⁰² Millard Fillmore, “Letter to the Emperor of Japan,” in *The Papers of Daniel Webster, Diplomatic Papers 2, 1850-1852*, ed. Kenneth Shewmaker and Kenneth Stevens (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987), 289.

¹⁰³ Wiley, *Yankees*, 101.

command scrambled to find a successor. Commodore Perry's name was floated, and in a letter marked January 12, 1852, President Fillmore formally inquired if Perry would accept the position.¹⁰⁴ Perry had not been consulted prior, and in fact, he had *not* wanted such a command. The East Asia Squadron was small, and the position did not come with a great deal of prestige. Once he found out that he was under consideration for the expedition, the Commodore voiced these objections, but Webster had already given his approval. In a later letter, the Secretary of State remarked that "if the Commodore had made known his wishes" earlier, "they could have been readily accomplished."¹⁰⁵ Despite his objections, Perry was not one to refuse an order and grudgingly accepted the command, becoming Aulick's replacement.

A brief sketch of Matthew C. Perry's personal history is critical to understanding his motivations and objectives for the Japan Expedition. The future Commodore was born in 1794 in Newport, Rhode Island, to a well-off Quaker family that lived in the region since the early 1600s.¹⁰⁶ His family was intertwined with the Navy: his brother Oliver Hazard Perry earned glory during the War of 1812, and Perry himself served in the same conflict and was promoted to acting lieutenant.¹⁰⁷ Over the coming decades, Perry rose in rank, both in the Navy and socially. His 1814 marriage to Jane Slidell gave him

¹⁰⁴ Millard Fillmore, "Letter to Daniel Webster," in *The Papers of Daniel Webster, Diplomatic Papers 2, 1850-1852*, ed. Kenneth Shewmaker and Kenneth Stevens (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987), 298.

¹⁰⁵ Daniel Webster, "Letter to Samuel Jaudon," in *The Papers of Daniel Webster, Diplomatic Papers 2, 1850-1852*, ed. Kenneth Shewmaker and Kenneth Stevens (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987), 298.

¹⁰⁶ Samuel Eliot Morison, *Old Bruin: Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), 4. Perry's father, Christopher, abandoned the pacifism of the Quakers when he served as a privateer during the Revolutionary War. While the Perry family was not at the apex of New England society, Morison writes that the family had "shrewdness in money matters," and that "nobody has ever heard of a really poor Perry." See Morison, *Old Bruin*, 12.

¹⁰⁷ Morison, *Old Bruin*, 40-41.

connections to business elites in New York, and his sister's marriage to George Rodgers (brother to Commodore John Rodgers) similarly assured his advancement in the Navy. His commands changed frequently. Perry served in faraway locations, including Africa and the Mediterranean, and gained a reputation for extreme discipline and a sense of self-importance. Sailors described him as "a terror to the ignorant and lazy," being "bluff, positive and stern on duty."¹⁰⁸ This haughtiness developed alongside his own rapidly rising star. When back in the United States, Perry served in various naval academies and promoted the modernization of the navy at a time when Congress demanded budget cuts. His supervisors eventually listened, and launched the U.S.S. *Fulton*, the navy's first steam frigate, in 1837.¹⁰⁹ Perry believed this was necessary to assure the future of the U.S. Navy in a world dominated by British vessels.

Perry was promoted to Commodore in 1840, and went on to serve in the Mexican-American War, his last major command prior to the Japan Expedition. During that conflict, the Commodore gained a reputation as a supporter of Manifest Destiny, the expansionist ideology of the rapidly growing United States. His naval operations and blockades were essential to both the Siege of Veracruz and the Battle of Tabasco. In the month prior to the latter engagement, Perry wrote that "destiny has doubtless decided that the vast Continent of North America, it should be executed by the Government or people of the United States," and "with such a consideration in view I deemed it politic to take formal possession of the Coatzacoalcas as far up as I ascended, and to invite the submission of the populous towns."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Wiley, *Yankees*, 51.

¹⁰⁹ Wiley, *Yankees*, 54-55.

¹¹⁰ Morison, *Old Bruin*, 228.

This sketch gives us some insight into Perry's values, which would later inform his conduct during the Japan Expedition. His personal sense of self-worth was connected to the prestige of the U.S. Navy, which he had modernized in a world dominated by Old World powers. The Commodore was stern, a disciplinarian, with little tolerance for dissent, and he prioritized ceremony and respect. He distrusted his country's rivals, specifically Britain, and was impatient to leave his mark on the world ahead of those rivals. In order to accomplish this, he was comfortable with imperialism or Manifest Destiny as a method to advance his goals.¹¹¹

As one of the highest-ranking officers in the U.S. Navy, some evidence suggests that Perry was involved in the preparation of the Japan Expedition before his appointment as its leader, back when Aulick was still in charge. Wiley suggests that his importance even equaled what was exerted by Palmer and Glynn. A notable piece of evidence is a letter from Perry to Secretary of the Navy William Graham, dated January 27, 1851. In it, Perry advised that "the real object of the expedition should be concealed from public view, under a general understanding, that its main purpose will be...the opening to [American whaling ships] of new ports of refuge and refreshment."¹¹² While this letter did not explicitly state the actual motivations of the expedition to Japan, the reader can assume that Perry desired something less palatable to both the American and Japanese publics, hence the need for secrecy. The simplest explanation would be some kind of economic domination or influence over Japan, if not a more direct form of imperialism.

Regardless of his role in planning, we know that Perry had not wanted to lead the

¹¹¹ Or, at least the *threat* of imperialist domination.

¹¹² Matthew Perry, "Letter to William Alexander Graham," in *The Papers of William Alexander Graham, Volume IV, 1851-1856*, ed. William Alexander Graham (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1961), 16.

expedition himself. Why did he accept the role? The Commodore's decision was probably not motivated by humanitarianism or a significant interest in expanding trade. What appears more likely is that Perry wanted to insist upon American naval honor and prestige, and, in doing so, enhance and guarantee his own. This is suggested in his writings in regards to Commodore Biddle. In his journal, Perry insisted that his methods would be "an entirely contrary plan of proceedings from that of all others who had hitherto visited Japan on the same errand."¹¹³ He would "demand as a right and not to solicit as a favor those acts of courtesy which are due from one civilized nation to another," not so subtly disparaging the conduct of his predecessor. Perry also despised the Dutch traders at Nagasaki, stating that they had "stopped at nothing, however dishonorable, or degrading to their national character, to effect their object" of economic gain, in contrast to the hardline stance he wanted to pursue.¹¹⁴

Washington authorized Commodore Perry to write his own orders to govern his conduct during the Japan Expedition. Scholars have made a great show of how this was a unique opportunity for Perry to unleash his tyrannical nature, but in reality, this was not an abnormal situation for U.S. naval officers. When sailing in remote waters, officials needed flexibility to respond to rapidly changing conditions. Since Japan was distant from the reach of American power, requiring Washington's approval for every decision would have been overly cumbersome. Thus, Perry had broad authority to conduct the mission as he chose.

In these orders to himself, the Commodore listed some standard justifications for the expedition that would have been palatable to the public should they have leaked.

¹¹³ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 92.

¹¹⁴ Perry, "Letter to William Alexander Graham," 18.

Primarily, his orders focused on the humanitarian needs of shipwrecked sailors, both American and Japanese. This was followed with a three-point list of specific goals, including 1) protecting American sailors brought into Japan “by stress of weather,” 2) getting permission for American vessels to resupply, and 3) permission “to enter one or more of their ports” for trade.¹¹⁵ He needed a large fleet to accomplish these goals: “Arguments or persuasion addressed to this people, unless they be seconded by some imposing manifestation of power, will be utterly unavailing.”¹¹⁶ Perry intended to ignore *sakoku* and proceed “with his whole force...to see the emperor in person,” and deliver the letter from Fillmore.¹¹⁷ If he “should fail to obtain from the government any relaxation of their system of exclusion,” then Japan would be “severely chastised.”¹¹⁸

The orders technically discouraged military force, “unless in self defence,” although this was not out of an inherent desire to maintain peaceful relations with the Japanese.¹¹⁹ Rather, because “the President has no power to declare war,” Perry’s mission was “necessarily of a pacific character.”¹²⁰ However, this was not a *prohibition* against military force, should it become necessary. Additionally, Perry gave himself special authorization to respond to “an act of personal violence offered to himself, or one of his officers,” thereby avoiding Commodore Biddle’s ignoble mistake. Perhaps most importantly, there was no requirement that Perry inform the Japanese of any restrictions on his authority, making the *threat* of military force perhaps his best negotiating tool.

¹¹⁵ Franklin Pierce, Executive Document 34, “Message of the President of the United States, Transmitting a Report of the Secretary of the Navy, in Compliance with a Resolution of the Senate of December 6, 1854, Calling for Correspondence, &c., Relative to the Naval Expedition to Japan,” (February 2, 1855): 6.

¹¹⁶ Pierce, “Relative to the Naval Expedition to Japan,” 6.

¹¹⁷ Pierce, “Relative to the Naval Expedition to Japan,” 6.

¹¹⁸ Pierce, “Relative to the Naval Expedition to Japan,” 7-8.

¹¹⁹ Pierce, “Relative to the Naval Expedition to Japan,” 8.

¹²⁰ Pierce, “Relative to the Naval Expedition to Japan,” 8.

Finally, Perry's orders stated that, because it was impossible "to provide for every contingency" in written instructions, the Commodore was "invested with large discretionary powers, and should feel assured that any departure from usage...will be viewed with indulgence."¹²¹ In effect, Perry used this phrasing to give himself carte blanche to conduct any style of diplomacy he thought appropriate, regardless of the letter or spirit of any of his previous orders.

Commodore Perry desired the expedition to "be strictly naval, untrammelled by the interference of diplomatic agents."¹²² While he did hire some civilians, such as Samuel Wells Williams, of the approximately 1900 people aboard the ten ships which comprised the expedition, there were no professional diplomats included, and the vast majority of participants were sailors or military officers.¹²³ Acting-Master McCauley noted in his diary that these sailors were subject to constant drilling during the voyage, remarking that "we are exercising from morning till night, one day small arms, next day pistols & swords, next great guns," etc.¹²⁴ This suggests that Perry at least desired the appearance of a military operation for his expedition, and did not terribly value the contributions of the civilian world to this endeavor.

¹²¹ Pierce, "Relative to the Naval Expedition to Japan," 8.

¹²² Perry, "Letter to William Alexander Graham," 20.

¹²³ Arthur Walworth, *Black Ships Off Japan: The Story of Commodore Perry's Expedition* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1946), Appendix A.

¹²⁴ Edward Yorke McCauley, *With Perry in Japan: The Diary of Edward Yorke McCauley* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942), 73.

Setting the Stage in the Ryukyus

The Perry Expedition formally began with the departure of the Commodore aboard the U.S.S. *Mississippi* on November 24, 1852, from Norfolk, Virginia.¹²⁵ From the East Coast, the *Mississippi* sailed further east, crossing the Atlantic before proceeding beneath the Cape of Good Hope, across the Indian Ocean and through the Strait of Malacca. On April 7, 1853, Perry arrived at the British-controlled port of Hong Kong, where he spent two months waiting for the rest of his fleet.¹²⁶ It was during this lull that the Commodore supplemented his crew with specialists, including Wells Williams, who would serve as his translator. Once these preparations were complete, the American fleet finally departed for Japan on May 23 from an anchorage just outside Shanghai.

Three days later the first diplomatic contact of the mission took place. Perry's fleet landed at Naha, the port of the nominally-independent Ryukyu Islands.¹²⁷ The Okinawans living there were *not* Japanese, but their overlords, who kept a close eye on them, were. The island chain had been functionally a Japanese protectorate under the control of the Satsuma domain since the early 1600s. However, the Okinawans still maintained significant trade and cultural contacts with China, and Edo was reluctant to formally claim the islands out of fear of provoking a response from the Asian mainland.

¹²⁵ Wiley, *Yankees*, 119. The other ships which comprised the American fleet departed on their own schedules, as was the case for the *Powhatan* on February 13, 1853, sailing out of Philadelphia. See McCauley, *Diary of Edward Yorke McCauley*, 35. Others, such as the *Susquehanna*, were already operating in Asian waters, and linked up with the Commodore upon his arrival in China.

¹²⁶ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 53.

¹²⁷ The Americans consistently referred to the Ryukyus as "Lew Chew," however, they also acknowledged their confusion towards any proper spelling. An agreed-upon Romanization of the name did not exist yet. I will use "Ryukyu" or "Okinawa" interchangeably, although all quotes will retain their original spelling. Please know that "Okinawa" did not become a common name for the region until 1879 when the islands were colonized into a Japanese prefecture. However, due to that name's modern ubiquity, I saw fit to use it here for convenience.

Upon touching down in Naha, Perry is quoted as being “prepared to interpose a little Yankee diplomacy” with the Okinawans, ominously suggesting that, due to the power imbalance, subsequent talks would be more demands than negotiations.¹²⁸

The first diplomatic salvo was initiated by the anxious Ryukyuan leadership. On the day of Perry’s arrival, local officials sent presents to the *Susquehanna* as a gift of welcoming.¹²⁹ While available records do not specify what these presents were, we can assume they consisted of trinkets and novelties for the higher-ranking American officers, and supplies for the ships. This was standard procedure for the Okinawans, reflective of their traditional diplomatic practice. As a tiny island nation at the crossroads of the East Asian powers, Ryukyuan diplomacy centered around appeasement. When negotiating with China or Japan, the Okinawans did so as an inferior tributary state. Antagonism was futile: therefore, the fastest way to rid the tiny kingdom of potential threats was to provide those powers with what they needed, and encourage them to depart quickly.

Perry did not come looking for tribute, however. The Commodore believed that gifts were an excuse not to engage in commerce, and since one of Perry’s goals was to open Japan to foreign trade, he refused these presents.¹³⁰ Instead, he insisted that his delegation pay for any gifts instead. He sent his representatives ashore to tell “the local magistrate of Napa [Naha]...the reason why the presents...were refused.”¹³¹ However, he did not explain any more details to the Okinawan government about why his fleet was there or what he did want. Commodore Perry instead waited another day aboard his

¹²⁸ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 61.

¹²⁹ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 61.

¹³⁰ Perry did some preparation before the trip, having consulted the few extant records available in Western libraries about Japanese culture and diplomacy. It is possible that he was aware the Okinawans would try the gift-giving gesture first, although there is no direct evidence to confirm this.

¹³¹ Samuel Wells Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition to Japan (1853-1854)* (Providence: Kelly & Walsh, 1910), 8.

flagship in an attempt to convey his authority by making himself as exclusive as possible. It fell to the Ryukyuan leadership to try a more direct approach.

On May 28, the regent of the Okinawan throne, a man named Shang-ta-mu, visited the American flagship to try and meet with the Commodore. Due to the Regent's high rank, Perry accepted the meeting. His subordinate officers showed the Regent around the ship, and the Commodore subsequently spoke with him in his cabin. Communication between the two was "very slow and...tedious" due to their mutual need for interpreters.¹³² At the meeting's conclusion, Perry made his first demand of the voyage: the Regent "should be ready to return the visit on the 6th proximo at the capital in Shui [Shuri]."¹³³ From the Commodore's perspective, mutual respect between nations demanded that he receive an audience at Shuri Castle, the Okinawan seat of government. Anything less would constitute an insult against his nation.

This demand was extremely problematic for the Okinawans. The prince was still a minor, and his mother was sickly; therefore, any visit by the Americans to Shuri could constitute a major shock to them. Perhaps more important for the Regent was what the Japanese representatives on the island would think if the Ryukyus provided Perry with this reception. Doing so would clearly be breaking national seclusion.¹³⁴ Faced with this untenable demand, and the threatening foreign ships in Naha harbor, the Regent proceeded with another variation on Ryukyuan diplomacy: being excessively humble. The Regent described the Ryukyus as "contemptible and beneath notice," not deserving

¹³² Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 11.

¹³³ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 10.

¹³⁴ An earlier British visit to Okinawa also demanded a visit to Shuri Castle. When the Okinawans capitulated, the Japanese representatives to the islands were extremely incensed, and there were consequences for Ryukyuan leadership that the Regent likely wanted to avoid a second time.

of the grandeur of a reception by the American Commodore.¹³⁵ However, Perry rejected this approach too. “Propriety” demanded he be received at Shuri by the royal family, as a reflection of the dignity of his delegation.¹³⁶

Left with little alternative, the Okinawan regent finally suggested that his government hold a reception banquet at Naha Town Hall for the Americans, which was much closer and more convenient than Shuri Castle. However, Perry did not budge in his demand.¹³⁷ There was little else the Regent could do, and he reluctantly conceded to the meeting at the castle. Seemingly satisfied, the Commodore threw a small party aboard his ship in honor of the Ryukyuan negotiators, but his guests had “such a melancholy set of faces, fixed, grave and sad, as if going to execution,” and did not appear to have enjoyed the festivities.¹³⁸

This dispute over the meeting at Shuri Castle illustrated the general diplomatic styles of the Americans and the Okinawans, while also clearly indicating who held the initiative. American diplomacy was based on intimidation: Perry refused to accommodate any of what the Regent wanted, and forcefully pushed his own demands. There is little doubt he was able to do so because of the intimidating presence his ships represented. The fleet highlighted American military might, and the possibility that negotiations could be backed up with force. Okinawan diplomacy was more passive out of necessity. The Regent tried to conduct a balancing act: give the Americans what they want (but as little

¹³⁵ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 10.

¹³⁶ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 10.

¹³⁷ Despite Perry’s blunt rejection, the Okinawans still held the banquet on June 2, although whether or not they seriously believed the Commodore would attend is in doubt. Local officials likely hoped to guilt Perry into leaving their islands by pointing out this rudeness, but Wells Williams explained that Perry did not attend because he had not received a written invitation, as demanded by Western diplomatic norms.

¹³⁸ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 11.

of that as possible), and hope they leave. Antagonism was futile and incredibly risky. Unfortunately for the Okinawan side, while passivity avoided dangerous escalation, this approach also encouraged the Americans to press further demands. Once he had browbeaten the Regent, Perry chose to hold a reception and celebrate, something common to the Commodore's diplomatic efforts once he got what he wanted.

The Okinawan government was not completely powerless in the face of American aggression, though. After this first meeting, several American sailors went ashore to explore the remote islands. Wells Williams noted that during this period, Naha officials put up a "surprising...degree of quiet resistance" to their unwelcome presence.¹³⁹ This resistance manifested as the local government discouraging civilians from interacting with Americans as much as possible, in public spaces such as bazaars.¹⁴⁰ While this was not an overt action against the expedition's crew, it did make the American stay uncomfortable. Williams described the situation as the government having "complete sway...over the common people," which allowed officials "to wield what power they have to the best advantage."¹⁴¹ Americans found it difficult or impossible to obtain desired services, as the population retreated into its shell. Japanese officials, who collaborated with the Okinawan government, put up additional roadblocks. U.S. sailors complained about being followed by Japanese "spies" who tailed them closely and monitored their behavior. While these minor inconveniences did not deter Perry from his larger mission, they did cause the Americans considerable frustration.

On Monday, June 6, 1853, the procession to Shuri Castle took place, anticipated

¹³⁹ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 14.

¹⁴⁰ The Okinawan civilians likely participated of their own volition as well, as the "barbarian" American sailors were frequently ill-behaved in public.

¹⁴¹ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 14-15.

triumphantly by the Americans, dreaded by the Okinawans.¹⁴² Just prior, the Regent submitted a petition to Perry urging him to reconsider, stating that the lives of the prince and queen dowager were threatened by this intrusion on their privacy. However, after conferring with his advisors, Perry was fully convinced that this excuse was a lie, remarking that the petition constituted a “pertinacious system of crooked diplomacy,” full of “falsehood, tricking, and deception.”¹⁴³ He remained undeterred. The procession included two companies of Marines, artillery pieces, and marching music played by brass bands. Using ceremony like this was a key component of Perry’s arsenal of intimidation. The Commodore himself rode in a regal sedan chair, leading the procession of over 200 men up to the castle gates.¹⁴⁴ Okinawan authorities reluctantly guided the Americans.

Upon Commodore Perry’s arrival at the front gate of Shuri Palace, a small contingent of officials headed by the Regent awaited him, where they made one final plea for the Americans to stop their advance. An alternative ceremony, one more respectful of the Commodore’s rank and dignity, could be held at the Regent’s residence. But this request was futile: to the tune of “Hail Columbia,” Perry descended from his palanquin to call at the castle. The Regent suggested that the Commodore at least enter through a side gate, but Perry rejected this as well, proceeding through the main gate anyway.

The Americans entered Shuri Castle to find it unoccupied. The prince and queen dowager were absent entirely, although Perry and his subordinates suspected they were just out of sight, watching them through sliding screen doors. The reception was spartan: there was no furniture (chairs had to be brought in), and the refreshments consisted of

¹⁴² Perry, *Personal Journal*, 65.

¹⁴³ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 65.

¹⁴⁴ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 20-21.

only tea and tough gingerbread. There was some brief, tense conversation between the Regent and Perry, during which the Commodore inquired about the queen's health and offered use of his physicians. There was little response: the Okinawans "seemed to have nothing to say to us, but rather [had] to endure our presence."¹⁴⁵ Perry did not push the matter. His main goal in Okinawa was simply to secure the respectful reception he believed was due for a U.S. representative. The delegation soon retired, and with his objective complete, Perry gathered his ships and departed, bringing an end to the first major diplomatic encounter of the trip.

If the Okinawans were hoping that they were done with the foreigners, though, they were to be disappointed. After a little more than a week at sea, Perry's ships made their way back to the island chain, regrouping at Naha port.¹⁴⁶ A large number of changes had already occurred within this short period of time. Most prominently, the Regent, Shang-ta-mu, had "retired" from his position, replaced by a younger relative, Shang Hung-hsun. Perry believed that the elder Shang had either "resigned or been deposed," and indeed, Okinawa's Japanese overseers had done the latter.¹⁴⁷ In the eyes of the mainland government, the reception at Shuri was an embarrassment, and they hoped a different regent could better fend off the barbarians.

At this time, though, Perry did not see the need for further negotiations with the Okinawans. The Ryukyus were a vassal state to Japan, and the Commodore understood that he would have more leverage in talks once he gained the consent of the mother

¹⁴⁵ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 22.

¹⁴⁶ Perry spent this time visiting the remote, largely uninhabited Bonin Islands to the east of the Ryukyus. Most of this leg of the trip focused on gathering data about local flora and fauna, and is relatively uninteresting in terms of diplomacy.

¹⁴⁷ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 83.

country. Japan needed to come first. Before leaving, though, Perry penned a letter to the Secretary of the Navy indicating the diplomatic options he was considering. The Commodore theorized that upcoming negotiations with the shogunate in Edo would stall due to Japanese obstinance; therefore, he stated that he would occupy Okinawa with his troops to drag the country back to the negotiating table.¹⁴⁸ This was because “Lew-Chew is a direct and valuable dependency of Japan,” and the government would be unwilling to sacrifice it.¹⁴⁹ For the time being, though, Perry remarked that his fleet had “all the control over [Okinawa] necessary for our present purposes.”¹⁵⁰

The First Visit to Edo Bay, the First Negotiations with Japan

The expedition set sail for Japan proper from Naha on July 2, arriving at Uraga outside Edo Bay on the 8th.¹⁵¹ The Japanese response was immediate. Smaller scout boats, which had been monitoring the American steamers and already reported their presence to Edo, swarmed the larger craft, much like they had done to Commodore Biddle half a decade earlier. This time, though, Commodore Perry was prepared. Reflective of the new, intimidating image of America that he wished to imprint on Japanese minds, the Commodore had chosen different vessels than his predecessor. As expected of the “Father of the Steam Navy,” the American fleet was now steam-powered. Unlike Biddle’s ships, which were driven by the wind and looked recognizable to the Japanese, Perry’s vessels belched black smoke from their centrally-located smokestacks,

¹⁴⁸ Pierce, “Relative to the Naval Expedition to Japan,” 32.

¹⁴⁹ Pierce, “Relative to the Naval Expedition to Japan,” 32.

¹⁵⁰ Pierce, “Relative to the Naval Expedition to Japan,” 32.

¹⁵¹ Now consisting of the *Mississippi*, *Susquehanna*, *Saratoga*, and *Plymouth*.

and had a strange side-wheel propelling them forward. These were the terrifying “black ships” that would go on to become such an integral part of Japan’s national mythology.¹⁵²

Average Japanese citizens living in the towns that dotted Edo Bay soon noticed these unwelcome visitors, and were terrified by their oppressive new forms. Pictorial representations of steamers from this time period emphasized their bizarre construction and black smoke, and often exaggerated them further. Many artists added eerie faces to the bow and stern of the ship which resembled fierce Buddhist demons.¹⁵³ The general public panicked even more when Japanese soldiers stationed on the coast fired rockets into the air to alert the capital. Once that happened, the panic spread to Edo itself. An unnamed physician recalled the rumors that made their way around town: the Americans had sent an invasion fleet, set to “act in a strictly military manner,” and their goal was to “burn down the whole [of] Yedo by bombardment.”¹⁵⁴ The general feeling, the doctor explained, “was as if we were suddenly thrown into the middle of a war.” Commoners throughout the city began “evacuating the young and old of their family, and...their valuable possessions as well, to the country-side,” clogging the roads in an abrupt, massive evacuation.¹⁵⁵

Chaos erupted before the shogunate could even meet with the Americans, perhaps suggesting that Perry’s supposedly peaceful visit had already lost its diplomatic focus.

¹⁵² For a discussion of the Japanese understanding of the “black ships,” see chapter 3 of John Dower’s essay *Black Ships & Samurai*. John Dower, *Black Ships & Samurai: Commodore Perry and the Opening of Japan (1853-1854)* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2008).

¹⁵³ One of the most famous depictions of “black ships” (although not drawn by a firsthand observer) was a woodblock print from 1854 simply titled “American Warship,” which featured these demonic faces. Most drawings done at the scene of Perry’s voyage were done by amateurs, and were frequently of lower quality; although their utility for historians is incomparable. Unknown Artist, *American Warship*, 1854, (Nagasaki Prefecture).

¹⁵⁴ “A Doctor’s Memorandum,” (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1985), 2-3, 4.

¹⁵⁵ “A Doctor’s Memorandum,” 4.

Since it was partially responsible for the confusion (Japanese soldiers had fired off the rockets, after all), Edo took the next steps to calm tensions. The main local authorities chose as representative was Nagashima Saburosuke, the “Vice-Governor” of Uraga, who approached the steamers with a sign reading “Depart Immediately and Dare Not Anchor” in French.¹⁵⁶ Predictably, the Americans ignored this order and remained in place.

Eventually, U.S. officials allowed Nagashima to board the *Susquehanna*, where the Japanese negotiator requested to meet with Perry to ascertain the reason for his presence. The Commodore ruled this possibility out, though: as previously mentioned, he desired to make himself exclusive in order to entice the officials with real power to negotiate directly. Perry would not speak with someone of lower rank. One of Perry’s subordinates explained this to Nagashima, but also clarified why the American ships had come to Japan. The steamers had come to deliver a letter from President Fillmore to the Emperor, and they would not go to Nagasaki to do so. Their intentions were friendly. This official then dismissed Nagashima.

The Japanese delegation regrouped at Uraga, while the Americans remained aboard their ships. A night passed, and on the morning of July 9, Kayama Eizaemon, the police chief of Uraga, went to try to resume talks. He would go presenting himself as the village’s “Governor.” This bit of misrepresentation was a diplomatic tactic the Japanese used frequently: officials either lied about their credentials, or the shogunate temporarily promoted them, in order to get around Perry’s insistence that he only meet with the highest-ranking representatives. This was done in order to expedite negotiations, or to

¹⁵⁶ Wiley, *Yankees*, 290. Nagashima was not actually vice-governor of Uraga, but this was how he presented himself to the Americans. He was actually an official of lower rank. As a reminder, neither Nagashima nor any of the other officials selected by the shogunate to negotiate with Perry had any formal diplomatic training in the Western style.

save face. If lower-ranking officials could be cast as higher-ranking, then the shogunate's actual leaders could avoid meeting with Perry and his subordinates. In turn, this preserved the illusion that the Americans were beneath notice.

Kayama's is one of the voices that is best preserved on the Japanese side. He presented the report of his meetings to the shogunate after the fact, the text of which was later translated into English. Despite presenting himself as Governor, he was still not able to gain an audience with Perry directly, although he did secure a meeting with Commander Franklin Buchanan and Vice-Commander Henry Adams, two of Perry's highest-ranking subordinates.¹⁵⁷ Kayama explained that protocol dictated the Americans travel to Nagasaki and submit the President's letter there, since Edo was not equipped to handle foreign dignitaries. Buchanan and Adams held to the Commodore's line: a visit to Nagasaki was "unthinkable," and if the letter was not received by an appropriately-ranked official somewhere along Edo Bay, "they would directly go to Yedo for its delivery."¹⁵⁸ Afraid that the Americans "were in readiness for the worst to happen," Kayama judged that "the matter would never be settled in a peaceable way unless our government would receive the letter as they desired."¹⁵⁹ The "Governor" of Uruga requested time to consult with authorities in Edo to buy some time, but Buchanan and Adams agreed to wait only three days before they expected a response. Kayama reluctantly consented and returned to shore, where he sent messengers to Edo to inform the *roju*.

While his subordinates had agreed to wait the full three days before proceeding,

¹⁵⁷ Kayama Eizaemon, "Memorandum of Kayama Eizaemon" (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1985), 7.

¹⁵⁸ Kayama, "Memorandum," 7.

¹⁵⁹ Kayama, "Memorandum," 7.

Commodore Perry himself was determined not to adhere to the spirit of the agreement with Kayama. Instead, he wanted to press his advantage. Perry shortly sent some of his smaller ships out, further up Edo Bay, giving the excuse that he wanted to survey the landscape. The Japanese scout boats anxiously followed, but “seeing our men well armed, [they did not] venture to molest them.”¹⁶⁰ These movements represented a significant problem for the Japanese: the country’s geography was a jealously guarded secret, and there was fear that these surveys could inform a military strike by the Americans. This fear was compounded when the Commodore sent the *Mississippi* to monitor the survey ships on July 11, with the steamer coming dangerously close to the capital. It was a deliberately provocative move and Perry admitted privately that he had done so to pressure the Japanese negotiators to respond. Kayama’s superiors subsequently instructed him to return to the American vessels to inquire as to why the *Mississippi* was advancing. According to Perry’s journal, his subordinates explained the survey was necessary to find sufficient anchorage for more convenient negotiations.¹⁶¹ Kayama recorded it differently: Commander Adams instead threatened that the ships were “surveying the depth of water in the Bay in order to prepare for a battle which would become inevitable in case our government would refuse to receive the letter.”¹⁶²

Either way, Kayama pushed back. He insisted that sailing any further “would produce an unfavorable impression on the authorities in Yedo.”¹⁶³ He also suggested that the shogunate was already likely to respond favorably to the American proposal; however, if American pressure persisted, the *roju* might become hostile. Perry’s fleet was

¹⁶⁰ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 94.

¹⁶¹ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 94.

¹⁶² Kayama, “Memorandum,” 11.

¹⁶³ Kayama, “Memorandum,” 11.

needlessly escalating a neutral situation into a conflict. This argument evidently held some sway with Perry's officers, since later that evening, the American surveying ships and the *Mississippi* retreated to Uraga harbor.

According to Samuel Wells Williams, the first major breakthrough of the encounter came the morning of July 12, the next day.¹⁶⁴ At around 10 in the morning, Kayama met again with Perry's negotiators aboard a U.S. vessel, where he stated that the shogunate had responded in the affirmative. The Japanese government's representatives would receive President Fillmore's letter of friendship nearby, not at faraway Nagasaki. This alone was a coup for Perry's expedition, being one of the first significant breaks in Japan's national seclusion in more than two centuries, involving direct acknowledgment of the leader of a (non-Dutch) Western government.

The next diplomatic task for both Perry and the Japanese was ensuring that the resulting exchange of Fillmore's letter went smoothly. The Commodore had not expected a positive response so soon: despite his blustering determination that he could manipulate Japan through threats and coercion, he privately noted that he was "not supposing [Kayama] would so readily accede to [his] demands."¹⁶⁵ Surprisingly though, Kayama had come aboard with fairly generous allowances from his government, in order to preemptively skirt any issues the Americans had with the timing or style of the meeting. The reception would be one suitable for the Commodore's *gravitas*, and he would be received by "a very distinguished personage properly accredited by the Emperor."¹⁶⁶ This

¹⁶⁴ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 54-55.

¹⁶⁵ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 95.

¹⁶⁶ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 96. While there is no direct evidence to confirm this, it is possible that the reception the Japanese had in mind was based in part on Perry's landing at Shuri Castle. The Japanese observers in Okinawa had seen this event take place, and had reported what happened back to Edo in the meantime.

was guaranteed in a certified letter that Kayama delivered which explained that this representative, Ido Iwami-no-Kami, “is of very high rank, equal to that of the lord Admiral.”¹⁶⁷ The reception would take place at nearby Kurihama Beach, which American ships had already surveyed. Perhaps most surprisingly, the reception would be quite soon, on the 14th.¹⁶⁸ The Americans readily accepted each of these points, and then allowed Kayama and the other negotiators to tour the ship.

Even though the Japanese had already made several concessions, Perry still imposed one more surprise demand before Kayama’s departure. The Commodore’s subordinates took this opportunity to inform him about the existence of a second letter, written by Perry himself and also intended for the Emperor, to supplement Fillmore’s. This time, Perry wanted to bring his own letter to Edo directly, and would not settle for Kurihama Beach. Furious, Kayama wrote in his report that he was totally blindsided: “they should have made such a proposal from the start,” he insisted, clarifying that “it was a breach of promise to raise a fresh issue after they had heard our decision to receive their King’s letter.”¹⁶⁹ By tacking on this additional demand, Kayama pointed out to the Americans that they now risked failure, as the location of the ceremony was a “life-and-death problem” for the shogunate.¹⁷⁰ Both sides eventually agreed upon a compromise: the shogunate would receive Perry’s letter, but would do so at Kurihama, not Edo.

The landing at Kurihama Beach took place as scheduled on the morning of July 14, 1853. Once again, Perry treated this landing as a military operation: he was supported

¹⁶⁷ Kayama, “Memorandum,” 11.

¹⁶⁸ Kayama, “Memorandum,” 11.

¹⁶⁹ Kayama, “Memorandum,” 12. Since the Japanese did not have a democratic tradition, Kayama was referring to President Fillmore when he wrote “king,” not Perry.

¹⁷⁰ Kayama, “Memorandum,” 13.

by about 300-400 subordinates, including 112 Marines who were heavily armed.¹⁷¹

About 40 musicians played festive music. Both American letters were brought ashore contained in “magnificent rosewood boxes,” which Perry considered to be “splendid specimens of American workmanship,” and they were carried “by a couple of tall jet-black Negroes, completely armed.”¹⁷²

The Japanese delegation also treated the landing at Kurihama as a military operation. Perry recorded in his diary that the shogunate deployed “five to seven thousand drawn up under arms,” coming from several domains.¹⁷³ Their weaponry was outdated by Western standards: the most well-equipped carried flint muskets or matchlocks, while others used bows or wielded spears on horseback. Still, their numbers made the receiving Japanese an intimidating sight for the Americans. Once Perry’s landing party had come ashore, there was tension between the sides throughout the entire encounter. Neither felt entirely comfortable with the intentions of the other, and there were a great deal of troops and weapons present. Wells Williams remarked that “any treachery on [the Japanese] part would have met a serious revenge,” while Kayama stated that the Americans advanced “as if they had been marching into an enemy territory.”¹⁷⁴

The Japanese received Perry’s delegation in what Williams described as a “hut set up on the beach...the whole inclosed [sic] by white and blue striped curtains hanging from poles,” which had been built specifically for the occasion.¹⁷⁵ The Commodore and his negotiators proceeded inside, where they met the two Japanese officials assigned to

¹⁷¹ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 59.

¹⁷² Perry, *Personal Journal*, 98.

¹⁷³ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 98.

¹⁷⁴ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 61. Kayama, “Memorandum,” 15.

¹⁷⁵ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 59.

meet with them. They were Toda Izu-no-Kami and Ido Iwami-no-Kami, the two men who had been giving Kayama Eizaemon his orders thus far. Further information about these two men is limited; however, we do know that the *roju* hastily promoted them in order to satisfy Perry's demand for a high-ranking reception. Once the two sides met, there was very little conversation, only the sterile exchange of documents. One of the only memorable exchanges occurred when the American delegation mentioned that China was currently embroiled in rebellion, but Izu and Iwami only curtly replied that "it would be better not to talk about revolutions at this time."¹⁷⁶

Perry's supplemental letter to the Shogun explained the next steps the Americans intended to take. The Commodore would wait for an official reply to "the very reasonable and pacific overtures contained in the President's letter," as to whether or not Japan would open its ports to foreign trade.¹⁷⁷ He did not expect an immediate response, though: Perry would retreat to China, and then "return to Yedo in the ensuing spring with a much larger force."¹⁷⁸ Again, the diplomacy contained in this letter centered around threats and strong-arm tactics; however, the Commodore would at least give the Japanese time to deliberate before employing force directly.

While Perry did intend to depart after the landing at Kurihama, the two Japanese "Princes," Izu and Iwami, presented the American delegation with a note that changed the American calculation. The text Perry received was little more than a brief confirmation, stating that both American letters "are hereby received, and will be

¹⁷⁶ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 62.

¹⁷⁷ Francis Hawks, *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan: Performed in the Years 1852, 1853, and 1854, Under the Command of Commodore M.C. Perry, United States Navy, by Order of the Government of the United States* (Washington: Beverly Tucker, Printer, 1856), 259.

¹⁷⁸ Hawks, *Expedition...to the China Seas and Japan*, 259.

delivered to the Emperor.”¹⁷⁹ However, the note’s concluding sentence caused problems: it read “therefore, as the letter has been received, you can depart.”¹⁸⁰ This wording was ambiguous, and Perry, taking the Japanese suggestion as more of a command, grew furious. In his understanding, the Japanese letter suggested that the shogunate had the authority to command an officer of the American navy, directly offending Perry’s goal of ensuring respect for his home country. This was completely unacceptable. Upon returning to his vessel, in order “to show these princes how little I regarded their order for me to depart,” Commodore Perry “immediately ordered the whole squadron underway, not to leave the bay, as they doubtless expected, but to go higher up,” closer to Edo.¹⁸¹

The American fleet’s advance triggered another crisis for the Japanese, as sources indicate the shogunate’s negotiators did not fully understand why Perry had taken this action. Back on land, Kayama recorded that “reports came in one after another from various Guard Boats” explaining that the steamers had moved up and would not retreat.¹⁸² The boats sought guidance, but Kayama was unable to provide it, and the whole Japanese delegation struggled about how to respond. Eventually, Izu and Iwami called Kayama to meet with them, during which the police chief was given “instruction to investigate the reason why they made such a movement,” and told to “demand [that the Americans] return to their former anchorage.”¹⁸³ If Perry succeeded in making his way to Edo, there would be chaos amongst the commoners, and the reputation of the shogunate would be irreparably damaged.

¹⁷⁹ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 100. While the wording in Perry’s journal uses “Emperor,” it is unlikely that the “princes” had any intent of delivering the letter to Kyoto. Rather, they intended to deliver it to the *roju* in Edo.

¹⁸⁰ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 100.

¹⁸¹ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 100.

¹⁸² Kayama, “Memorandum,” 15.

¹⁸³ Kayama, “Memorandum,” 15.

Kayama headed back to the American flagship for answers. While the Japanese on land were panicked, Perry and the rest of his officers remained calm. They lied, stating that their steamers needed safer anchorage because the weather had turned bad, and that this was the primary reason for their advance. The movement was not intended to intimidate, since the Commodore had “nothing but friendly feelings” for the Japanese.¹⁸⁴ However, Perry’s officers also refused to back down, and Kayama had to retire to the shore for the evening.

The standoff continued for another day, as Kayama went between the American ships and the Japanese base on land, trying to smooth things over. Perry’s officers continued to stonewall the police chief, regardless of his argument that this was a gross violation of Japanese law. On land, Kayama focused on calming his own delegation. He sent messages to nearby garrisons, urging troops to not act rashly because the Americans did not have malicious intentions, even though he personally suspected otherwise. For the time being, the “Governor” was more worried about causing “an unnecessary confusion among the people in Yedo,” which would certainly occur if Japanese soldiers attacked.¹⁸⁵ Kayama retired that evening, unable to sleep, tormented “with the thought [of] how should I argue them into returning to the former anchorage.”¹⁸⁶

The next day, July 16, the Americans informed Kayama that they needed provisions. The police chief took the request to his superiors, who, after two days of pressure, decided to provide the requested supplies as gifts to decrease tensions. When Kayama re-boarded the American flagship, he came not only with what Perry had asked

¹⁸⁴ Kayama, “Memorandum,” 16.

¹⁸⁵ Kayama, “Memorandum,” 17.

¹⁸⁶ Kayama, “Memorandum,” 17-18.

for, but also “5 rolls of Japanese brocade, 40 round fans, 50 tobacco pipes,” and other presents for the officers.¹⁸⁷ The Commodore was pleased, but, recalling his behavior in Okinawa, he refused to accept the presents unless the Japanese took something in exchange for them. That something included a portrait of Perry and some wine and cotton goods, which he bragged were “of greater value” than what his delegation had received.¹⁸⁸ Kayama accepted the goods, and the Commodore ordered his ships to return to the mouth of the bay, ending the crisis. This show of American force had benefitted Perry twofold. First, by exchanging presents with the Japanese, he was setting the baseline for future trade. Second, Perry had already completed the necessary surveys of Edo Bay by the time he withdrew his ships, giving him a leg up in future negotiations. His tasks completed, the Commodore “thought it advisable to return to Lew Chew,” and departed on the 17th.¹⁸⁹

Return to the Ryukyus and Between the Voyages

True to his intention, Perry and the American fleet arrived back at Naha on July 25 in order to tie up some loose ends. Since Perry had “been measurably successful with the Japanese,” he now felt “confident of gaining additional concessions from the Lew Chewans,” which he intended to do before leaving for China.¹⁹⁰ Upon landing, Samuel Wells Williams and Captain Adams found that the port city had a new mayor, the old one

¹⁸⁷ Kayama, “Memorandum,” 18.

¹⁸⁸ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 102.

¹⁸⁹ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 102.

¹⁹⁰ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 107.

having been abruptly dismissed.¹⁹¹ Without formalities, the American delegation listed their demands to the new mayor: Wells Williams recalled that these included the creation of a storehouse for coal, an end to monitoring by Japanese “spies,” and the opening of a market where sailors could buy “silks, cottons, lacquered ware, china-ware and other products.”¹⁹² The mayor did not offer much response, apparently “unprepared to answer directly and did not wish to at all.”¹⁹³ He did not object to future negotiations, though, and the coming days were spent settling on an appropriate date and location for a meeting between the Commodore and the Regent. Unlike before, Perry did not insist upon a grand reception at Shuri Castle, perhaps because he had already set the precedent that he still *could*, had he wanted to.

The meeting took place on July 28 at the *Kung-Kwan* of Naha, a government building that was “small but neat,” and the reception had a decidedly less military-centric tone than before.¹⁹⁴ Instead of squadrons of marines, it was just Perry and his immediate entourage, who met the Regent and his negotiators outside the front gate. Once inside, the Ryukyans presented the American party with a lavish dinner of many courses; however, the Commodore explained that he “wished to speak upon business before eating, and that he hoped the regent...had an answer prepared” for his demands.¹⁹⁵ Despite the Commodore’s objection, though, the Okinawan regent insisted that both groups eat first, and to this, surprisingly, Perry relented. Everyone sat down and “went on eating awhile,

¹⁹¹ This means that Okinawa had both a new regent, and a new mayor for the port of Naha, in the span of only about a month.

¹⁹² Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 72.

¹⁹³ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 71.

¹⁹⁴ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 109.

¹⁹⁵ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 74.

some six or eight courses,” amid some conversation.¹⁹⁶ The reason for this is likely because Perry felt comfortable enough that his demands would be met. Japan had already partially relented, as the Commodore explained to the Regent over dinner, and his fleet could now go “anchoring and sounding in such parts of [Edo] bay as we pleased.”¹⁹⁷ Okinawan opposition would be quite difficult in this situation.

About halfway through the meal, Commodore Perry reiterated his desire for the Regent to respond to the American demands, to which the Regent read from a prepared statement. The Ryukyu Islands were humble, “their own productions...exceedingly few and manufactures contemptible.”¹⁹⁸ Perry’s requests would largely be impossible, or, in the language used by the Regent, “inconvenient.”¹⁹⁹ The Okinawan government was too poor to build a coal storehouse, and would be unable to maintain it even if built. Additionally, the Regent and his subordinates could not force local shopkeepers to participate in a market if they did not want to. The one concession the statement allowed was ending the “spy” program that Japanese officials conducted against American sailors.

Naturally, this was “not at all satisfactory” for Commodore Perry, who demanded the letter be revised immediately.²⁰⁰ If the Okinawans “did not wish to erect a building for coal,” his sailors would come with “materials, and put it up” themselves.²⁰¹ He would not accept the Regent’s refusal to set up a market: American sailors “paid for all we received,” and were “an advantage to the people.”²⁰² If locals did not want to do business

¹⁹⁶ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 74.

¹⁹⁷ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 75.

¹⁹⁸ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 76.

¹⁹⁹ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 76. By “inconvenient,” the Regent likely meant impossible, but wanted to avoid using such a harsh word.

²⁰⁰ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 110.

²⁰¹ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 110-111.

²⁰² Perry, *Personal Journal*, 110.

with his troops, then it must be because of a government mandate, not their free choice. If he was not given a more satisfactory answer, Perry vowed to “land two hundred men [and] march to Shuri and occupy the palace there.”²⁰³ The entire American delegation then got up and left, returning to the *Susquehanna*.

Defeated, the next morning the mayor of Naha visited Perry’s flagship and shared that “all [his] propositions had been acceded to,” and that “preparations for putting up a coal shed had already been commenced.”²⁰⁴ The Regent and his officials opted for capitulation over possible annihilation. A few days later, Wilhelm Heine, a German artist sailing with Perry’s expedition, noted that “a kind of bazaar...to sell” various goods sprung up, open to American sailors.²⁰⁵ “And so we gradually overcame the shyness of the inhabitants of Loo Choo,” Heine remarked, before concluding that he hoped “friendly relations...with those good-natured people will get better and better in the years to come.”²⁰⁶ Perry’s fleet departed for Hong Kong on August 1, the first leg of the Commodore’s expedition to Japan now completed in its entirety.

While the Ryukyus had made their decision about how to deal with Perry and his troublesome American fleet, debates on the Japanese mainland were just beginning. The Commodore had no way of knowing it, but his visit set off a firestorm in Edo that quickly spread throughout the country, becoming the worst foreign policy crisis Japan had faced in more than two centuries. The main policymakers were in the *roju*, and it was their opinions that eventually translated into the government’s overall response. Two particular

²⁰³ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 111.

²⁰⁴ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 111.

²⁰⁵ Wilhelm Heine and Frederic Trautmann, *With Perry in Japan: A Memoir by William Heine* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 76.

²⁰⁶ Heine and Trautmann, *A Memoir by William Heine*, 76.

names stand out. The first is Abe Masahiro, the *roju*'s chief councilor. Although only thirty-three at the time of Perry's visit, Abe had consolidated power and had final say over the government's decision. A nobleman, the *daimyo* of Fukuyama, the chief councilor's reputation was that of a consensus-builder.²⁰⁷ This focus on compromise necessarily made Abe politically moderate: for example, after "Shell-and-Repel" was repealed in 1842, Abe enforced the less aggressive policy that took its place, advocating that foreign ships be resupplied instead of attacked.

Contrasting dramatically with Abe was Tokugawa Nariaki, the *daimyo* of Mito, who also served on the *roju*. Whereas Abe was mild and conciliatory, Nariaki was fiery and uncompromising.²⁰⁸ The Lord of Mito was a prominent backer of the philosophy that bore his domain's name, the "Mito School." Adherents of Mito learning believed in a strongly xenophobic form of Japanese nationalism, based on reverence for the real Emperor in Kyoto. They also sought to keep Japan "pure" of foreigners and foreign ideas, collectively forming the ideology of *Sonno Joi*, or "Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarians." Originally advocated by scholars like Aizawa Seishisai in the early 1800s, this philosophy had many prominent supporters by the 1850s, largely among the samurai class. By the time of Perry's visit, Tokugawa Nariaki was the Mito School's champion, and he used his position on the *roju* to advocate for anti-foreign policies.²⁰⁹

On the surface, the question the *roju* was debating was a simple one: What would be the Japanese response to President Fillmore's letter? However, hidden within that question were numerous sub-questions which focused on the long-term viability of

²⁰⁷ Feifer, *Breaking Open Japan*, 142.

²⁰⁸ The reason why Tokugawa Nariaki is referred to by his given name instead of his family name here is because of the abundance of Tokugawas that are relevant to this time period.

²⁰⁹ Feifer, *Breaking Open Japan*, 198-199.

Japan's *sakoku* policy. Would the public perceive a positive response to Fillmore as an abdication of said policy? Would Japan open for foreign trade? Could Japan refuse other nations, if it capitulated to the United States? These were significant questions, ones which the young chief counselor apparently felt too uncomfortable to answer on his own. Therefore, in accordance with his reputation as a consensus-builder, Abe took a step which shocked many of the nation's *daimyo*: for the first time since the creation of the shogunate, he requested the input of these feudal lords in forming the national response.

Abe's plan was bold, but risky. He intended to open up the circle of decision makers beyond the *roju* to include the entirety of Japan's aristocratic class. The chief councilor did this because if Japan decided to go to war with the Americans, he wanted to guarantee support from all the nation's *daimyo* beforehand. Additionally, this move would diffuse responsibility, so that Abe could not be held accountable if things went wrong. However, there were some key downsides. First, this action "opened the floodgates": by soliciting the opinions of the nation's *daimyo*, he solicited *all* of their opinions, including the *tozama daimyo* who had been traditionally antagonistic towards the Tokugawa family. Once these *daimyo* had a foot in the door, it would be difficult to tell them that they could not participate in future *roju* decisions. Secondly, many of these outsider *daimyo* considered Abe's gesture to be a sign of weakness. Even during earlier periods of crisis, the shogunate never reached out beyond friendly *daimyo* to form a response. Doing so now was the same as admitting that the shogunate was not equipped to handle the Americans. This, in turn, diminished Abe Masahiro's personal standing.

Regardless of whether the chief counselor's move was a wise one, responses came in from regional lords across the country. Their letters fit into three general

categories. The first, the “war approach,” was advocated by Tokugawa Nariaki and his supporters. In his own letter, Nariaki listed several reasons why Japan should respond to Perry’s inevitable return with force. For example, Nariaki argued that “although our country’s territory is not extensive, foreigners both fear and respect us...because our resoluteness and military prowess have been clearly demonstrated to the world.”²¹⁰

However, Perry’s actions were so provocative that Japan would lose this prestige unless it responded with violence. War would also “increase ten-fold the morale of the country” and inspire the samurai class.²¹¹ The rest of the document included details on how to fight this war, which would be conducted by a large coalition of soldiers from across the country, united under the banner of *Sonno Joi*.

Another response came from Ii Naosuke, the *daimyo* of Hikone, who advocated a more moderate position in line with Abe Masahiro’s personal preference. In his letter, Ii explained that times had changed since the creation of the shogunate, and it was no longer responsible to pursue an uncompromising policy of expulsion towards foreigners. “Careful consideration of conditions as they are today, however, leads me to believe that...it is impossible in the crisis we now face to ensure the safety and tranquility of our country merely by an insistence on the seclusion laws.”²¹² The Hikone *daimyo* believed that, should war break out immediately, Japan would be devastated, as the country “had no warships capable of opposing foreign attack on our coasts.”²¹³ Instead, Ii wanted to respond positively to Perry’s “friendship” and open Japan to foreign trade. This would

²¹⁰ Tokugawa Nariaki, “Tokugawa Nariaki to Bakufu, 14 August 1853,” in *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, ed. W.G. Beasley (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 103.

²¹¹ Tokugawa, “Nariaki to Bakufu,” 103.

²¹² Ii Naosuke, “Ii Naosuke to Bakufu, 1 October 1853,” in *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, ed. W.G. Beasley (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 117.

²¹³ Ii, “Naosuke to Bakufu,” 117.

buy time. The country could then modernize its armed forces, and send students overseas to learn the secrets of Western warfare. Then, the new Japan would be strong enough “to reimpose its ban and forbid foreigners to come to Japan,” enforcing seclusion through war if necessary.²¹⁴

Nariaki and Ii’s ideas were two of the most coherent policy suggestions the *bakufu* received during the crisis. The last category of response came from those who struggled to commit to either side. One example comes from a letter written jointly by several officials, collectively known as the *jisha-bugyo*, *machi-bugyo*, and *kanjo-bugyo*.²¹⁵ These officials insisted that it was “quite impossible for the Bakufu to agree to appoint a port at which [the Americans] may be supplied with coal, food, and so on – to say nothing of questions such as friendship and trade.”²¹⁶ However, they also clarified that “the wording of our refusal, therefore, must at all costs be peaceable [sic].”²¹⁷ For the *roju*, which had already dealt with Perry’s obtuseness, this position was little more than wishful thinking. Other *daimyo* had little advice beyond advocating delay. Shimazu Nariakira, the lord of Satsuma, stated “it is my belief...that the Bakufu should act so as to gain as much time as possible...to order completion of our coast defences,” in a hope that these alone could repulse the American fleet.²¹⁸

After the *daimyo* submitted their plans to respond to Perry’s return, Abe

²¹⁴ Ii, “Naosuke to Bakufu,” 119. Therefore, ultimately, Ii and Nariaki had the same end goal for their policies, Ii’s just delayed that goal until Japan was strong enough to oppose the foreigners.

²¹⁵ *Jisha-bugyo* were the officials in charge of shrines and temples, *machi-bugyo* were those in charge of administrating Edo, and *kanjo-bugyo* were in charge of finances. See Beasley, *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, 323-325.

²¹⁶ “Jisha-Bugyo, Machi-Bugyo and Kanjo-Bugyo to Roju; Memorandum Concerning the American Letters, Submitted to Abe Masahiro on 26 August 1853,” in *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, ed. W.G. Beasley (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 108.

²¹⁷ “Jisha-Bugyo,” 108.

²¹⁸ Shimazu Nariakira, “Shimazu Nariakira to Bakufu, 2 September 1853,” in *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, ed. W.G. Beasley (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 113.

Masahiro's *roju* realized that his gambit had largely failed. The chief councilor had hoped for more responses like Ii Naosuke's, which gave him sanction to open the country and avoid war, but instead he found a majority opposed to both peace and war. The feudal lords of Japan had told the council much about the things they did *not* want, but had not provided realistic suggestions for things they *did*. This meant that, despite his reluctance, Abe was still responsible for making the final decision. In December, the *roju* circulated a memo amongst the *daimyo* which described the policy the shogunate had settled upon. The response to President Fillmore's letter would be positive, but the government would also avoid making as many commitments as possible with Commodore Perry.²¹⁹ As a compromise to Nariaki's faction, this statement also included a provision to begin military preparations, although this only went into effect if the Americans indicated they would use force.

As the shogunate deliberated, Perry and his fleet were wintering along the China coast. In his original letter to the Japanese, the Commodore promised that he would return in the spring of 1854 for Edo's answer. However, news of his expedition quickly spread amongst the European powers, specifically Russia and France, who were both interested in Japan themselves.²²⁰ Perry became worried that these powers would try to muscle in on American gains in Japan, and decided to return earlier "rather than allow either the French or Russians to gain an advantage over me."²²¹ After taking some time to gather his fleet, the Commodore departed for Naha in mid-January of 1854.

²¹⁹ Beasley, *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, 24. Some of these commitments that the government wanted to avoid included trade and opening ports, among others.

²²⁰ Only a few weeks after the conclusion of Perry's first voyage, Russian Admiral Euphymius Putiatin had even conducted his own voyage to Nagasaki, although this trip was unsuccessful at obtaining any concessions from the officials there.

²²¹ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 136.

The Second Round of Negotiations

The American vessels arrived at Naha port on January 20, marking the beginning of yet another brief stay in the remote islands, but this time, the trip was diplomatically uneventful. Perry noted in his diary that “the people were evidently, though slowly, relaxing in their disposition” toward his sailors, although this was more tolerance than friendliness.²²² Before he could leave for the mainland, though, the Commodore received a transmission from the Governor General of the Netherlands, who was passing information from the Dutch Factory at Nagasaki. Earlier that winter, while the *roju* was debating internally, Shogun Tokugawa Ieyoshi had abruptly died. “According to Japanese laws and customs,” there would be an extended period of mourning during which “no business of any importance can be transacted.”²²³ Because of these circumstances, the Japanese government requested (using the Governor General as an intermediary) that Perry “not...return to Japan at the time fixed upon” in his letter.²²⁴ Although it was depicted as a national tragedy, this message was the first diplomatic salvo of the second leg of the expedition. Tokugawa Ieyoshi was only a figurehead, and the *bakufu* still functioned without him. This meant that the *roju* likely tried to use his timely demise as a way to delay the American fleet’s return.²²⁵ Perry responded coolly to the Governor General’s letter, privately believing that “the death of the Emperor was a mere *ruse* to obstruct the American negotiations.”²²⁶ He stated that, because “the present rulers of

²²² Perry, *Personal Journal*, 146.

²²³ Hawks, *Expedition...to the China Seas and Japan*, 322.

²²⁴ Hawks, *Expedition...to the China Seas and Japan*, 322.

²²⁵ Peter Wiley argues that the Shogun’s death actually came about because of Perry, who had caused Ieyoshi to die of shock due to the trauma of his visit. See Wiley, *Yankees*, 332-333.

²²⁶ Hawks, *Expedition...to the China Seas and Japan*, 323. Emphasis was Hawks’.

Japan have become so well satisfied” of his intentions, and because they had plenty of time to formulate a response, he would still proceed to Edo Bay as planned.²²⁷

After departing Naha, the ships of Perry’s fleet made their way back to Edo Bay, with Wells Williams noting that his ship first saw land on February 11. Local villagers lit signal fires when they noticed the early American return in order to inform the capital, and shortly after, government scout boats headed out to meet the vessels. They did not obstruct the ships this time; instead, the Japanese boats simply followed the Americans until they settled down at their position inside Edo Bay, at the so-called “American Anchorage.” The shogunate did not want to be viewed as aggressively posturing this time, but still, Perry’s fleet was much closer to Edo than the government was comfortable with. Kurokawa Kahei, an official aboard the scout ships, asked the Americans “why [they] had anchored so far above Uruga,” before suggesting that both sides regroup at that location.²²⁸ The negotiator also indicated that “the [Japanese government’s] answer to the President’s letter would be a favorable one,” in an attempt to get Perry to back down. However, the Commodore rejected Kurokawa’s offer, with his subordinates explaining that their current location offered “more secure anchorage.”²²⁹

Over the next few days, the familiar problem of where Perry was to be received came up again, stalling discussions, although things still proceeded relatively calmly. The Japanese negotiators again insisted on Uruga, at a facility built specifically to receive the Americans. The Commodore, however, wanted to be received at Edo, at the Shogun’s court, which was a non-starter for the Japanese. As a concession, Perry agreed to send

²²⁷ Hawks, *Expedition...to the China Seas and Japan*, 322.

²²⁸ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 100.

²²⁹ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 100.

someone to inspect the Uraga facility first, to determine if it might still be rendered suitable for him. This inspection took place on February 18, and a small party led by Commander Adams arrived at Uraga beach to conduct it.²³⁰

It was at this inspection that the Americans first encountered the man whom the shogunate had recently named chief negotiator for the Japanese delegation, Hayashi Daigaku-no-Kami. The honorific “Daigaku-no-Kami” likely reflected Hayashi’s authentic position: the name “Lord of the University” was given to the head instructor at the Neo-Confucian academy in Edo.²³¹ He had most likely not been given a title by the shogunate specifically for this job, like Izu, Iwami, and others. Coming from a background in philosophy, Hayashi had a calm diplomatic style, focused around compelling moral arguments, but he did not have any formal diplomatic training. He spoke little at this initial meeting; instead, Commander Adams mostly discussed logistics with lower-ranking officials. Despite his initial quietude, though, Hayashi would go on to be the most important weapon in the Japanese diplomatic arsenal, blunting Perry’s brash demeanor and ultimately earning the Commodore’s respect.

Commander Adams was not satisfied with Uraga as a site for the American reception. According to the testimony of an unnamed *bakufu* official, Adams criticized

²³⁰ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 106.

²³¹ William Elliot Griffis, an early and prominent scholar on Japanese history, suggests that Hayashi was not actually the Chief Rector of the University, implying that Hayashi was yet another example of the shogunate promoting lower-ranking officials to negotiate with Perry. However, he does not offer any evidence to back up this belief, and his opinion largely goes against the prevailing consensus about Hayashi, as expressed by scholars like Wiley, that he was indeed the Chief Rector. William Elliot Griffis, *The Mikado’s Empire: A History of Japan from the Age of the Gods to the Meiji Era (660 BC-AD 1872)* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Classics, 2006), 355. Wiley, *Yankees*, 338. I am reluctant to speculate on this, since I was not able to find any records that fully confirm Hayashi’s position, so I will side with the consensus that Hayashi was the Chief Rector. However, if Griffis is correct, then Hayashi’s eventual success in negotiations with Perry is even more notable, as it validates the shogunate’s approach of sending lower-ranking officials to negotiate with foreigners, even in the face of Perry’s obstinance.

the reception hall as “a very small place,” which Kurokawa Kahei conceded.²³²

Kurokawa then asked if Kurihama Beach would be an acceptable substitute, but Adams rejected this too. The Commander still insisted that Perry would be received at Edo, although he did remark that “he would not object to the selection of a satisfactory site either at Kanazawa or Kanagawa” instead.²³³ However, both of these were suburbs of Edo, and, while distant from the Shogun’s castle, they were still far too close for comfort for the officials of the *bakufu*.

Hayashi Daigaku-no-Kami sent notes over the coming days, explaining the situation and imploring Perry to accept a reception at Uruga. The Commodore’s response was blunt and predictable: on February 21, he sent the *Vandalia* further up Edo Bay to try and break the stalemate.²³⁴ Once again, the Japanese blinked quickly. The *roju* sent instructions to Hayashi authorizing him to meet Perry at Yokohama in Kanagawa, and Kayama Eizaemon delivered this information to Commander Adams.²³⁵ Adams led a party to investigate the site, and returned with a positive verdict this time.²³⁶ On the 22nd, in honor of George Washington’s birthday, “all of the ships of the squadron fired the usual salute,” which scared local villagers who thought they were under attack.²³⁷

Now that the location was finalized, Perry’s Marines landed at Yokohama on March 8 in a similar procession to the one at Kurihama Beach. Both sides were still

²³² “Diary of an Official of the Bakufu,” *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* 2, no. 7 (December 1930): 100.

²³³ “Diary of an Official,” 100.

²³⁴ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 109.

²³⁵ “Diary of an Official,” 100.

²³⁶ Interestingly enough, there was no reception hall at Yokohama, and one would need to be built for the reception. One will recall that Adams’ main critique with the Uruga venue was that the reception hall was too small, so it is strange that he gave his approval to a site without one in the first place. This furthers the idea that the main thing on Perry’s mind was proximity to Edo, not a lavish reception site.

²³⁷ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 161.

heavily armed. This was the first direct encounter between Commodore Perry and Hayashi Daigaku-no-Kami. Wells Williams noted that physically, the Japanese chief commissioner was unimpressive, even going so far as to call the professor “an unintellectual looking man.”²³⁸ Perry’s journal only glossed over the resulting meeting, stating that the exchange consisted merely of “suitable interchanges of courtesy.”²³⁹ The Japanese, however, captured a much more vivid picture of what happened. According to the diary of the *bakufu* official, the talks started benignly enough, and both men expressed their pleasure at finally making the other’s acquaintance. Hayashi stated clearly the *bakufu*’s position. In regard to President Fillmore’s letter, the Japanese response was positive. Visiting American ships would be resupplied at Japanese ports.²⁴⁰ Shipwrecked sailors “will be treated with kindness hereafter.”²⁴¹ However, Hayashi also stated that his government would reject any American demands “regarding trade and so on.”²⁴²

The Commodore almost seems to not have heard the last remark. As soon as Hayashi finished, Perry jumped into an unrelated topic, bringing up the issue of where to bury a recently deceased American sailor. After a brief exchange, they agreed that he would be buried at a temple near Uraga. The Commodore was grateful, “to the extent even of shedding tears,” and thanked the Japanese for treating his men “with kindness.”²⁴³ However, he then changed his tone. Japanese kindness contrasted with Perry’s assessment of the country’s behavior over the past two decades. The shogunate

²³⁸ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 125.

²³⁹ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 165. I suspect that the reason for the brief treatment of this meeting in Perry’s records is because of the Commodore’s embarrassment at what happened.

²⁴⁰ “Diary of an Official,” 102.

²⁴¹ “Diary of an Official,” 102.

²⁴² “Diary of an Official,” 102.

²⁴³ “Diary of an Official,” 103-104.

treated shipwreck victims “like slaves,” who were kept “in harsh imprisonment.”²⁴⁴

Because of this, Perry insisted that “you thus seem to have no regard even for your own countrymen and to be exceedingly inhumane.”²⁴⁵ He then reminded Hayashi that “our country has just had a war with a neighboring country, Mexico...circumstances may lead your country also into a similar plight. It would do well for you to reconsider.”²⁴⁶

Perry’s entire outburst reads like a prepared statement, and in context of the conversation, it makes little sense. Most of his argument focused on shipwreck victims, as though the Commodore intended to use that issue as a cudgel to press the Japanese on trade. Perhaps he mis-stepped here: Perry may not have expected the *bakufu* to concede so quickly on the shipwreck issue, and just pressed forward, ignoring Hayashi’s affirmative comments.²⁴⁷ It is unclear if he knew about the earlier repeal of “Shell-and-Repel,” and it is certainly unlikely that he fully understood the implications of this decision even if he was aware of it. Perhaps he had already prepared an invective-laden diatribe that he was determined to give no matter what. Regardless, the Commodore can come across as confused and off-topic during this conversation for the modern reader.

Hayashi responded forcefully to Perry’s attack. He explained that Japan would not be intimidated by Perry’s reference to the Mexican War, stating that “if forced by circumstances, we will also go to war.”²⁴⁸ The Rector then objected to the American characterization of his country, arguing that “our government is not the inhumane thing you describe. First, we excel any other country in the importance we attach to human life.

²⁴⁴ “Diary of an Official,” 104.

²⁴⁵ “Diary of an Official,” 104.

²⁴⁶ “Diary of an Official,” 104.

²⁴⁷ This would be in line with Perry’s surprise at Kayama Eizaemon’s quick agreement to the landing at Kurihama Beach during the previous year. The Commodore privately expected much more pushback.

²⁴⁸ “Diary of an Official,” 104.

For this reason, we have enjoyed peace for more than 300 years.”²⁴⁹ If the United States was truly as benevolent as Perry insisted it was, then it would not permit “mistaken reports” to allow “the resentment of successive years to crystalize” into conflict.²⁵⁰ The argument was simple, but effective. Hayashi targeted the supposed moral superiority of the Americans, which Perry needed in order to issue threats without appearing to be a conqueror.

Taken aback at the rebuke to his remarks, the Commodore finally spoke frankly about his intentions. He asked Hayashi, “Why do you not allow commerce?”²⁵¹ Perry elaborated: “If you open your country to commerce it will bring to you great profit and will surely be to your great advantage.”²⁵² Hayashi offered his own understanding, stating “our country since the beginning has found the things which it produces to be sufficient for its own needs. We are not discontented at being without the products of other countries.”²⁵³ The Rector then concluded by making a remark which appeared fatal to Perry’s original arguments: “You have attained your purpose [of guaranteeing good treatment for U.S. sailors]. Now, commerce has to do with profits, but has it anything to do with human life? Is it not enough that you have gained what you sought?”²⁵⁴

By making this point, Hayashi ensured that any claims of moral superiority Perry tried to make were untenable. The shipwreck victims were the main moral outrage that the Americans claimed to be concerned about; however, as the Rector identified, trade had nothing to do with these victims. Therefore, if Perry persisted in demanding

²⁴⁹ “Diary of an Official,” 104.

²⁵⁰ “Diary of an Official,” 104-105.

²⁵¹ “Diary of an Official,” 105.

²⁵² “Diary of an Official,” 105.

²⁵³ “Diary of an Official,” 106.

²⁵⁴ “Diary of an Official,” 106.

commerce, it would be clear that he was only doing so for self-serving reasons. This was not something the Commodore was prepared to do: force without justification would make the United States look bloodthirsty, harming American prestige abroad. Backed into a corner and not willing to risk his country's dignity, Perry capitulated. He pulled out a draft of the Treaty of Wanghia between the United States and China and presented it to the Rector, stating "I brought it because, if commerce were to be permitted, [this treaty, as a model for a U.S.–Japan equivalent] would govern this matter fairly and equitably; but in view of your arguments, *I shall not insist*."²⁵⁵ Hayashi accepted the offered draft treaty, while the meeting ended shortly after.

This meeting between Perry and Hayashi concluded with the first major diplomatic "defeat" for the United States in Japan since Commodore Biddle's time. While Griffis dismissed Hayashi as little more than a "chopper of Chinese logic," his arguments largely worked: a treaty of commerce was now off the table.²⁵⁶ Japan's strategy of partial conciliation appeared to have staved off the worst for the country, even though most of the credit should be given to Hayashi, not the *roju* as a whole. However, since the Rector accepted the draft treaty, that meant his government acknowledged that it would work out some other kind of official framework with the Americans. This would be Japan's first international treaty in centuries. Negotiations needed to proceed carefully for the *bakufu* not to lose face; likewise, Perry needed to operate strategically if he were to secure the remainder of his desired provisions, now that he had forfeited free trade.

March 17 was when Perry and Hayashi were scheduled to reconvene to discuss the details of a U.S.–Japan treaty of friendship. Significant planning took place in the

²⁵⁵ "Diary of an Official," 106. The emphasis is mine.

²⁵⁶ Griffis, *The Mikado's Empire*, 355.

meantime: both sides worked to clarify what they wanted out of such a treaty, and participated in various diplomatic niceties. On the 13th, Perry explained that this was “the day the presents were landed,” consisting of a wide range of gifts for Japanese negotiators and the *roju*. Wells Williams listed the gifts in detail, with some notable presents including volumes detailing the United States’ history and legal system, perhaps included to encourage the Japanese to model their own society on this precedent.²⁵⁷ On the 15th, the Japanese delegation provided the Americans with their list of desired treaty provisions. Article V of these suggestions was the closest thing to a trade provision, stating that, at any open port, “if there be any other sort of articles wanted, or any business...there shall be careful deliberation between the parties in order to settle them.”²⁵⁸ However, this only applied to sailors in need of supplies. The suggestions also stated that Nagasaki would continue to serve as the primary port of reception for all foreigners. The government would open another city after five years, but it would not be either in the Ryukyus, or in the northern territory of Matsumae (modern Hokkaido). This was because these were “distant frontier dependenc[ies]” that were only loosely controlled by Edo.²⁵⁹ On most points, the Americans were fine with the Japanese suggestions. However, it was on this question of ports where both sides would clash.

Finally, Perry and Hayashi reconvened on the 17th. There was yet another grand

²⁵⁷ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 168. Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 131-134. Some of these books included 4 volumes of the “Annals of Congress,” the “Laws and Documents of the State of New York,” & Bancroft’s “History of the United States.” Other presents included 9 volumes of “Audubon’s Birds,” Hayashi was given a revolver, and there was a considerable amount of liquor presented to each negotiator. The “Emperor” (Shogun) was given an entire barrel of whiskey. One of the councilors was given a history book of the Mexican-American War, perhaps an odd choice for a diplomatic venture, although in line with Perry’s strategy of intimidation.

²⁵⁸ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 138.

²⁵⁹ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 138. Perry had expressed specific interest in opening both of these locations during earlier negotiations.

procession outside the hastily constructed Yokohama reception hall. Once everyone was seated, Perry began by saying his desire was for American sailors to be able to visit “any harbor” that was controlled by Japan.²⁶⁰ However, at minimum, he expected “five or six other ports” to soon be open to American visitors. Hayashi reiterated that Nagasaki would be adequate for the time being, but Perry was not moved. He stated unequivocally, “I therefore reject Nagasaki,” as it was “a most inconvenient place” for American whalers to make port.²⁶¹

Hayashi acknowledged that Nagasaki was a non-starter for the Americans, reassuring the Commodore that “we can select some other suitable harbor in its stead.”²⁶² The Japanese delegation had likely prepared for this: Perry’s disdain for the southern port had been made clear the year before, when he refused to meet the Shogun’s negotiators there. However, by conceding on Nagasaki, they might be able to get Perry to cut down on the number of open ports he demanded. The Commodore quickly suggested Kanagawa as a suitable alternative. Hayashi rejected this: Kanagawa was too close to Edo. Perry protested, but the Rector shut down this line of discussion entirely, remarking that if Perry desired Kanagawa so badly, he “should have mentioned its name much earlier.”²⁶³ Japan would open up a more convenient port than Nagasaki, but the shogunate needed time to determine which one. The Commodore was cross, but acknowledged this was fair. However, he insisted that he would only wait “two or three days” for a response.²⁶⁴ The meeting was then adjourned. While this second encounter between Perry

²⁶⁰ “Diary of an Official,” 108.

²⁶¹ “Diary of an Official,” 108.

²⁶² “Diary of an Official,” 109.

²⁶³ “Diary of an Official,” 109.

²⁶⁴ “Diary of an Official,” 109.

and Hayashi may have had some tense moments, the diplomatic gulf had narrowed considerably. Most of the treaty's articles were already agreed upon.

Shortly after, the Japanese delegation proposed the seaside village of Shimoda as the first port to be open to American sailors. Perry agreed, although his acceptance was contingent on a positive inspection of the anchorage there. Hayashi consented, and on the 20th, the *Vandalia* and *Southampton* departed to gather this information. In the meantime, negotiations continued, focusing on the second port that Perry wanted open. On March 23, the Japanese inquired if the northern city of Hakodate would be acceptable.²⁶⁵ Hakodate was only sixty miles from Matsumae, which Perry had originally expressed interest in, and it had a better deep-water port, of which Perry was already aware. Additionally, the city's considerable distance from Edo made Hakodate attractive to the *bakufu* negotiators, who wanted to keep Americans at arm's length. Perry agreed.

The next issue to solve was the timeline when those cities would be open to visiting American sailors. The Japanese delegation naturally pressed for a longer timeframe, arguing that, because these cities had never dealt with foreigners before, they were unequipped to handle visitors. The government needed time to train local authorities and make them familiar with the new state of amity between the countries. Hayashi stated that 18 months was the minimum needed, but Perry countered that he wanted the end of the year (approximately 9 months) as the deadline. Both sides eventually compromised to Shimoda opening in 12 months, in March of 1855.²⁶⁶ With that, both sides turned to the appointment of an American consul, whom Perry wanted to permanently reside in

²⁶⁵ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 144.

²⁶⁶ Hawks, *Expedition...to the China Seas and Japan*, 372. Perry indicated that Hakodate would also be open to Americans at the same time, while the Japanese account only mentioned Shimoda. I am not sure of the reason for this discrepancy, and, regardless, it does not seem to have made a significant difference.

Shimoda. While able to accept the temporary presence of foreigners at two port cities, allowing one to live in Japan permanently would be a significant blow to the shogunate's prestige. Hayashi explained that a consul was not necessary. Since there was to be no trade, an official stationed in Shimoda to regulate trade would be pointless. Perry disagreed, but both sides consented to take up the issue later once Shimoda and Hakodate were formally opened.

One final note in regards to this phase of negotiation is that Samuel Wells Williams successfully lobbied for the inclusion of a "most-favored-nation" clause in the treaty text.²⁶⁷ While it appears that the *bakufu* did not entirely understand the importance of this provision at the time, it would go on to be one of the key issues that humiliated Japanese policymakers and enraged anti-foreign activists over the next decade.²⁶⁸

Occurring simultaneously with this phase of negotiations was an interesting and relevant period of public diplomacy that took place between American sailors and Japanese officials. I briefly mentioned earlier how Perry had some presents delivered to Hayashi and his fellow negotiators; however, this was not a one-time occurrence. Sailors unloaded more American presents over a period of several days, and the Japanese gave reciprocal gifts to their visitors. Some of the American gifts included a model train and a telegraph machine, which the fleet's engineers set up to demonstrate. These same engineers also set up miles of telegraph wire around the treaty house, and when sending

²⁶⁷ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 152. This meant that if Japan were to sign other treaties with other nations, the U.S. would automatically be entitled to the same benefits those other countries negotiated for.

²⁶⁸ I state that the *bakufu* did not understand the importance of the most-favored-nation clause because I could not find in any of the documents I consulted, from the American or Japanese perspective, any evidence that this was a hotly contested point during negotiations. Even in Williams' own account, little about this stage of negotiations is mentioned. Given the fact that the clause was tantamount to a huge surrender of national rights, the lack of debate is telling that the shogunate misunderstood this concession.

messages, local samurai would run from one end to the other in an attempt to out-speed the message. When they proved unable to do so, they were quite surprised.²⁶⁹ However, for other Japanese onlookers, the ideas behind the machines were not entirely mystifying. For example, although Japan had never seen a functioning train before, many *rangakusha* read about the principles behind it in Dutch books.²⁷⁰ This may have disappointed Perry, who probably intended these gifts to showcase American power and technological superiority.

Japanese gifts also appeared to convey strength as well. The most notable example took place on March 25, when the shogunate's officials informed the Americans they would be receiving 200 large bales of rice. Each bag weighed 135 pounds.²⁷¹ Perry and his sailors were surprised to find that delivering the bags were "some twenty-five or thirty huge men, naked with the exception of a narrow girdle around the loins."²⁷² They were sumo wrestlers, some of the largest and most physically intimidating men in Japan, and they made a spectacle of carrying the rice to the American ships. According to the Commodore, "each man...carried two on his right shoulder."²⁷³ Another even "carried a bale suspended by his teeth," while yet another "held one in his arms and repeatedly turned a somerset [somersault] upon the ground, retaining the bale in the same embrace."²⁷⁴ The Americans were free to inspect the muscles of the wrestlers – which many did – and several sumo matches took place afterwards. Edward McCauley noted his opinion that "it was a very unsatisfactory trial of strength," and "any wrestler that I have

²⁶⁹ Walworth, *Black Ships Off Japan*, 195.

²⁷⁰ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 143. Williams remarked that "all appeared to understand the idea, though not the mode of its operation."

²⁷¹ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 192.

²⁷² Perry, *Personal Journal*, 190.

²⁷³ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 192.

²⁷⁴ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 192.

heretofore seen of half the muscle would have laughed at them.”²⁷⁵ However, the fact that he was compelled to stress the superior strength of his countrymen perhaps indicated bravado more than anything else.

The rice itself, along with other gifts provided by the Japanese such as fowls, swords, and various dyed textiles, held more symbolic importance in the Japanese context than material value. Wells Williams later complained that “the Japanese have not shown themselves at all generous,” due to their “ignorance of the actual cost of the things” exchanged, and Perry repeatedly bragged about the superior value of American goods.²⁷⁶ However, this exchange illustrated a fundamental difference between American and Japanese gift-giving culture: the shogunate negotiators were more concerned with the symbolism of the gifts provided (representing abstract concepts like longevity or good luck), rather than monetary value.²⁷⁷ Details that the Japanese prized, like pristine presentation, went unnoticed by the Commodore. This disconnect may have contributed to Perry’s impression that the Japanese were inferior to his own countrymen.

Even though the outstanding issues with Japan were not yet fully resolved, Commodore Perry was satisfied enough to arrange a celebratory banquet on March 27 aboard the *Powhatan*. Perry wrote glowingly of how extravagantly he treated his guests, stating that “I spared no pains in providing most bountifully for this numerous party, being desirous of giving them some idea of American hospitality.”²⁷⁸ The head chef of the vessel, a Parisian, provided “a variety of ornamental dishes which would have done

²⁷⁵ McCauley, *Diary of Edward Yorke McCauley*, 99.

²⁷⁶ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 215.

²⁷⁷ While it is not necessarily directly related to the diplomacy of the Perry Mission, for a general overview of the gift-giving culture in Japan, see Harumi Befu, “Gift-Giving in a Modernizing Japan,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 23, no. 3/4 (1968).

²⁷⁸ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 188.

credit to Delmonico of New York.”²⁷⁹ Over the course of the evening, “the chief commissioner Hayashi ate and drank sparingly,” but “the others proved themselves good trenchermen,” with one Japanese official even “getting gloriously drunk.”²⁸⁰ After toasts and speeches, the Americans put on a minstrel show, which even the quiet Hayashi enjoyed.²⁸¹ At the end of the night, one of the negotiators, Matsuzaki, embraced the Commodore and drunkenly declared “Nippon and America, all the same heart.”²⁸² Japanese accounts, meanwhile, largely omit this banquet.²⁸³

The reception aboard the *Powhatan* is indicative of an important component of the Commodore’s diplomatic style. So far, I have mostly emphasized Perry’s focus on coercion: when negotiating, he did not suggest, he demanded. However, once Perry’s goal had been achieved – or, at least was indisputably in sight – his demeanor shifted. Suddenly, the Commodore was much more conciliatory, as though afraid continued belligerence would jeopardize what he had accomplished. This also applies to his earlier failure to push for a trade agreement with Hayashi. Perry had gotten some concessions from the Shogun’s representative, but he gave up talk of commerce when he could have pressed his advantage further.

The actual signing of the Treaty of Kanagawa took place a few days later, on March 31 at the reception hall in Yokohama.²⁸⁴ There were some minor last-minute changes: for example, the Japanese refused to allow the phrase “Our Lord Jesus Christ”

²⁷⁹ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 188.

²⁸⁰ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 188.

²⁸¹ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 189.

²⁸² Perry, *Personal Journal*, 189.

²⁸³ Aside from mentioning that it happened in the first place. Likely, this is because the negotiators either did not consider the affair notable or enjoyable, or because they were afraid to be seen behaving frivolously with foreigners.

²⁸⁴ The *Vandalia* and *Southampton* had since returned and indicated that they were satisfied with Shimoda as a port, removing the last obstacle to the treaty signing.

in marking the year on the Chinese translation of the treaty, but the Americans agreed to this without any fuss.²⁸⁵ However, there was one large issue that threatened to derail the entire process. The English translation of the treaty stated that Shimoda was to be open immediately to American sailors, not 12 months later. Perry requested to change the other translations of the treaty (Dutch, Chinese, and Japanese) to reflect this. Oddly enough, this was not a power-play from the Commodore. Perry explained to Hayashi that it was a formality for his government. It would take a year for the democratic system in the United States to ratify the treaty in the first place, so there was no functional change in what was being signed. American ships would not flock to Shimoda before the agreed-upon date. The Commodore, however, could not return to his home country with a treaty that allowed for a year's delay, as this would indicate that he had been too lenient with his terms. Hayashi asked that Perry submit this explanation to him in writing to have some kind of a guarantee, which the Commodore agreed to do. Both sides then signed the treaty. Perry presented the chief negotiator with a large American flag, perhaps the sincerest gift given during the whole exchange.²⁸⁶

Now that his treaty was signed, there was little keeping Perry in Edo. The only thing left for him to do was to personally investigate the ports of Shimoda and Hakodate. Still, the Commodore decided to make one last attempt to visit Edo directly for his personal edification. Once more, the records differ about what happened next. According to the Japanese testimony, Perry politely requested permission from Hayashi, who

²⁸⁵ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 152. The English and Dutch versions kept this phrase, but the Chinese and Japanese versions did not – presumably because both of these languages were more likely understood by any domestic Japanese critics of the negotiating process. Referencing Christianity would have been very unpopular with adherents of the Mito School.

²⁸⁶ “Diary of an Official,” 116.

equally politely rejected him. The Commodore did not persist any further. In Perry's record, though, he insisted that his fleet did sail north for Edo, trying to catch a glimpse of the Shogun's palace, but they turned back due to poor visibility. In this case, the American perspective is more compelling testimony, since both McCauley and Wells Williams corroborated his account. Either way, we know that ultimately Perry did not see more than an outline of the capital in the mist, and left before his confrontational actions could endanger the treaty.

Six ships, including Perry aboard the *Mississippi*, arrived in Shimoda on April 18.²⁸⁷ They would spend a month there, the American leadership assessing the anchorage and working with reluctant local officials to determine the limits of the treaty. The leader of these officials was Kurokawa Kahei, who had earlier unsuccessfully tried to initiate negotiations at the beginning of the 1854 voyage. This time, though, he served as Perry's main point of contact; apparently, the Commodore's policy of exclusivity had lapsed. Kurokawa tried to implement restrictions on American freedom of movement within the tiny village, but the foreign sailors continually challenged these, including Perry himself. On some occasions, the "spies" who followed sailors around found themselves victim to physical assault. McCauley described an encounter when a man named Bibbles grabbed an official named Tatsunosuke who had been following them "by the scruff of the neck and in a few minutes reduced him to a pacific state."²⁸⁸ There was little that the Japanese could do to punish this aggression without enraging the entire fleet. Still, it was clear that local leadership resented the American presence, and the Americans resented being monitored, making the experience unpleasant for all.

²⁸⁷ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 164.

²⁸⁸ McCauley, *Diary of Edward Yorke McCauley*, 112.

After the month was over, Perry's fleet made its way north, for a similar type of expedition to Hakodate, where they arrived on May 17. The Commodore noted with glee his immediate satisfaction with the harbor there, comparing the port to "that of Gibraltar" in strategic value.²⁸⁹ However, there were issues when the fleet tried to disembark. The shogunate had sent representatives from Edo to inform local officials about the Treaty of Kanagawa; however, Perry's ships arrived far sooner. The officials of Hakodate only had a vague inclination that the Americans would visit, and were not made aware that they intended to leave their ships and explore the city. As such, local authorities were not prepared when Perry tried that very action. Without direct guidance from the shogunate, decision-making was left to Endo Matazaemon, the highest-ranking official in the city. Desiring to avoid conflict with the Americans, Endo took the foreigners at their word when presented with a copy of the treaty, and allowed them ashore. A few days later, Matsumae Kageyu, a representative of the family that administrated Hokkaido, joined Endo and backed his policy of accommodation.²⁹⁰

Despite this initial confusion, the stay in Hakodate was much more relaxed for both parties than Shimoda. Endo Matazaemon was particularly well-liked, with Wells Williams remarking that the Americans "have become almost intimate" with him, and Perry proclaiming him "the most sensible and the easiest with whom to transact business of any we have yet met in Japan."²⁹¹ This was likely because Endo put comparatively fewer barriers to interaction between the citizens of Hakodate and the Americans. The only quarrel came in regards to how far sailors were allowed to travel outside the city,

²⁸⁹ Perry, *Personal Journal*, 204.

²⁹⁰ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 191.

²⁹¹ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 190. Perry, *Personal Journal*, 209.

although Perry and Matsumae Kageyu compromised to solve this issue. Hakodate was a larger, more cosmopolitan city than Shimoda, and the people at least temporarily tolerated their strange guests.²⁹²

Worth mentioning is an event that occurred on May 21: a group of American sailors behaved poorly in town on the Sabbath. The following day, Endo and Matsumae presented a list of grievances to Commodore Perry, which included that the sailors had gambled in local temples, climbed over fences to break into houses, and stolen from local shops. Similar events took place back in Shimoda, but Perry had not punished the offending sailors. This time, though, Perry withdrew all of his men from Hakodate in order to punish them, just the very next day.²⁹³ The difference in response was likely due to Perry's rapport with Endo and Matsumae. Because they initially acquiesced to American demands, the Hakodate officials were now in a position to make their own and have Perry listen. It helped that the offending incident took place on a Sunday. Wells Williams noted with shame the hypocrisy by which "a heathen prince" could rightfully complain about "the bad conduct of Christians in his town" on this holy day.²⁹⁴

On June 2, Hakodate officials supplied Commodore Perry's ships with provisions and presented Perry with a bill, as he desired. However, the Commodore believed that he was being charged too little, and made the officials accept some additional gifts to make

²⁹² Matajiro Kojima, a citizen of Hakodate, repeatedly stressed the obtrusive and irritating presence of the Americans, which led to an increase in rice prices. See Matajiro Kojima, *Commodore Perry's Expedition to Hakodate, May 1854, A Private Account with Illustrations* (Hakodate: Hakodate Kyodo Bunkakai), 5. However, the citizenry could not openly complain about the Americans because Endo's government instructed them to "plan with the utmost care that everything may go off quietly while the foreigners are here." Matajiro, *Expedition to Hakodate*, 2. While I was not able to find any primary sources confirming this, Hakodate's willingness to accommodate Perry may have also had something to do with the Russian raids against Hokkaido earlier in the century. Unlike most other Japanese cities, Hakodate had already confronted its vulnerability to European intrusion, likely encouraging cooperation with the Americans.

²⁹³ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 192.

²⁹⁴ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 192.

up the balance. “With this all parties were satisfied.”²⁹⁵ The next day, the American fleet set sail for Shimoda, arriving back on the 7th. Perry spent a few days there ironing out some issues and throwing parties for local Japanese officials.²⁹⁶ On the 23rd, the Commodore notified the local government that he would depart soon, and by the 28th, the last remnants of the American fleet in Japan were gone. Wells Williams observed that “doubtless our departure was a relief to the over-burdened town of Simoda [sic],” if not the entire country.²⁹⁷

Coda: An Occupation in Okinawa

Now that he had succeeded in signing a treaty with the Japanese, Commodore Perry desired to conclude a similar document with the Ryukyans before returning home. Unfortunately, the Commodore’s personal journal ends just before this final phase of the expedition, although Wells Williams and others continued to document events as they occurred. The steamers *Mississippi* and *Powhatan* arrived in Naha on July 1. American sailors who remained in Okinawa during negotiations on the mainland filled Perry in on the goings-on of the southern islands. The Okinawan government was in a state of mourning: the queen dowager had abruptly passed away, mandating a shutdown of the island’s activities.

This information did not bother Perry much, however; of far more concern was a

²⁹⁵ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 201.

²⁹⁶ Williams noted that, during these parties, “both parties felt rather awkward.” It does not appear that the officials of Shimoda particularly appreciated these repeated American offerings. Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 215.

²⁹⁷ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 227.

contemporary incident involving an American sailor named William Board, who had died while the expedition was in Japan. Local government officials informed the Americans that Board's cause of death was drowning, having taken place after a night of drunken antics. Authorities reported the death as an accident, but Perry suspected otherwise. A Western doctor analyzed the body, and determined "that the skull had been almost broken by blows."²⁹⁸ Assuming that the murderers were Okinawan, Perry demanded that the culprits be rounded up and brought to justice, or else he "proposed himself to go ashore" in retaliation.²⁹⁹ By July 5, the Ryukyuan government presented seven individuals to the Commodore, who confessed to committing the crime after Board raped a local woman. Perry did not decide their fate on the spot, but instead handed the Regent a draft of the treaty that he wanted him to sign.

Between the treaty and the assailants, the Regent of Okinawa must have been terrified that an invasion of his island was practically guaranteed. Previously, we have identified how Perry was reluctant to actually use force, even though he frequently threatened to do so. This time, however, the Regent's fears were justified. On July 6, Perry gave the order to "go ashore with twenty marines and take possession of the temple and yard at Tumaï, allowing no natives to enter or remain within the precincts."³⁰⁰ The invasion took place as Perry ordered, and his troops encountered no resistance. While no blood was spilled during the exchange, this action was the most overtly militaristic of the entire expedition. It also completely bound the Regent's hands, forcing him to accept Perry's decisions on the fate of his subjects in the Board case, and the provisions of the

²⁹⁸ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 229.

²⁹⁹ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 230.

³⁰⁰ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 235. Wiley, *Yankees*, 446.

treaty that he was now compelled to sign.

Thusly, the Regent resolved Perry's outstanding issues to the Commodore's satisfaction. The Okinawan government presented the assailants for the Americans to judge, who declared that they were to be banished, not executed.³⁰¹ Just days later, on July 11, the treaty was signed between the U.S. and Okinawa. The agreement was shorter than its Japanese equivalent but also more severe in its wording. Americans would be "treated with great courtesy" when visiting the islands, whereas the Japanese version merely called for "a sincere and cordial amity" between nations.³⁰² His tasks completed, Perry and his ships departed, and by July 20, the fleet had arrived at Ningpo, China. Finally, the Perry Expedition was finished.

Setting the Tone of Future Relations

At the time of the Perry Expedition's close, the United States had concluded two treaties with countries with which, prior to the voyage, it did not have diplomatic relations. These two treaties were the immediate material effects of the trip. However, the larger impact of these voyages, beyond what was written on a piece of paper, were felt across all of Japan. For both its supporters and detractors, the policy of *sakoku* appeared to have reached its end with the signature of the Treaty of Kanagawa, permitting for a foreign presence in two Japanese ports, with more to come. The shogunate suddenly appeared to be on shaky ground. Beginning with Perry's voyages, events would snowball over the coming decades, and the Japan that emerged in 1868 would be fundamentally

³⁰¹ Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 238.

³⁰² Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition*, 246, 155.

different from what was in place under Abe Masahiro and his *roju*.

When viewing the expedition in its totality, it remains difficult to conclude that American diplomatic methods towards Japan were anything other than an early form of gunboat diplomacy. Despite the objection of Samuel Morison, Perry's biographer, the Commodore certainly fits the charges of being a "boorish and bullying 'imperialist'," during the mission.³⁰³ He was haughty, refusing to negotiate with those whom he saw as beneath himself, while also being quick to threaten and intimidate. These threats escalated into brinksmanship, when Perry sailed his vessels up Edo Bay in order to extract concessions from the Japanese. Most importantly, he descended into unmistakable imperialism during the brief occupation of Okinawa. These tactics worked, and in that way, we could say that Commodore Perry was shrewd, for he had accomplished what Biddle had failed to a decade prior. Japan had been "opened," and the treaty Perry desired was signed. But there were downsides. Japanese fears and anxieties about the West were not allayed in the slightest as a result of the trip, and were deeply exacerbated instead.

Perry could still be molded, though, and he was not immune to the tactics of the *bakufu* negotiators. He could have pressed for a trade treaty, but did not. This appears to be from a lack of confidence in his own diplomatic ability – that meaning, diplomacy not stemming from intimidation. When matched with the moral arguments wielded by Hayashi Daigaku-no-Kami, he quickly folded. Once he secured the baseline of what he wanted, Perry was reluctant to press for more, and even became conciliatory, hosting banquets for those he once decried as beneath him. The reception aboard the *Powhatan* and punishment of American sailors in Hakodate further this perception.

³⁰³ Perry, *Personal Journal*, XVIII.

The Japanese were certainly the weaker party in the relationship at this time. The shogunate managed a delicate balancing act, trying to show strength when possible while respecting the power realities on display. The presence of armed battalions at Kurihama Beach and the sumo display are both examples of the Japanese preserving agency. They were not perfect at this: for example, when trying to dismiss Perry after the first Kurihama landing, the Commodore almost made his way to Edo instead. But overall, the government's approach centered more around conciliation than strength, especially after the *roju* decided to re-dedicate itself to this philosophy in the wake of the national debate between the voyages. Hayashi Daigaku-no-Kami added a touch of moral firmness to the Japanese position, thereby preventing a trade treaty, the worst possible outcome for the country. The resulting Treaty of Kanagawa still contained compromises from both sides, although importantly, many of its provisions were already redundant, based on the earlier repeal of "Shell-and-Repel" policy.

By evaluating the approaches, successes, and failures of both sides of the Perry Expedition, we can arrive at the baseline of what U.S.–Japan diplomacy was like at this early point in their relationship. The United States, as the more powerful side, acted aggressively. It pushed demands that the Japanese had no choice but to accept, at least in some form. Americans were largely antagonistic toward the Japanese, believing them to be deceitful and slippery. They were also determined that Western norms needed to be imposed on the country. As the weaker party in this diplomatic equation, the Japanese sought outcomes that would let them maintain as much independence as possible without risking war. They were anxious and uncomfortable with Western norms, but still participated, if only because they were forced to. When negotiating amongst themselves,

the members of the *roju* ultimately agreed on a pragmatic solution. To sum it up briefly, the Americans were aggressive; the Japanese, defensive.

The Perry Expedition was a rebirth, albeit forced and unpleasant, for the diplomatic relationship between the United States and Japan. The next major trans-Pacific mission would not take place until 1860, when the Tokugawa Shogunate found itself in a very different world. New diplomatic methods were needed, and new responses would be used in that coming endeavor. By analyzing the 1860 mission, we can begin to understand elements of change and continuity stemming from the baseline set by Commodore Perry and his expedition in 1853 and 1854.

IV. THE TOKUGAWA EMBASSY OF 1860

Introduction and Historiography

In the early months of 1860, representatives of the government of the shogun boarded two warships, one Japanese, one American, as they embarked on a journey from their home country to the United States. Their mission was diplomatic in nature. The *roju* had tasked these ambassadors with obtaining the American signatures necessary to ratify a new treaty between the countries. After a rough voyage spanning several weeks, both vessels eventually made landfall in San Francisco, where the procession subsequently split up. One half of the embassy remained on the West Coast, while their counterparts travelled east for meetings with President Buchanan and a whirlwind tour of the country's northeastern cities. Regardless of where they explored, each Japanese ambassador interacted with a fascinated American public, and by the end of the trip both sides formed more concrete opinions about the other based on those experiences.

This endeavor was the 1860 Tokugawa Mission, the next major diplomatic encounter this thesis will explore. This time it was Japan travelling to the United States in the government's first foreign mission since the implementation of *sakoku* in the 1630s. Naturally, it was an important step for Japan's participation in the international system, and while abroad, the shogun's delegates exhibited a new agency not present in 1853 and 1854. However, this was a reluctant agency the ambassadors exercised only after prodding from American officials. Washington had a vested interest in making sure the trip went smoothly, and American stakeholders carefully curated the Japanese itinerary

with the goal of reinforcing the optics of American power on the world stage. Conflict between the two countries was no longer open but morphed into behind-the-scenes tension and distain. The mission also had a fixed outcome that was decided before the ambassadors ever departed, meaning there were a lack of traditional, high policy-centric talks. In absence of these, this chapter utilizes alternate manifestations of what constitutes “diplomacy,” including a greater focus on public diplomacy.³⁰⁴

In its day, the Tokugawa Embassy was regarded as a major event in the United States, comparable to Perry’s voyages. Since then, however, Western academics have largely neglected the expedition. Within the available historiography, most notable is Masao Miyoshi’s *As We Saw Them: The First Japanese Embassy to the United States*, which focuses on the impressions the Japanese developed about their host country. Some members, particularly Vice-Ambassador Muragaki Awaji-no-Kami, were critical of the United States, while others sought to bridge the cross-cultural gap with American onlookers. Additionally, *As We Saw Them* is useful because it provides excerpts from voyage diaries that remain untranslated in their entirety. Other works which discuss Japanese perceptions of America include Romulus Hillsborough’s *Samurai Revolution* and parts of Donald Keene’s *Modern Japanese Diaries*, which includes commentary on Muragaki’s diary and that of Commodore Kimura Settsu-no-Kami.³⁰⁵

More numerous within the English historiography are works by Western scholars that analyze American impressions of their Japanese guests. These include Tom and

³⁰⁴ “Public Diplomacy” is a tricky term to define, but for simplicity’s sake, this chapter will use it to refer to the unofficial relations between ordinary people belonging to different societies. For example, in this case, what did average Americans think about the visiting Japanese, and vice-versa?

³⁰⁵ The entirety of Commodore Kimura’s diary has not been published in English, making the snippets available in Keene’s work the best available text.

Sidney Marshall's *The Tycoon's Ambassadors*, which provides the perspective of Captain Samuel Du Pont, along with journal articles by Reginald Kearney and David Scott.³⁰⁶ Patterson Dubois' article *The Great Japanese Embassy of 1860* is interesting because it is both a secondary source written by a historian after the fact, and also a primary account since Dubois was present as a young boy for the occasion.

The comparative paucity of scholarly attention paid to the 1860 Tokugawa Mission is surprising, given the variety of high-quality sources from both the Japanese and American perspectives. To briefly address some, two diaries of the Japanese ambassadors have been fully reproduced in English: Vice-Ambassador Muragaki's *Kokai Nikki* and Masakiyo Kanesaburo Yanagawa's *The First Japanese Mission to America, 1860*.³⁰⁷ Fukuzawa Yukichi, the renowned father of the Japanese enlightenment, also recorded his experiences in his *Autobiography* long after the fact. American naval officers John Mercer Brooke and James D. Johnston, both of whom participated, kept diaries as well.³⁰⁸ Rounding out these sources are Senate publications of communiques between high-ranking diplomats, and the abundance of American newspaper articles written during each phase of the embassy's trip.

³⁰⁶ Respectively "Reactions to the First Japanese Embassy to the United States," and "Diplomats and Poets: 'Power and Perceptions' in American Encounters with Japan, 1860."

³⁰⁷ More about Muragaki will be detailed once this thesis arrives at his appointment to the mission. We know relatively little about Yanagawa, other than that he was a retainer of Chief Ambassador Shimmi Buzen-no-Kami. Yanagawa Masakiyo Kanesaburo, *The First Japanese Mission to America (1860): Being a Diary Kept by a Member of the Embassy* (Kobe: J.L. Thompson & Co., 1937), i. This suggests that Yanagawa was a member of the samurai class, but does not tell us much about his family's wealth or standing. Many retainers came from both wealthy and poor backgrounds. Yanagawa wrote much less about his impressions than Muragaki did, though, and instead focused on facts about the mission. This may be a good thing, since modern historians can worry less about his biases.

³⁰⁸ Johnston served as an officer aboard the *Powhatan* from 1853-56; however, he was not listed as one of the officers who participated in the Perry Expeditions, so it is possible he was absent for those endeavors. Johnston would resign from the U.S. Navy in 1861, becoming a commander in the Confederate Navy. He fought in the Battle of Mobile Bay and was held prisoner until the end of the war. Spencer Tucker, ed. *The Civil War Naval Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 331.

This chapter uses both traditional and public diplomacy to explain that the 1860 Tokugawa Mission represented a tentative step forward for Japan on the world stage, as well as a relaxation of outright hostility toward Japan by the American government. I also illustrate how the optics of a Japanese visit to the United States were just as important as Perry's earlier negotiations, since the Americans sought to use this opportunity to assert their growing power against Europe. As such, the reader should be able to see the developing relationship between nations, away from antagonism and toward a form of conciliation, setting the stage for future cooperation.

Changing Japan, Changing America, and the Harris Treaty

The Convention of Kanagawa, Perry's 1854 treaty with the shogunate, was a relatively small step forward in terms of what it actually provided. The Commodore failed to secure trading privileges for the United States at Japanese ports. What he did secure was the limited "opening" of the small fishing hamlet of Shimoda, and of the well-stocked but remote Hakodate, neither of which were key power centers for the Japanese government. American ships could land at these ports and receive supplies, but these gains were admittedly minimal. Writing after the Convention's ratification, the *Weekly Herald* remarked that, while the treaty was not entirely "a dead letter," it was still "a great cry...made about an exceedingly small amount of wool."³⁰⁹ The publication insisted "new treaties...are required, and will doubtless soon be concluded."³¹⁰ Other papers

³⁰⁹ "The News from Japan – Another Test of the Value of Commodore Perry's Treaty," *Weekly Herald*, February 2, 1856, 37.

³¹⁰ "The British Treaty with Japan," *Weekly Herald*, February 9, 1856, 45.

reported that the Japanese already failed to abide by the treaty, and had turned away American sailors who tried to land at the open ports.³¹¹ As more complaints mounted, it became clear that the Treaty of Kanagawa was inadequate for U.S. interests.

Despite the treaty's commercial failures, it did contain provisions that played a key role in the developing relationship between the United States and Japan. One of these was Article XI, which established an American consulate in Shimoda to represent U.S. trade interests.³¹² The position of consul-general was filled by Townsend Harris, a merchant-turned-diplomat from New York whom President Pierce appointed.³¹³ Much like Perry before him, Harris had no prior experience with Japan, although he could at least boast some experience in Asia, as he had briefly served as the American vice-consul at Ningpo, China.³¹⁴ After following Perry's voyage with great interest, Harris jumped at the opportunity for the newly created consular position. In a letter to the President, he indicated, "I have long had a strong desire to visit Japan; and so deep has this feeling become that, if I was offered the choice between Commissioner to China or Consul to Japan, I should instantly take the latter."³¹⁵ Notably, Commodore Perry himself backed Harris's nomination, which was crucial in Pierce's final decision.³¹⁶

Townsend Harris arrived in Shimoda in August 1856 and set up the first foreign consulate at Gyokusen-Ji, a Buddhist temple. Once situated, the consul worked to finish

³¹¹ John Rodgers, "Infringement of the Japanese Treaty," *National Intelligencer*, October 16, 1855.

³¹² US Department of State. 1854. Treaty of Kanagawa. U.S.–Japan. March 31. The reader will recall that this had been a major sticking point for the Japanese, but Perry eventually found a way to get this provision into the treaty. The exact negotiations behind how he did so are, unfortunately, unavailable.

³¹³ Townsend Harris, *The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris, First American Consul General and Minister to Japan* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1930), 24-25.

³¹⁴ William Elliot Griffis, *Townsend Harris: First American Envoy in Japan* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1895), 15.

³¹⁵ Harris, *Complete Journal*, 9.

³¹⁶ Harris, *Complete Journal*, 15.

what Perry had started by trying to formulate a coherent policy for the United States in Japan. Mirroring the Commodore, Harris's negotiating style was overbearing and demanding, especially over matters of protocol and proper displays of respect. Harris often insisted that, since he "was not a Japanese subject, and being as [he] was the diplomatic representative of the United States," he could conduct diplomacy without respecting the customs of his host country.³¹⁷ For example, he refused to take off his shoes before entering a room, or ride in a palanquin for transportation. While appearing to be obsessed with minutia on the surface, Harris understood that negotiating on Japanese terms might be perceived as weakness by Edo, hence his obstinance.

Harris's main diplomatic goal in Japan was to seek a new treaty with the shogun's government, allowing full trading privileges. It does not appear that he received specific orders from Washington to do so; rather, his decision was based on analysis of what would benefit American interests. At the time, American businessmen largely wanted an open Japanese market for American goods. In terms of reciprocal Japanese goods, silk and tea were popular luxury items, along with coal (so desired by Daniel Webster before Perry's voyages) and copper, although Japan only had limited natural resources to draw from.³¹⁸ Still, the allure of a captive market for U.S. business likely drove most of Harris's maneuvering. The mention of a new treaty first appeared in a journal entry from November 14, 1856. After meeting a man named Possiet of the Russian Corvette *Olivuzza*, Harris learned that the czardom had concluded its first treaty with the shogunate.³¹⁹ This put pressure on the consul: if the U.S. lost the initiative in Japan to

³¹⁷ Harris, *Complete Journal*, 420.

³¹⁸ Lillian Li, "Silks by Sea: Trade, Technology, and Enterprise in China and Japan," *The Business History Review* 56, no. 2 (Summer 1982): 195.

³¹⁹ Harris, *Complete Journal*, 260.

European rivals, he, as the sole in-country representative, could be held responsible.

In the face of this situation, Harris began treaty negotiations with the shogunate in earnest.³²⁰ On January 8, 1857, he sent a letter to the *roju* in which he vaguely claimed that Japan was “threatened with great calamities,” which imperiled “her national honor and the welfare of her people.”³²¹ These threats did “not emanate from the United States, but from other Governments.”³²² Only by allying with the United States and signing a new treaty could the Japanese secure a “safe and honorable remedy against these threatened evils.”³²³ In a subsequent letter, Harris clarified that England was the power with the most concrete designs against Japan, although he kept those plans vague, likely because he was making them up.³²⁴ The consul-general then insisted that “the terms demanded by a [European] fleet would never be as moderate as those asked” for by himself, and for the nervous shogunate who still feared an Opium War of its own, this offer fell upon receptive ears.³²⁵ While an analysis of the subsequent negotiations behind the Harris Treaty is beyond the scope of this chapter, it should suffice to say that the consul was successful in finally securing the trade deal the United States sought.

The conditions that made the 1860 Tokugawa Embassy possible were laid down during the Harris Treaty negotiations. Over this stretch from late 1856 to 1858, the *roju* was in turmoil. An alliance of *tozama daimyo* and the imperial court forced Abe Masahiro to step down in 1855, but he was replaced with the similarly indecisive Hotta

³²⁰ Harris’s account of the negotiations is the sole record in English of such, hence my reliance on his perspective.

³²¹ *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America: Documents 173-200: 1855-1858* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931), 625.

³²² *Treaties and Other International Acts*, 625.

³²³ *Treaties and Other International Acts*, 625.

³²⁴ *Treaties and Other International Acts*, 628.

³²⁵ Harris, *Complete Journal*, 485. The Second Opium War (1856-1860) between Britain and China was still raging during these negotiations.

Masayoshi who wavered on what Japan should concede to the Americans.³²⁶ Trying to take advantage of the confusion, Tokugawa Nariaki volunteered “to be sent to America on Japan’s behalf,” along with a retinue of samurai, to talk the Americans out of pursuing their treaty.³²⁷ Although Nariaki’s plan was quite different from what the 1860 Tokugawa Embassy would eventually become, it was the first mention of the government sending some kind of embassy abroad to meet the Americans and discuss the treaty.³²⁸

Hotta Masayoshi lost power once it became clear he could not secure the loyalty of the *tozama* or the increasingly meddlesome imperial court in Kyoto.³²⁹ In his place rose Ii Naosuke, the *daimyo* of Hikone. Ii was a powerful decision maker during the Perry Expedition, and advocated opening Japan’s ports to take advantage of Western technology. Unlike Hotta, though, Ii was a ruthless leader, and as the *roju*’s *tairo* (“great elder”), he did not waver on implementing his specific vision. To the horror of Nariaki and the Mito School adherents, Ii purged his rivals from government and quickly approved the full Treaty of Yedo with the Americans.³³⁰ The document itself was signed on July 29, 1858 aboard the U.S.S. *Powhatan*. Once the floodgates were open, Ii also concluded new treaties with Great Britain, Russia, the Netherlands, and France during the same year. This was a massive shock to the system for Japan, which only five years prior

³²⁶ Much like Abe Masahiro and Ii Naosuke, Hotta favored limited concessions to the Westerners and the conclusion of some treaties.

³²⁷ Tokugawa Nariaki, “Tokugawa Nariaki to Roju, 30 December 1857,” in *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, ed. W. G. Beasley (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 169.

³²⁸ Given Nariaki’s temperament and background, we can assume that he intended his embassy to be combative towards the US.

³²⁹ Despite the Emperor’s lack of formal political power, Emperor Komei, father to the Meiji Emperor, managed to use his considerable symbolic sway to influence certain shogunate policies in the late 1850s and 1860s. Most of the initiatives were organized by Komei’s court, which sought a more visible political role for the Emperor and the court as a whole. The court only truly began meddling in *bakufu* policy a few years later. While unfortunately, to detail more about these trends is beyond the scope of this thesis, suffice to say that this was unprecedented for the Emperor under the Tokugawa system.

³³⁰ The Treaty of Yedo was the official name for the Harris Treaty.

had been almost completely closed to the outside world. The *tairo*'s openness was also a negative for Harris since, despite securing the treaty, the American position in Japan was still threatened by Europeans. In the wake of Ii's signings, it became a race to woo Japan, and a dramatic gesture like being the recipient of Japan's first foreign embassy could tip the balance in one power's favor.

Origins of the 1860 Embassy

The Treaty of Yedo had been signed, but it was not yet ratified by the U.S. government. How this would take place was something that had come up during earlier negotiations. Harris originally suggested that the shogunate send forth a delegation to the United States to obtain the necessary presidential signature, but the *bakufu* deferred the discussion, not wanting to appear too eager for foreign travel.³³¹ Still, the topic could not be delayed indefinitely, as Western diplomatic norms required ratification for foreign treaties to be considered legitimate.

The catalyst for renewed discussion came in February 1858, during a particularly intense round of negotiations. Harris and the *bakufu* representatives were arguing about freedom of movement for Americans visiting Osaka. So far, the treaty allowed visits to the city, but there were strict prohibitions on residency. Harris wanted a more lenient policy, but the discussion was not moving in that direction. Midway through the day on the 6th, the shogun's negotiators abruptly suggested that if an American "might suddenly be taken sick while on a visit," they would be quarantined in a facility *outside* Osaka, to

³³¹ Appearing enthusiastic for such a mission could put one's life at risk at the hands of violent *Sonno Joi* supporters, and was generally unpopular with the public.

rule out any chance they spent too much time in the city.³³² Frustrated after months of negotiations, Harris was “indignant,” although the resulting explosion suggests his actual feelings were more severe.³³³ The consul-general proclaimed that the Japanese “proposition was so very offensive that I would not consent to have it again interpreted to me,” and the negotiators were acting “with bad faith.”³³⁴ He then threatened to reevaluate earlier parts of the treaty that had already been agreed upon, potentially scuttling any Japanese gains. Most alarmingly, Harris invoked the idea that Americans had the right to reside in Kyoto, the imperial capital, which had long been insulated from foreigners.

The threat of outsiders trespassing on sacred ground was too much for the shogunate. In Harris’s description, the Japanese “stammered and boggled for some time,” before “partially admitting that the proposal was none of their making.”³³⁵ Then, they dropped the question of Osaka entirely; in its place, the negotiators quickly shifted to ratification. They volunteered to “send an ambassador in their steamer to Washington via California for [the] purpose” of completing this task, which surprised and pleased Harris. This was a tactical move on the Japanese part. The negotiators were likely aware of the pressure Harris was under, and volunteering for the pomp and circumstance of a trans-Pacific voyage would go a long way to appeasing Washington. Sure enough, Harris did not bring up the questions of Kyoto and Osaka again. Much like with Perry’s expedition before, the ratification voyage began out of a perceived slight to American interests.

Once the shogunate made clear that it was willing to embark on such an adventure, Harris did not waste time moving forward with preparations. In a letter dated

³³² Harris, *Complete Journal*, 530.

³³³ Harris, *Complete Journal*, 530.

³³⁴ Harris, *Complete Journal*, 530.

³³⁵ Harris, *Complete Journal*, 530.

September 6, 1858, he outlined his vision for the trip.³³⁶ The Japanese would travel across the Pacific Ocean before proceeding down through Panama. After crossing the isthmus, they would travel to Washington for the signing. As the Japanese were still new to the international system, Harris also requested that the U.S. government cover their expenses. This would be fair payment for Harris's own costs he had incurred over the past four years, which the shogunate had already paid.³³⁷ The consul even began reaching out to the rapidly growing expatriate community in Japan, and selected officials to oversee the expedition.³³⁸ Meanwhile, the shogunate also began preparations, seeking out crew members and ambassadors to represent the government abroad.

The first issue was which vessels would be used. The *bakufu* was determined that its ambassadors should travel aboard a ship of the nascent Tokugawa Navy. Doing so would highlight Japan's agency in this adventure, while also showcasing the country's recent technological achievements. However, Harris had seen the state of the government's vessels: "they tell me it will take the steamer two days to run from Kanagawa to Shimoda," a distance of only 100 miles, and "if this be true, it must be a very poor affair, and will hardly take their Ambassador to San Francisco."³³⁹ If anything happened to the ambassadors, it would reflect negatively on the United States; therefore, the consul insisted on an alternative. Once again, the U.S.S. *Powhatan* would be adequate for the ambassadors. The main retinue would travel aboard that vessel, crewed by Americans, while a Japanese warship served as an escort. The shogunate selected the

³³⁶ Townsend Harris, "Mr. Harris to Mr. Cass, September 6th, 1858" in *Documents Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Volume 49* (Washington), 274.

³³⁷ Harris, "September 6th, 1858," 274.

³³⁸ Notably, flag-officer Josiah Tattnall of the U.S. Navy had already agreed to captain a vessel.

³³⁹ Harris, *Complete Journal*, 556.

Kanrin Maru, a Dutch corvette that was Japan's first warship since 1633.

The selection of the Japanese sailors to crew the *Kanrin Maru* was a simple process, as the shogunate only had a small pool of candidates to choose from. The star pupil of the naval academy at Nagasaki was Katsu Kaishu, the son of a low-ranking samurai, who earned a position as captain due to his high marks. Katsu's immediate superior, Kimura Settsu-no-Kami Yoshitake, came from the academy as well. He was less skilled than Katsu but had a better familial pedigree. As for the ordinary crew members, Kimura and Katsu selected their subordinates. Fukuzawa Yukichi, a student of Western learning, "went to Captain Kimura's house, and begged him to take [him] along as his servant," so that he could see the West firsthand.³⁴⁰ Kimura agreed, but he may not have had much choice, as "there were not many volunteers" who wanted to go abroad.³⁴¹

The *bakufu*'s selection of ambassadors to lead the embassy proved more difficult. Masao Miyoshi explains that the government had qualified individuals: students of foreign policy like Iwase Tadanari and Kawaji Toshiakira.³⁴² While these men would have been able diplomats, they were on the wrong end of domestic politics in the late 1850s. With the ascendancy of Ii Naosuke, anyone in government with strong leanings, liberal or conservative, were targets of his "Ansei Purge." The men arrested included figures like Hotta Masayoshi, Tokugawa Nariaki, and the future shogun Hitotsubashi Keiki, but also lower-ranking figures like Iwase, Kawaji, and others.

With the career diplomats under house arrest, Ii's *roju* looked to officials with

³⁴⁰ Fukuzawa Yukichi, *The Autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 106.

³⁴¹ Fukuzawa, *Autobiography*, 106.

³⁴² Miyoshi, Masao, *As We Saw Them: The First Japanese Embassy to the United States* (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, Inc., 1979), 19. Iwase had previously served as *gaikoku-bugyo*, one of the diplomats created by Hotta Masayoshi's initiative in 1858, rendering him uniquely qualified. Beasley, *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, 333.

appropriate pedigrees instead, as was common in Neo-Confucian Tokugawa society. This was largely in spite of their actual qualifications. The government named Shimmi Buzen-no-Kami Masaoki as the first chief ambassador, who came from a background of only a few weeks of diplomatic training. Second in command was Muragaki Awaji-no-Kami Norimasa, the governor of Yokohama. Muragaki was more qualified for his position, since he had some experience with foreigners during a prior stint as the magistrate of Hakodate.³⁴³ Rounding out the trio was Oguri Bungo-no-Kami Tadamasa, who held the position of *metsuke* (chief censor) and was responsible for monitoring the embassy's conduct while abroad. Of the three, Oguri was the most qualified, having been *metsuke* for the *gaikoku-gakari*, the diplomatic committee created by Hotta Masayoshi in 1856.³⁴⁴

The original Treaty of Yedo stipulated that ratification would take place before July 4, 1859, but no ships had sailed by that date. Even at its most optimistic, the original deadline was too tight a turnaround, but Townsend Harris knew that any more delay would cause problems. In a March 1859 letter, Harris revealed that he had become aware of “an effort made by the English to procure an embassy from [Japan] to England, either

³⁴³ Of the three, Muragaki has the most written about him, and since this chapter relies heavily on his diary, a few more details about the vice ambassador are worth mentioning. Miyoshi writes that Harris was not happy with his choice (and the choices of Shimmi and Oguri, as well), calling him “ignorant of the international situation.” Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them*, 21. While Muragaki may not have had much formal education about the West, he did try and educate himself as much as possible in the months before the voyage, as recorded in John Mercer Brooke's diary. His diary, the *Kokai Nikki*, is an extremely interesting primary source. Frequently, Muragaki made comments that might be expected for someone of his social and educational background, remarks that were highly critical of the United States and the practices of the “barbarians”. However, Muragaki also made comments recognizing the common humanity between himself and his hosts abroad, indicating his changing mindset. When reading the *Nikki*, one should strive to be cognizant of Muragaki's background as a Tokugawa bureaucrat for proper context.

³⁴⁴ Beasley, *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, 338. However, as *metsuke*, Oguri's main task would have been monitoring and reporting on the *gaikoku-gakari*, which may have exposed him to foreign policy, but did not necessarily mean that he learned a considerable amount about it. Unfortunately, Oguri's perspective on the events of the 1860 mission is particularly hard to determine for the English-speaker, as any records he compiled remain untranslated.

in advance of that to the United States or simultaneously with it.”³⁴⁵ So far, Harris’s threats of British imperialism had dissuaded the Japanese from forming much of a relationship with English consul-general Rutherford Alcock, but the urgency of this letter indicated Harris’s worry that this could change. Because it was “probable that those [English] efforts will be renewed,” Harris quickly negotiated an additional clause for the treaty, providing “that no embassy shall be sent to any country until after the arrival of the Japanese ambassadors [sic] at Washington.”³⁴⁶

One of the Americans who became involved in the preparation process was John Mercer Brooke, a navy lieutenant living in Yokohama.³⁴⁷ Brooke first became involved due to his working relationship with Vice-Ambassador Muragaki, whom he frequently met with to discuss voyage logistics.³⁴⁸ Commodore Josiah Tattnall, who had already accepted a leadership position aboard the *Powhatan*, subsequently spoke with Brooke about the possibility of him accompanying the *Kanrin Maru* as an advisor. Although the lieutenant wrote in his diary that he was “not anxious to go in the Japanese Steamer,” he felt some obligation to do so, to repay the generosity of his Japanese neighbors in

³⁴⁵ Townsend Harris, “Mr. Harris to Mr. Cass, March 23rd, 1859,” in *Documents Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Volume 49* (Washington), 279.

³⁴⁶ Harris, “March 23rd, 1859,” 279.

³⁴⁷ Yokohama was, by 1860, one of the main ports with a large foreign presence, and served as an early melting pot for foreigners and Japanese – as such, a few details about it are worth recounting, since this cultural environment likely informed the perspectives of both Brooke and Muragaki. C.T. Assendelft de Coningh, a Dutchman living there, recalled the environment of 1859-1860 as being tense, with many foreign residents fearing violence from disgruntled samurai. The U.S. government mostly left Americans to fend for themselves, with de Coningh writing that Washington only sent one warship per year “to see if all the Yankees were still alive.” de Coningh, *A Pioneer in Yokohama*, 60-61. This tense environment is important, as it is likely it contributed to Muragaki’s frequent skepticism about the West that he espoused during the voyage. Additionally, it makes Brooke’s positive attitude towards his Japanese neighbors more notable. Brooke wrote frequently about the attacks against Westerners living in Yokohama, but did not give the impression that he was particularly afraid himself. He did note, however, that “one should be armed in Japan where so many wear swords and are so quick to use them.” John Mercer Brooke, “Brooke Journals,” in *Collected Documents of the Japanese Mission to America 1860, Volume V*, ed. George M. Brooke, Jr. & Eiichi Kiyooka (Tokyo: Association for Japan-U.S. Amity & Trade Centennial, 1961), 21.

³⁴⁸ Brooke, “Brooke Journals,” 9.

Yokohama.³⁴⁹ Brooke agreed, and in early January 1860, Commodore Tattnall gave him his formal orders “to assist or aid in navigating a Japanese Government steamer to Panama.”³⁵⁰

Once both sides finished gathering their representatives, final departure from Yokohama rapidly approached. The Treaty of Yedo was placed in a handsome black lacquer box adorned with purple satin and scarlet cords, indicating the importance of the event. The *roju* also wrote letters in the shogun’s name, both for the American president and their departing ambassadors. In the letter for Shimmi, Muragaki, and Oguri, there was a vaguely ominous command that the trio were “to be careful about all business matters of importance so that the peace and friendship between both countries be permanent.”³⁵¹ Indeed, the importance of their mission was not lost on the envoys, or on the American and *bakufu* officials who had put it all together.

The Journey Across the Ocean

Recounting the details of the 1860 embassy’s trans-Pacific voyage is worthwhile because it provides examples of the changing public diplomacy between the United States and Japan. The long crossing gave sailors like Katsu Kaishu and John Mercer

³⁴⁹ Brooke, “Brooke Journals,” 43. Brooke had shipwrecked off Japan in 1859 and had lived in Yokohama since. He was one of the only Americans living there not engaging in currency manipulation, a practice that made merchants quite a bit of money but earned them the ire of the Japanese. Because of this, Brooke was uniquely well-regarded by his neighbors and local officials. This made him a good fit to advise the crew of the *Kanrin Maru*. This is the view of Brooke put forth by Brooke’s descendant, George Brooke, in the introduction to his journals. While it is certainly possible that George Brooke wanted to paint a positive, progressive picture of his ancestor in this description, the younger Brooke’s view is corroborated by his co-editor Eiichi Kiyooka, a historian and the translator of works such as *The Autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa*, who wrote equally glowingly of John Brooke.

³⁵⁰ Brooke, “Brooke Journals,” 50.

³⁵¹ Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them*, 27.

Brooke opportunities to form opinions of their counterparts, and these opinions illustrated the broader shifting relationship between the U.S. and Japan. Tension was certainly prominent – the Japanese crew of the *Kanrin Maru* distrusted Brooke's intentions, while Brooke often believed the Japanese to be incompetent. However, opportunities for cooperation necessarily came up during the rough voyage, and by the end, we see that each side formed a partial respect for the other. In this way, the voyages described in the following section represent a transition from conflict to collaboration, thereby illustrating the broader historical process presented in this thesis.

The weeks prior to the Embassy's planned mid-February departure date were anxious ones for its principal actors. Muragaki in particular was nervous: he recounted in his diary that he had not volunteered for his position nor really desired it in the first place. Instead, Ii Naosuke directly ordered him to accomplish this task.³⁵² His participation "should be considered as the greatest honor that a man can ever hope for," but "the more I thought of my responsibility, realizing that failure in accomplishing this unprecedented task of serving as an envoy to the strange land would constitute an irreparable disgrace to our country, the heavier became my heart."³⁵³ The vice-ambassador attended multiple going-away parties in his honor, and each time, this responsibility was repeatedly hammered home by guests. Government officials read poetry they composed for the occasion: "*Upon your mission rests matters of national importance, And never should any disgrace stain the name of the Eastern Emperor.*"³⁵⁴ Another proclaimed, "*Let your banner stream proudly before the ruler of the strange country, And with magnanimity*

³⁵² Muragaki Awaji-no-Kami, *Kokai Nikki: The Diary of the First Japanese Embassy to the United States of America* (Tokyo: The Foreign Affairs Association of Japan, 1958), 1.

³⁵³ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 2.

³⁵⁴ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 4.

and dignity, conquer even the monster dragon.”³⁵⁵ Despite American assurances, it was clear that the Japanese were preparing for the possibility that this would not be a friendly encounter. Muragaki’s poetry simply expressed resignation: “*Leaving my fate in the care of the Gods and my Sovereign, I depart to seek my renown in the strange land.*”³⁵⁶

As early February came around, both sides gathered their belongings and loaded the ships. Aboard the *Powhatan*, American sailors complained about the smell of Japanese foodstuffs, including pickles, soy sauce, rice, fish and *sake*, all of which were packed in massive quantities. For the Japanese travelers, however, these small comforts proved essential for their well-being while abroad. Western food was anathema to most in the shogun’s delegation. Once these final preparations were done, the *Kanrin Maru*, with its Japanese crew and American support team (headed by Brooke), departed from Uraga Bay on February 10.

The *Powhatan*, however, experienced a delay as an unforeseen obstacle came up, threatening the voyage before it could begin. James Johnston described the situation “at this unpropitious moment, [taking] the shape of a diplomatic correspondence between our Minister resident at Yedo and the British Consul-General.”³⁵⁷ The British legation, still unhappy that the Japanese were not visiting London first, attempted an interception by accusing the Americans of taking excessive amounts of Japanese coins aboard the *Powhatan*. Currency manipulation had been a problem for years now, and it was likely that the Americans *were* guilty of this claim; however, they were also not singularly responsible. Johnston noted that “there were English merchants in Yokuhama [sic],

³⁵⁵ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 8.

³⁵⁶ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 9.

³⁵⁷ James Johnston, *China and Japan: Being a Narrative of the Cruise of the U.S. Steam-Frigate Powhatan* (Philadelphia: C. Desilver, 1860), 327.

however, who contrived to procure the exchange of itzibus for large sums in dollars.”³⁵⁸

By emphasizing the above complaint, Alcock suggested that Britain was not being treated fairly under Japan’s treaty obligations. This, in turn, would provide justification for the British consul to insist on his country’s rights through force. If the shogunate wanted to avoid an intervention, then Alcock had a counter-offer prepared: the Japanese embassy would instead take a British steamer “so far as Aden, on the overland route to England, with suitable arrangements for the continuance of the journey.”³⁵⁹ If successful, this would secure for the English the procession they desired, instead of the Americans.

Alcock’s move backfired, though, since his intimidating stance made the Japanese government even less eager to accept his invitation. The local governor of Kanagawa staunchly denied any claims of American currency hoarding, and insisted that, even if they had, the “Japanese government reserved to itself the right of granting personal favors to whomsoever it thought proper.”³⁶⁰ While further information of what subsequently occurred is unavailable, any lack of further discussion suggests that the British consul dropped the claim. This exchange does illustrate some changing power dynamics, though. The reception of the first Japanese embassy abroad was something that was so sought-after that rival powers were willing to try underhanded tactics to get what they wanted. However, even though Alcock could have followed through with his threat, he opted not to, suggesting that he did not want to risk his country’s relationship with Japan any more than he already had.

With this distraction resolved, the *Powhatan* finally departed on February 13,

³⁵⁸ Johnston, *China and Japan*, 330-331. “Itzibus” (ichibus) were pre-Restoration Japanese coins.

³⁵⁹ Johnston, *China and Japan*, 333.

³⁶⁰ Johnston, *China and Japan*, 334.

flying both the flags of the United States and the Tokugawa Shogunate. The American ship band played in honor of the successful departure, but the Japanese ambassadors dismissed their strange-sounding instruments as nothing more than barbarian music. Even upon their arrival to America, they would never get used to this noise. Shortly after, the Americans posted the rules for shipboard behavior in mutually intelligible Dutch, some of which further contributed to Japanese discomfort. Among these were prohibitions against portable coal-fired braziers in order to prevent fire, but these were ubiquitous fixtures of Edo Period Japanese rooms.³⁶¹

Meanwhile, the *Kanrin Maru* was already well into its trans-Pacific journey. Captain Brooke was still in the process of getting to know the Japanese sailors who were, in theory, responsible for getting the ship to San Francisco. Most were cordial with Brooke, although this masked their true feelings. For Katsu Kaishu, the American presence aboard the Japanese warship was insulting. His crew's goal was to highlight that Japanese sailors were just as good as foreigners, but this was impossible with Brooke aboard. Instead, it would appear that the Japanese were little more than children, guided by a superior Westerner. Fukuzawa Yukichi later wrote that "the Japanese officers were to receive no aid from Captain Brooke throughout the voyage...we were never in the least dependent on the Americans."³⁶² However, this appears unlikely. Other crew members were less proud, including Kimura, who highlighted his gratitude towards Captain Brooke for his guidance.³⁶³ The most open and engaged member of the crew, though, was a sailor named Manjiro, who already spoke English and had lived in the

³⁶¹ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 2.

³⁶² Donald Keene, *Modern Japanese Diaries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 33.

³⁶³ Keene, *Modern Japanese Diaries*, 37.

United States. Because of this linguistic connection, Manjiro was one of the few lifelines Brooke had when he needed to communicate orders to his Japanese-speaking crew.³⁶⁴

Soon into its voyage, the *Kanrin Maru* hit rough waters which put the safety of the escort ship into jeopardy. During these storms, the ship tossed and turned violently, which made the majority of the inexperienced Japanese crew seasick. This included both Katsu and Kimura, the former of which was bedridden for almost the entirety of the voyage. Brooke had to man the ship with the few available sailors he could muster. Even as the Japanese crew recovered, though, Brooke realized that their actual skill as sailors was lacking. On February 14, he remarked that the sailors were “not competent” to manage the vessel’s sail, which slowed the ship down.³⁶⁵ By the 16th, Brooke concluded that, despite their desire to show off, “the Japanese seem to rely entirely upon us. It would be amusing if it were not such a serious matter to see how completely they abandon the ship to our two or three men of the watch.”³⁶⁶ For his part, Manjiro did not disappoint in his competence, and Brooke described him as “the only Japanese on board who has any idea” of what needed to be done.³⁶⁷

While the *Kanrin Maru* struggled with personnel issues, the *Powhatan* sailed with

³⁶⁴ Manjiro’s story is interesting and worth briefly recalling here. Nakahama Manjiro was born in the remote Tosa Domain, and was shipwrecked in 1841, after which he was picked up by an American whaling vessel. This ship brought him back to the U.S., and Manjiro lived in Fairhaven, Massachusetts where he learned English. He then returned to Japan in the early 1850s, and was promoted by the shogunate due to his useful language skills. Brooke, “Brooke Journals,” 63.

³⁶⁵ Brooke, “Brooke Journals,” 70.

³⁶⁶ Brooke, “Brooke Journals,” 72. Brooke noted that there were only 16 Americans on board, including himself. Shortly afterward, the captain noticed more issues with his crew: during some later storms, the Japanese sailors ignored his orders about charcoal stoves, and their carelessness led to a small fire in the ship’s galley. More dangerously, the crew had also packed explosives into the ship’s storage. Brooke became aware of this when another American asked for his help dealing with a mysterious box below deck. The captain theorized that it only contained foodstuffs, but upon opening, he “found it full of percussion caps, enough to have blown the cabin up – about 40,000.” See Brooke, “Brooke Journals,” 70-71. As to why the Japanese crew had brought the box in the first place, Brooke was unaware, but he stored it properly with Manjiro’s assistance.

³⁶⁷ Brooke, “Brooke Journals,” 71.

its own problems. The American vessel also started its journey with bad weather. Muragaki described a “terrific gale” that set in, leading all hands to deal with the storm.³⁶⁸ The ambassadors’ luggage “got loose and began to roll about” the ship, but no Japanese was able to do anything because of how seasick they were.³⁶⁹ All the embassy could do was watch “it happen in helpless silence.”³⁷⁰ Yanagawa could only “lay very weak and miserable in [his] bunk.”³⁷¹ Homesickness was also a problem for the first-time travelers. In one of Muragaki’s poems, he remarked that “*Gazing up at the new moon in the sky, my longing is stirred For home.*”³⁷² Despite the conditions, the Americans still noted that “the Japanese gave no indication of fear, but, on the contrary, maintained their cheerful and contented demeanor through all the discomforts.”³⁷³

The storms had taken their toll on the *Powhatan*, and on February 27, the flag-officer made the pivotal decision to divert course.³⁷⁴ The original plan was to sail directly to San Francisco. This is what the ambassadors wanted, since the express purpose of their trip was for them to visit the United States, and that country alone. However, the needs of the ship outweighed diplomatic concerns. There was a “scarcity of water” and too “much coal [had] been consumed.”³⁷⁵ Direct passage to the United States was now impossible for the ship, and the course changed to the nominally-independent Sandwich Islands, better known to the modern reader as the Kingdom of Hawaii.

³⁶⁸ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 13.

³⁶⁹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 14.

³⁷⁰ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 14.

³⁷¹ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 5.

³⁷² Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 16.

³⁷³ Johnston, *China and Japan*, 346.

³⁷⁴ Johnston, *China and Japan*, 348.

³⁷⁵ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 17.

Interlude in the Sandwich Islands

There is something ironic in the fact that Hawaii was ultimately the Japanese embassy's first overseas destination. The parallels with Perry's voyage in 1853 are striking. Although not a blatant puppet-state like the Ryukyus under Japanese domination, the remote kingdom was functionally dominated by American interests in the sugar industry. Other foreign powers also had stakes in Hawaii, which confronted the ambassadors with a vision of Japan's future should their mission fail. This tension was illustrated by the tentative and nervous nature of Japanese diplomacy during their stay in this tropical paradise. Still, there was also an openness to the ambassadors and their crew that is worth exploring.

Muragaki described the port city where the *Powhatan* docked as the "legendary under-sea 'Castle of the Dragon God'," although the American sailors knew the location better as Honolulu.³⁷⁶ Both Westerners and native Hawaiians formed a large reception for the ship, warmly welcoming the ambassadors. Yanagawa described the Hawaiians as having "a black and yellow skin," with some – the "lower class" in particular – resembling "painted demons."³⁷⁷ Muragaki remarked that local women looked "as formidable as ogresses."³⁷⁸ For most in the entourage, this was the first time they had touched foreign soil, and the intimidation they felt was evident in these early descriptions. Many did not want to depart the *Powhatan* at all, worried that doing so would constitute breaking the shogun's orders. Commodore Tattnall insisted otherwise,

³⁷⁶ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 20.

³⁷⁷ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 10.

³⁷⁸ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 23.

explaining that Hawaii “was on amicable terms with the United States,” and that “quarters had already been prepared ashore” for them.³⁷⁹ Washington would consider a refusal to be rude. This is indicative of American diplomatic methods: while the planners of the expedition did not intentionally divert the *Powhatan* to Hawaii, they still used the detour to their advantage. Even though Hawaii was not formally part of the United States, it was within the American sphere of influence; therefore, connecting the Japanese with the Hawaiians would still enhance American prestige.

The Japanese were too exhausted to argue with Tattnall. Once ashore, the party boarded several horse-drawn carriages, with Hawaiians “lined up to see us” the entire way to the hotel.³⁸⁰ Also travelling by carriage was an American officer named Captain Taylor, who “had been charged by the Flag-officer” with looking after the procession.³⁸¹ The group had accommodations at a luxurious Honolulu hotel owned by a Frenchman, the entirety of which Taylor rented out for the embassy’s comfort. When they arrived, the group was both amused and confounded at the many gadgets, mechanisms, and architectural styles the building possessed. Nevertheless, Muragaki was satisfied with the lodgings, writing that after taking “a few drinks of *sake*,” he felt “completely revived.”³⁸²

At the time of the embassy’s visit, the reigning monarch of Hawaii was King Kamehameha IV, and his wife Queen Emma. Kamehameha was only 26 at the time and had only been king for five years. However, we do know that he wielded more influence than his Okinawan counterpart during Perry’s visits. The king was also interested in his visitors: James Johnston wrote that as soon as he had learned of their arrival, he invited

³⁷⁹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 20.

³⁸⁰ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 10.

³⁸¹ Johnston, *China and Japan*, 349.

³⁸² Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 21.

them to stay at one of his palaces, as royal guests, instead of at a public hotel.³⁸³ Giving the excuse that “they had already established themselves at the hotel,” the ambassadors rejected this proposal.³⁸⁴ Subsequently, however, the American Commissioner in Hawaii, J.W. Borden, insisted that a royal mansion was “the most suitable place” to receive ceremonial calls during the day, and the ambassadors relented.³⁸⁵ This suggests that the Japanese embassy felt uncomfortable making these types of diplomatic decisions on their own, and sought some kind of permission from the Americans before complying. The king also invited the Japanese to meet with him directly, but the ambassadors rejected these requests emphatically.

The ambassadors and crew spent the next few days sightseeing, gradually growing acclimated to this new world. Yanagawa described an excursion to the house of a wealthy Honolulu resident, where he heard Hawaiian instruments and learned the game of pool, played with “four balls made of ivory.”³⁸⁶ He then found out that the residence was actually a “house of ill fame,” and quickly made his exit.³⁸⁷ Meanwhile, Muragaki and the other chief ambassadors went on a guided tour of the city led by Captain Taylor. This included a visit to a local newspaper, and Muragaki described the machines as completely “beyond my description.”³⁸⁸ This remark highlighted that Muragaki was not a

³⁸³ Johnston, *China and Japan*, 349.

³⁸⁴ Johnston, *China and Japan*, 350.

³⁸⁵ Johnston, *China and Japan*, 350. According to Johnston, they only used the palace for taking calls during the day, and returned to the hotel at night. Additionally, after just three days, the embassy returned to the *Powhatan*, as they were ultimately more comfortable with their shipboard quarters. Both Yanagawa and Muragaki do not mention that the Japanese took calls at the palace, although this is likely because the Japanese wanted deniability if the shogunate was later displeased by this diplomatic gesture.

³⁸⁶ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 12.

³⁸⁷ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 12.

³⁸⁸ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 23.

good fit for his role, and had little curiosity about the West.³⁸⁹ The vice-ambassador made no further inquiry about the machine, having already given up trying to understand it.

The excursion in Hawaii shifted from the informal to the formal when the group finally accepted a meeting with King Kamehameha. Muragaki learned that their earlier refusals violated “international customs and formalities,” and that the embassy displayed “a lack of diplomatic courtesy.”³⁹⁰ Not wanting to exacerbate things, the chief ambassador trio reluctantly agreed to a meeting on March 9, around midday, at Iolani Palace.³⁹¹ Upon their arrival, the full procession – which also included lower-ranking members, interpreters, and accompanying Americans – proceeded through the stone gate as guests of honor by a welcoming Hawaiian monarchy, not as the subject of resentment that Perry had been in Okinawa. Unlike the Commodore, the Japanese had not forced their way into this meeting, which in part explains this treatment. However, more important was that in the eyes of American officials, the purpose of the trip was to bring Japan into the international fold; therefore, promoting Kamehameha’s openness would help advance this goal. The Ryukyuan court rejected Perry because Japan’s goal had been to keep the country closed.

Upon entering the palace, the ambassadors made their way before King Kamehameha IV, “wearing a black coat with broad gold sashes across his shoulders,” standing “on a slightly raised platform at the far end of the Audience Hall.”³⁹² The ambassadors “bowed low” before the sovereign and his court, before the king addressed

³⁸⁹ In turn, this highlighted the shogunate’s prerogatives. Learning about the West was not a goal of the mission.

³⁹⁰ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 24.

³⁹¹ Johnston, *China and Japan*, 350.

³⁹² Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 25.

them directly.³⁹³ He expressed gratitude for the opportunity to host the Japanese, and wished they would be blessed with no more delays on their way to America. Namura, the interpreter, conveyed these remarks to the ambassadors, and then, in Dutch, expressed ambassador Shimmi's "deep gratitude" for the king's accommodation.³⁹⁴ The procession then exited to a side room, concluding the brief encounter. A few minutes later and the ambassadors returned to the reception hall, where Queen Emma had replaced her husband. Both sides only silently greeted each other with nods. Muragaki remarked that the queen stood with such dignity that she appeared "more like the living Buddha himself."³⁹⁵ However, when he later reflected on his encounter with Hawaiian royalty, the vice ambassador dismissed the exchange as nothing more than "a strange dream."³⁹⁶

The day after his visit to the palace, Muragaki wrote that "it seemed to me that the chieftains of the islands were not held in very high esteem in the United States."³⁹⁷ This remark came after a meeting with the French consul-general, who visited the ambassadors at the Hawaiian Government House in the morning.³⁹⁸ Towards the end of the meeting, the Hawaiian Minister of Foreign Affairs approached the building in a carriage, bringing the king's thanks for their visit to Iolani. However, Captain Taylor instructed the ambassadors not to allow the Hawaiian official inside, before turning away the carriage. Suddenly and starkly, this dismissal highlighted the imperialistic tendencies of the Western powers. Japan was being *ranked* by them, as to where it belonged in the

³⁹³ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 25.

³⁹⁴ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 25.

³⁹⁵ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 26.

³⁹⁶ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 26. After the ceremony at Iolani, the Japanese (sans the chief ambassadors) went to a party held in their honor by local businessmen. This was omitted in Muragaki's account, probably because it could have been scandalous if the news made its way back to Edo.

³⁹⁷ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 27.

³⁹⁸ The ambassadors only agreed to such a meeting because Japan already had a treaty with France.

broader community of nations. Their country was superior to Hawaii, but inferior to France. Throughout the rest of the embassy, American officials replicated this process, comparing the Japanese positively against Chinese immigrants, Panamanians, and blacks. However, there was always something that prevented them from being on equal ground with whites. Muragaki's observation hints at an underlying anxiety, and the modern reader can guess at what questions may have been going through his mind. Where did Japan fit in the international hierarchy? More importantly, if the ambassadors failed in their mission, could that negatively influence their country's ranking?

The embassy only spent a few more days in Hawaii, during which the ambassadors learned about the history of the islands as told by Westerners. "Until a hundred years ago, the islands were inhabited by cannibals," but once King Kamehameha adopted Western ways, the people and society improved as well.³⁹⁹ A week after the meeting with the king, the *Powhatan* acquired the necessary supplies to complete its voyage. The last issue centered around the payment of accounts. The Japanese wanted to pay for their stay, since accepting excessive hospitality might reflect negatively on them. Commodore Tattnall rejected the idea, though, and insisted the Japanese accept Hawaiian generosity. Both sides agreed on a compromise where the ambassadors sent presents (not money) to Hawaiian officials, and to the French hotel owner. The day after, the *Powhatan* set sail after firing off a seventeen-gun salute.

³⁹⁹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 29.

Finishing the Crossing and Arrival in San Francisco

The *Kanrin Maru* had been soldiering along while the *Powhatan* was delayed in Hawaii.⁴⁰⁰ More and more of the Japanese sailors started to feel better, and Brooke's opinion of them vacillated between admiration for individual crew members and frustration with the group as a whole. For example, he was keen to point out that a navigator named Tomogoro was "excellent" at his job, to the point where Brooke devoted time to explain advanced techniques to him.⁴⁰¹ He also wrote that Captain Katsu was clearly "very highly esteemed" by his men for his naval competence.⁴⁰² However, other times he stressed that the Japanese crew was "incompetent," and on March 3, he threatened to have his men "not continue to take care of the vessel unless [Katsu's] officers would assist."⁴⁰³ Despite these criticisms, Brooke's overall impression was that the crew was getting better, and he spent much of his journal making notes about how to continue this improvement, rather than exhaustive criticism.

On February 26, in what Donald Keene described as "a major event in the history of the Japanese navy," the *Kanrin Maru* had the opportunity to assert the Japanese presence on the world stage.⁴⁰⁴ It started when a crew member saw a ship in the distance they thought "might be the *Powhatan*."⁴⁰⁵ The mystery ship approached them, revealing itself to be the *Flora* from New York instead. The *Kanrin Maru* raised its signal flag, identifying itself as a ship of the Tokugawa Navy. This was the first time this had ever

⁴⁰⁰ Despite the ship's own – and arguably worse – difficulties, Captain Brooke opted not to make the same detour.

⁴⁰¹ Brooke, "Brooke Journals," 82.

⁴⁰² Brooke, "Brooke Journals," 82.

⁴⁰³ Brooke, "Brooke Journals," 87-88.

⁴⁰⁴ Keene, *Modern Japanese Diaries*, 36.

⁴⁰⁵ Brooke, "Brooke Journals," 82.

occurred. Brooke met with the *Flora*'s captain, who noted that the *Kanrin Maru* "sailed very well for a steamer and a Japanese," to which Brooke challenged him to a race to San Francisco.⁴⁰⁶ Once they were informed of this arrangement, the Japanese crew was inspired to make even greater haste in their journey. The next day, Brooke informed Kimura Settsu-no-Kami that he should start introducing himself as "admiral" once they arrived in America.⁴⁰⁷

Battered and worse-for-wear from the storms and the long drive, the *Kanrin Maru* finally arrived in San Francisco on March 17, 1860. The crew had not bested the *Flora*, but to their credit, they out sped the *Powhatan* by a significant amount. Admiral Kimura recalled that a massive crowd turned out to greet them. Most surprising to him were the multitudes of women who participated, which would not have occurred in a Japanese port.⁴⁰⁸ As the ship pulled into the bay, the crew worried about what they would do if the Americans fired a salute in their honor. The Japanese were unfamiliar with their ship's cannons, and Captain Katsu insisted that a return greeting, "if we should not fire it off properly," would "bring shame on us."⁴⁰⁹ Sasakura Kiritaro, an officer, took up Katsu's challenge and "brought off a salute beautifully," before declaring that Captain Katsu's head now belonged to him.⁴¹⁰ Despite Katsu's reluctance, this incident still showed that the Japanese crew was eager to prove its competence, especially once it was more visible to the American public.

Fukuzawa Yukichi described San Francisco's reception of the *Kanrin Maru* as

⁴⁰⁶ Brooke, "Brooke Journals," 84.

⁴⁰⁷ Brooke, "Brooke Journals," 86.

⁴⁰⁸ Keene, *Modern Japanese Diaries*, 36.

⁴⁰⁹ Fukuzawa, *Autobiography*, 111.

⁴¹⁰ Fukuzawa, *Autobiography*, 111.

“certainly worthy of a friendly people... [who] did everything for us, and they could not have done more.”⁴¹¹ The ambassadors themselves were still sailing from Hawaii, but this did not change the fact that all around the bay were massive crowds eager to welcome any Japanese, regardless of social station, on this occasion. Onlookers clapped and cheered as the steamer approached the navy yard to dock.⁴¹² Initially, though, the *Kanrin Maru*’s crew was hesitant to leave the vessel. Much like Muragaki aboard the *Powhatan* in Hawaii, Admiral Kimura initially refused to disembark out of fear that doing so would violate his orders. After a day of waiting – during which, it appears, crowds still continued to gather to catch a glimpse of the Japanese – on the 18th, San Francisco’s President Teschemaker boarded the vessel and extended a formal invitation to receive Kimura.⁴¹³ Horse-drawn carriages brought everyone to the International Hotel, one of the most refined in the city. Once inside, Fukuzawa expressed his bafflement that Americans would dare to trample on the luxurious carpeting with their dirty shoes.⁴¹⁴

The city, state, and national governments, and local businessmen all contributed to the comfort of the Japanese, including the crew of the *Kanrin Maru* and especially the ambassadors later on.⁴¹⁵ In Washington, Congress allocated 50,000 dollars to pay for the embassy’s expenses, as a result of lobbying efforts from Townsend Harris.⁴¹⁶ In San

⁴¹¹ Fukuzawa, *Autobiography*, 112.

⁴¹² Captain Brooke departed from the embassy at this point, although he did write positively of his experience in a letter to Secretary of the Navy Isaac Toucey. He only lightly touched on the problems he encountered with his crew. This letter was published in many American newspapers shortly afterwards, providing a positive view of the Japanese to the entire country.

⁴¹³ Hillsborough, *Samurai Revolution*, 119. At this time, San Francisco did not have a mayor, but instead a “President,” which may have confused the crew of the *Kanrin Maru*.

⁴¹⁴ Fukuzawa, *Autobiography*, 113. This was the same carpet that only the wealthiest *daimyo* could afford back in Japan.

⁴¹⁵ Despite the fact that many of the *Kanrin Maru*’s crew were of comparatively lower rank back home, such as Fukuzawa.

⁴¹⁶ US Congress, Executive Document 12, “Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, Transmitting a Statement of Receipts and Expenditures of the United States for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1860,” 36th Cong., 2nd sess., December 17, 1860, 65.

Francisco, the local government allocated 2,000 dollars from its coffers for similar use, to “provide for [the Japanese] suitable entertainments.”⁴¹⁷ Wealthy community leaders throughout the embassy’s journey would host dinners or otherwise supplement the entertainment budget with their own funds. This generosity was not necessarily because these groups were concerned with high-level diplomatic issues (although Washington certainly was); rather, they contributed because they were interested in economic opportunity. Much the same as in Perry’s time, Japan still represented a huge untapped market for American entrepreneurs. Now, however, the Harris Treaty would soon come into force, meaning that these same entrepreneurs wanted to get on the good side of any Japanese they could, even if they were not specifically high-ranking ambassadors. Examples of this are common throughout the embassy, but especially during the stay in San Francisco, which was conveniently located to take advantage of the Japan trade.

On the 19th, Kimura and his crew met California’s “modest little Irish Governor,” John Downey, at their hotel, who travelled in order to “honor the occasion.”⁴¹⁸ During introductions, the governor’s presence and demeanor shocked the Japanese once they were made aware of his rank. The crew knew that an American governor was equal to a Japanese *daimyo*: accordingly, “it took all the faith that the strangers could command to believe that a little man in a black coat, with no retinue, could be a genuine Governor.”⁴¹⁹ Feudal lords were intimidating figures that commanded respect, and travelled with huge samurai entourages, not small figures like Downey. This simplicity was likely intentional

⁴¹⁷ “By Pony Express from California – Arrival of the Japan Grand Embassy,” *Cleveland Daily Herald*, April 14, 1860.

⁴¹⁸ “The Japanese in San Francisco,” *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, April 16, 1860.

⁴¹⁹ “The Japanese in San Francisco.”

on the governor's part, as he identified with President Buchanan's everyman image.⁴²⁰ A larger reception took place for the leaders of Kimura's crew on March 22, when officials presented the Japanese to the city at City Hall.⁴²¹

The retinue of ambassadors aboard the *Powhatan* finally arrived on the 29th.⁴²² Upon consulting an American newspaper, Muragaki recorded that the *Kanrin Maru* "had arrived at the port a fortnight ahead of us," which was a point of pride for the vice-ambassador.⁴²³ After remaining on the ship for another night, the trio of ambassadors disembarked to explore the naval yard, where they met Kimura, Katsu, and President Teschemaker. This meeting was informal and brief, and Teschemaker remarked that his guests "were invited to have dinner with him on the following day."⁴²⁴ The ambassadors thanked the President, but Muragaki later wrote that the exchange made him uncomfortable. Teschemaker represented the entire city, but he casually invited strangers to a social event.⁴²⁵ The ambassador interpreted informality as a lack of propriety, which contrasted to the social background he himself came from.

Over the coming days, the Japanese ambassadorial response to their reception mirrored how they behaved in Hawaii. In terms of events perceived as "mandatory," in which the ambassadors received invitations from high-ranking Americans, the trio dutifully attended. However, for other soirees, the ambassadors politely refused.⁴²⁶ At the events they did attend, Muragaki's experience suggests that the group frequently felt

⁴²⁰ Like Buchanan, Downey was a Democrat.

⁴²¹ "Reception of the Japanese," *Daily Alta California*, March 23, 1860.

⁴²² "By Pony Express from California – Arrival of the Japan Grand Embassy."

⁴²³ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 35.

⁴²⁴ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 37.

⁴²⁵ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 38.

⁴²⁶ For example, the ambassadors rejected a meeting with the consul of Sardinia because Japan did not have a treaty with that country. Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 40.

uncomfortable. One such example was a particularly painful dinner at City Hall. On this occasion, the proud Americans spent most of the evening conducting loud toasts and speeches in a language that was unintelligible to the Japanese, as everyone became more and more inebriated. When accompanied with the despised barbarian music, this stimulation proved too much. The Japanese departed early and expressed their discomfort to each other. The group, “accustomed to subdued manners,” saw the banquet as comparable to “the drinking bouts of workmen in Yedo.”⁴²⁷

The lower-ranking members of the embassy enjoyed their time in San Francisco more than their superiors. Yanagawa described a visit to the city’s Chinatown, which gave the Japanese a sense of home by seeing “the shop names and names of articles” written in characters they understood.⁴²⁸ Later on, they visited a Chinese theater which put on plays where the female roles were played by men, similar to *kabuki* in their home country.⁴²⁹ A more dramatic occurrence took place later, when a servant went shopping. While out, the man quarreled with two Americans, eventually escalating into a fistfight. For the etiquette-conscious chief ambassadors, this represented calamity, and they promptly had the servant locked away aboard the *Powhatan*.⁴³⁰ There was no further mention of the man in either Japanese or American accounts, probably because both wanted to minimize any embarrassment.

The San Francisco leg of the embassy’s journey consisted mostly of introductions, fancy parties, and displays for the endlessly curious locals. Back east, as sectarian divisions between North and South brewed, things looked grim, but the strange

⁴²⁷ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 43.

⁴²⁸ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 25.

⁴²⁹ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 28.

⁴³⁰ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 28.

ambassadors were still able to provide a momentary distraction from these more serious matters. Little in the vein of formal diplomacy took place in San Francisco, but this encounter still served as the bedrock for the future trading relationship between both sides of the Pacific. The Americans perceived the Japanese as formal and quiet; likewise, the Japanese considered their hosts to be independent, boisterous, and informal. On April 7th, the ambassadors met with President Teschemaker one final time, with both sides exchanging their goodbyes. The Japanese had decided that their retinue would split up. The crew of the *Kanrin Maru* would remain in San Francisco while repairs were completed on the ship, and they would return to Japan once they confirmed the *Powhatan* group's safe arrival in Washington. With this last matter resolved, the ambassadors departed in the evening, headed to Panama.

Panama and Arrival in Washington

Visiting Panama was a necessary next step for the Japanese travelers. There was no simple overland way for the embassy to get from the West Coast to the East Coast. The Trans-Continental Railroad was still eight years away, and the only other method of crossing was on horseback, which was inappropriate for a diplomatic mission. Therefore, the fastest route was for the Japanese to sail down south, to Panama, and then cross the thin isthmus before boarding another vessel bound for Washington. Much like in Hawaii, the ambassador's brief stay in Panama illuminated contemporary Japanese attitudes towards foreigners and imperialism.

The following weeks aboard the *Powhatan* were something of a break for the

exhausted Japanese, and consequently, neither Muragaki nor Yanagawa wrote much in their diaries. The vice-ambassador was content to comment that “the long spring days have become exceedingly monotonous and boring,” and otherwise just logged location coordinates.⁴³¹ While it is understandable that the group needed time to recover from their journey thus far, the fact that the Japanese did not devote energy to parsing through their experiences suggests that their hearts were not fully committed to the voyage.

The *Powhatan* arrived in Panama on April 23, and this was as far as the vessel could take the Japanese on their journey. Muragaki was saddened at this realization, and composed a poem in a brief moment of solidarity with the barbarians: “*Looks and appearance alienate men, but One heart and sincerity in common we have.*”⁴³² When the embassy departed the ship, a large welcoming committee was present to greet the Japanese, but it mostly consisted of white Westerners, not Panamanians. Despite the country being independent from Europe, these Westerners controlled the vast majority of the economy of Panama, and the Japanese focused almost exclusively on their colonial presence in their writings.⁴³³ Soon after arriving, the embassy boarded a train bound for Aspinwall, on the Atlantic coast, where another American vessel awaited them.⁴³⁴ Muragaki fixated on the “black smoke...puffing out of the locomotive,” while Yanagawa noted that the Americans, not the Panamanians, actually owned the railroads here.⁴³⁵

Despite the *New York Herald*’s assertion that everything went swimmingly, the ambassadors themselves were quite nervous when they boarded the train.⁴³⁶ They had

⁴³¹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 47.

⁴³² Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 51.

⁴³³ Panama was part of Columbia at this time.

⁴³⁴ Modern-day Colón.

⁴³⁵ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 52. Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 34.

⁴³⁶ “Reception of the Embassy at Panama,” *New York Herald*, May 10, 1860.

never ridden in a locomotive before, and the “thundering,” “deafening” nature of the terrible machine did little to improve their collective nerves.⁴³⁷ Once the beast set off, the Japanese felt dizzy at the disconnect between the speed of the vehicle and the blurring landscapes outside. They were also unable to converse with each other due to the train’s loud rumbling, rendering the trip both nausea-inducing and “dull.”⁴³⁸

Despite these conditions – or, perhaps, because of them – the process of the Japanese ranking themselves in the international hierarchy continued during the train ride. Because conversation was impossible, the only thing Muragaki could do was make silent judgments about the Panamanians, whose dwellings he could barely make out as the train sped by. As the former magistrate of Hakodate, the vice-ambassador observed that native houses resembled “the cottages built by the Ezo tribe,” which was indigenous to Hokkaido.⁴³⁹ This was not a compliment, as members of the “Ezo tribe” were looked down upon by their Japanese colonizers. Even more bluntly, Yanagawa described the Panamanians as “naked and barefooted and their character was bad.”⁴⁴⁰ After only three hours, the ambassadors were surprised to find themselves in Aspinwall, “after covering a distance of some 47.5 miles.”⁴⁴¹

Awaiting the Japanese was the U.S.S. *Roanoke*, staffed by a new crew led by American Commodore William McCluney, whom Muragaki described as “courteous and dignified.”⁴⁴² Once the Japanese were on board, McCluney and his staff dined with the ambassadors, and the Commodore informed them that he served as the captain of the

⁴³⁷ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 52.

⁴³⁸ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 53.

⁴³⁹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 53. The “Ezo Tribe” is more commonly known as the Ainu people.

⁴⁴⁰ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 34.

⁴⁴¹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 54.

⁴⁴² Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 55.

Powhatan during Perry's 1853 voyage to Japan.⁴⁴³ The fact that Washington chose this man to guide the expedition is interesting. Records indicate that the government made this decision prior to the embassy's departure from Japan, back during the planning phases.⁴⁴⁴ It was not a spur-of-the-moment decision. McCluney likely gained the post because he was a competent, accomplished officer in his own right, but it is also likely Washington chose him to inspire awe (or intimidation) in the Japanese, given the hugely symbolic importance of the Perry missions in U.S.–Japan relations at the time.⁴⁴⁵

The day after introductions, the *Roanoke* set sail northwards, and thirteen days later, the ship reached Sandy Hook, New Jersey on May 9, approaching the end of its journey. However, upon pulling in at port, Commodore McCluney received urgent orders from the Navy that changed the trajectory of the mission.⁴⁴⁶ Instead of continuing to New York, the ambassadors would now sail directly to Washington, since the government wanted to quickly ratify the Treaty of Yedo. According to Yanagawa, the Commodore told the Japanese that “New York had not yet made preparations to receive” them.⁴⁴⁷ However, contemporary articles from the *New York Herald* suggest that the city *had* conducted extensive prep-work. What appears more likely is that Washington simply

⁴⁴³ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 55. Perry, *Personal Journal*, 229.

⁴⁴⁴ *The Executive Documents, Printed by Order of the Senate of the United States, First Session of the Thirty-Sixth Congress, 1859-60, in Fifteen Volumes*, 1148.

⁴⁴⁵ Adding further credence to the theory that the US sought to impress or intimidate the Japanese was the presence of a “Captain Adams...who also accompanied Commodore Perry” as one of McCluney's right-hand men. See Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 55. During Perry's voyages, a man named Captain Adams was one of the main enforcers of Perry's heavy-handed diplomatic policy, earning him no friends amongst the shogun's negotiators. While it is not certain that these Adamses were the same person, we do know that Captain Henry A. Adams (Perry's man) was captain of the guard-ship stationed at Aspinwall, the *Sabine*, in 1860, making it highly likely. See US Naval Academy Alumni Association, *Register of Alumni, Graduates and Former Naval Cadets and Midshipmen* (Baltimore: Press of Isaac Friedenwald, 1887), 43. If they are the same person, this suggests that Washington was comfortable – at least partially – with reminding the Japanese of this earlier experience. According to Muragaki, this Adams “talked proudly, as if he knew Japan thoroughly – a disagreeable fellow.” See Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 55-56.

⁴⁴⁶ Johnston, *China and Japan*, 365.

⁴⁴⁷ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 41.

wanted to be the first destination in the east to receive the much-anticipated embassy.

After a few days of delay, the *Roanoke* resumed sailing on May 12. To mark the occasion, Muragaki composed another poem: “*To the grace of the Gods and our sovereign, we owe Our safe voyage of tens of thousands of miles.*”⁴⁴⁸

On the 14th, the *Roanoke* spotted the *Philadelphia*, a “small steam-engined [sic] river-boat,” which approached “decked out most richly for the occasion, with the Japanese flag flying at her bow and the Stars and Stripes at her stern.”⁴⁴⁹ The group was now very close to Washington, and this was the ship that would guide the ambassadors there, with a lavish reception and a full “score of musicians” ready to greet them.⁴⁵⁰ A trio of men headed the reception committee, “Captain Dupont, Captain Lee, and Lieutenant Porter, who were appointed by the President” for the task.⁴⁵¹ Samuel Du Pont, the leader, had some experience in Japan: in 1858, he visited Nagasaki twice, and left the country with a favorable impression of its natural beauty and kindly inhabitants.⁴⁵² It was this positive predisposition towards the Japanese, alongside the Du Pont family name and prestige, that earned him this responsibility.⁴⁵³ Du Pont, along with Lee and Porter, would escort the embassy throughout the remainder of the trip, and determined the Japanese itinerary in each city they visited. The American trio determined it was their “duty to show the Japanese everything the Americans were proud of whether the Japanese wanted

⁴⁴⁸ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 62.

⁴⁴⁹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 63.

⁴⁵⁰ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 63.

⁴⁵¹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 63.

⁴⁵² Tom & Sidney Marshall, *The Tycoon’s Ambassadors: Captain Du Pont and the Japanese Embassy of 1860* (Somerville: Green Forest Press, 2015), 11.

⁴⁵³ The Du Pont family was (and still is) one of the wealthiest and most powerful families in the United States, with connections to international shipping, the military, and numerous other industries. The Crowninshield branch of the family, in particular, is connected to the expansion of U.S. shipping in Asia, making Samuel Du Pont an exceptionally relevant personage to guide the embassy. See David Ferguson, *Cleopatra’s Barge: The Crowninshield Story* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), 64.

to see it or not.”⁴⁵⁴ Also present was a representative of Secretary of State Lewis Cass, who passed on the Secretary’s welcome to the visiting diplomats.

It was immediately clear to the Japanese that the city of Washington was determined to make a dramatic impression on them. Once the ambassadors boarded the *Philadelphia*, the *Roanoke* fired off a departing salute in honor of the nation’s guests, which Muragaki recorded as “the highest honor shown to anyone leaving a warship.”⁴⁵⁵ As they explored the new ship’s luxurious accommodations, Yanagawa raved that “even the passage leading to the toilet is decorated in gold and silver trimmings and is so fine that I cannot describe it.”⁴⁵⁶ Capitalizing on this impression, Du Pont’s team asked if the Japanese would be interested in touring the nearby Fortress Monroe, which guarded the entrance to the Chesapeake Bay.⁴⁵⁷ The ship made a detour to the facility, and “on either side of the quay, there stood soldiers in line; and as we landed a band struck up, and a salute was fired from the fort.”⁴⁵⁸

The inspection of Fort Monroe itself was brief, and in contrast with the reception aboard the *Philadelphia*, Muragaki was unimpressed with what he saw. The vice-ambassador compared the fortress favorably in terms of size to Japan’s recently created western-style Fort Goryokaku. However, he felt “doubtful of the practical use of the fort,” believing that it was too far inland to provide any useful defense.⁴⁵⁹ Additionally, the cannons appeared “to be set up more for the sake of appearance than for their

⁴⁵⁴ Marshall, *The Tycoon’s Ambassadors*, 77.

⁴⁵⁵ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 64.

⁴⁵⁶ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 44.

⁴⁵⁷ One of the things the ambassadors were curious about in America was if American military power was actually as formidable as they understood it to be. For their part, this was also one of the areas that the U.S. was most keen to show off.

⁴⁵⁸ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 64.

⁴⁵⁹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 65.

efficiency.”⁴⁶⁰ Admittedly, Muragaki was not well-informed on military matters, stating that “I am in no way qualified to make criticism.”⁴⁶¹ However, these observations appear to have bolstered his confidence and that of other embassy members, reminding the group that the Americans themselves had only started industrialization in the last half-century. Japan was not that far behind.

Once the visit was over, the group re-boarded the *Philadelphia* which steamed up the Potomac through the night. The next day, on May 15 at noontime, the vessel reached its destination, pulling in to the navy yard at Washington. Both sides were anxious: the Japanese to complete their duty and ratify the treaty, and the Americans to highlight their accomplishments as a country.

Washington, D.C.

The *Alexandria Gazette* announced the imminent arrival of the Japanese ambassadors in Washington, in an account that was distributed across the country. According to this account, “a large crowd...visited the Federal Capital” on the morning of the 15th, trying to get to the navy yard.⁴⁶² At 11:30, a cannon indicated the *Philadelphia*’s approach, and “in an instant all work stopped in the shops” as everyone converged, coming “forth in a dense mass” and requiring police to keep order.⁴⁶³ Finally, resplendently displaying both the American and Japanese flags, the *Philadelphia* docked and its foreign guests disembarked in order of rank. The group was received by

⁴⁶⁰ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 65.

⁴⁶¹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 65.

⁴⁶² “Arrival of the Japanese Embassy,” *Warrenton Flag of '98*, May 17, 1860.

⁴⁶³ “Arrival of the Japanese Embassy.”

Commodore Franklin Buchanan, who welcomed the Japanese with a rousing speech: “your excellencies may be assured that the welcome you will receive from His Excellency, the President...will convince you of the friendship entertained for your Emperor and his countrymen, as expressed by the gallant Perry, when he made the treaty with Japan.”⁴⁶⁴ The ambassadors quickly thanked Buchanan and, preferring not to remain in the massive crowd, did not offer a formal reply.

The procession did not end at the navy yard. The hotel Captain Du Pont selected was Willard’s, a historic building that played host to Washington’s most elite clientele. In order to get there, however, the Japanese had to endure a parade through the streets of the capital in front of the fascinated public. This march was extremely elaborate: the *Gazette* recalled that the “President’s Mounted Guard, U.S. Artillery from Arsenal, U.S. Marines, Washington Light Infantry,” and many more members of the armed forces guarded the ambassadors.⁴⁶⁵ Muragaki rode with Captain Du Pont, who informed the vice-ambassador that “the city of Washington had never seen so great a crowd before.”⁴⁶⁶ In Muragaki’s estimation, this was because visitors from Western countries “wore more or less the same kind of costume,” but his own countrymen “observed customs and manners very different from those of the Westerners.”⁴⁶⁷ Once at the hotel, the group re-arranged the décor to more suit their tastes, and “shut ourselves in this room, and enjoyed telling one another what we had seen on the way to the hotel.”⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁴ “Arrival of the Japanese Embassy.” Once again, the Americans invoked the specter of Perry. Commodore Buchanan had no relation to President Buchanan. He would go on to serve as the only Full Admiral in the Confederate Navy.

⁴⁶⁵ “Arrival of the Japanese Embassy.” Much like the visit to Fort Monroe, this extravagance was likely to impress the Japanese with American military might.

⁴⁶⁶ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 68.

⁴⁶⁷ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 68.

⁴⁶⁸ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 69. The redecoration focused on clearing excess American furniture, so that the group could spread out on the floor like at a Japanese residence.

At this point, it would do well to mention an important diary entry made by one of the embassy's lower-ranking members, Tamamushi Sadayu Yasushige.⁴⁶⁹ Tamamushi provided commentary on the shogunate's instructions for the embassy, which warned that the ambassadors needed "to be careful about all business matters of importance so that the peace and friendship between both countries be permanent."⁴⁷⁰ By the embassy's arrival in Washington, the chief ambassadors had since interpreted those instructions quite harshly. Tamamushi wrote that "while in this city, we are prohibited, by the strictest order of our own authorities, from taking even a step outside the hotel. Even when we are allowed to go out for some compelling reason, we are accompanied by our officials."⁴⁷¹ This illustrates a dramatic expansion of Muragaki's earlier aloofness when the group was in San Francisco. The leaders were now actively threatening embassy participants with punishment and surveillance for trying to participate in anything more than the strict letter of their mission. Tamamushi continued: while "no one on our side care[d]" about engaging with the Americans, their hosts were constantly "trying to show us everything without any intent of concealment."⁴⁷² Had the shogunate selected more appropriate officials, the Japanese delegation could have returned home with significant knowledge about the West; however, Tamamushi's observations reinforce the idea that truly engaging with the international system was not one of the goals of Ii Naosuke's *bakufu*.

The day after arriving, the Japanese remained confined to the hotel. Most of the time was spent looking "out of the windows fitted with glass panes, and watch[ing] the

⁴⁶⁹ Tamamushi served as the manservant for chief ambassador Shimmi.

⁴⁷⁰ Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them*, 27.

⁴⁷¹ Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them*, 35.

⁴⁷² Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them*, 35.

main street below.”⁴⁷³ To a degree, this isolation was out of necessity. The lobby of the hotel was swarming with people, eager to get a look at the Japanese or shake their hands. Yanagawa found it “inconvenient to walk about in the hotel,” and he and other members had to spend time obliging the crowd if they wanted to go anywhere.⁴⁷⁴ The only call Muragaki took that day was from Vice President John Breckinridge, who informed the ambassadors that, in addition to meeting President Buchanan, they would also have a reception at Congress, “where no foreigners had been hitherto admitted.”⁴⁷⁵

The Japanese departed their hotel the next day, to attend a scheduled meeting with Secretary of State Lewis Cass. This was an important occasion for the ambassadors: for the first time, Muragaki mentioned his concerns about how he and the others dressed, and how they should behave around the Secretary. He asked for Du Pont’s suggestion, and was surprised to hear that there would be minimal ceremony. The ambassadors ultimately settled on “only a small suite...our travelling costumes, and took but a few servants each.”⁴⁷⁶ Once they were in front of the Secretary of State, the trio presented Cass with the letter from the *roju* illustrating the trip’s objectives, largely for formality. Cass replied casually. He thanked the ambassadors, but was more interested in arranging “a tour of sight-seeing” in his country for the Japanese.⁴⁷⁷ Muragaki had expected the highest-ranking American diplomat to conduct himself more elegantly, but instead, the ambassadors were received “without ceremony or formality...as if [we] had been some old acquaintances, without offering a cup of tea even!”⁴⁷⁸ The Secretary’s focus on

⁴⁷³ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 69.

⁴⁷⁴ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 49.

⁴⁷⁵ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 70.

⁴⁷⁶ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 70.

⁴⁷⁷ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 71.

⁴⁷⁸ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 71.

pleasure travel also made the ambassadors uncomfortable.

Another aspect of the meeting with Cass that perturbed the Japanese was the presence of the Secretary's family. Cass brought along several curious family members, including multiple female relatives, in order to introduce them to the Japanese; this was abnormal, but not unheard of in American diplomacy. The Japanese, however, were used to the staunch patriarchy of Tokugawa society. Women had no role in official life, and were confined to taking care of children and the home. It was strange enough for Kimura to even see women present at the welcoming in San Francisco, but it was a different level of improper for them to be at such a high-level meeting in Muragaki's eyes. This was something that consistently bothered the Japanese at parties and other get-togethers. Cass noticed that the Japanese seemed to be rushed, and "were very desirous to return home at the earliest possible period."⁴⁷⁹

At the meeting with Cass, the Secretary informed the embassy that President Buchanan would receive them the following day. Given this short notice, the group was naturally anxious. Back at the hotel, the ambassadors questioned Du Pont about proper protocol. For example, what clothes would be appropriate, how to enter and exit, and how to address the President, all of which were standard points of etiquette when dealing with a fellow Japanese dignitary. Again, though, the group was faced with dreaded informality. Du Pont expressed that "there was no fixed manner of etiquette," but that "we might conduct ourselves according to our own."⁴⁸⁰ Flustered, the ambassadors "begged him to arrange for a rehearsal" to avoid any mishaps.⁴⁸¹ However, American

⁴⁷⁹ Lewis Cass, "Lewis Cass to Wakisaka Nakatsuekasano, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, June 23rd, 1860," National Archives.

⁴⁸⁰ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 71.

⁴⁸¹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 71.

traditions held that presidential receptions were conducted without much preparation. Du Pont offered to take them to the White House that evening to look around, but the ambassadors declined. A mere glimpse of the location was not enough.

The following day, the 17th, was cloudy, and the whole procession (including American guards and musicians) gathered in front of the hotel to head for the White House.⁴⁸² Muragaki's diary devoted considerable space to documenting the ambassador trio's clothing choices, consisting of court regalia and silk-and-gold adorned swords.⁴⁸³ Each ambassador was accompanied by retinue members carrying spears, resembling an armed *daimyo* procession and highlighting Japan's martial prowess, which the *National Intelligencer* was keen to take note of.⁴⁸⁴ A massive turnout of Washington's population was present to witness the parade and observe the Japanese in their finery. After a short parade through the city, the embassy was finally able to see the White House itself. Yanagawa recalled his surprise that the small building – by the standards of Japanese castles – was “without any tower or pond in the yard.”⁴⁸⁵

Once they passed through the White House's iron gate and grounds, the ambassadors descended from their carriages. Subsequently, American officials ushered them inside to the anteroom, while lower-ranking members went elsewhere. As they waited patiently for the reception to start, Muragaki found his attention diverted towards the decorations on display. There were several tables, on top of which were “lacquered writing boxes and other Japanese articles, which had been presented to Commodore Perry

⁴⁸² Johnston, *China and Japan*, 371.

⁴⁸³ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 72. This was likely noted to illustrate to the *bakufu* back home that the Japanese had taken the ceremony seriously.

⁴⁸⁴ “Official Reception of the Japanese,” *National Intelligencer*, May 18, 1860.

⁴⁸⁵ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 52.

on his visit to Japan.”⁴⁸⁶ Once again, this reminded the ambassadors of the relationship between the two countries.⁴⁸⁷ Eventually, Secretary Cass came to greet the ambassadors and told them that President Buchanan was ready to receive them. Steeling themselves, the trio walked down the hallway and headed for the White House’s audience room.

The man with whom the Japanese were tasked with meeting stood in the center of a mid-sized room. James Buchanan, a “silver-haired gentleman of over seventy years of age” was dressed in “a simple black costume of coat and trousers in the same fashion as any merchant.”⁴⁸⁸ This immediate impression was not a complement. In Tokugawa society, merchants were at the bottom of the social order, due to the Confucian idea that, as middlemen, they contributed no value to the economy. Yet Muragaki was willing to make the comparison, perhaps because he was shocked to find that there was not anything that differentiated Buchanan from the men around him. Even in Hawaii, King Kamehameha looked distinct, whereas the president was utterly plain in contrast. Buchanan stood out even more when compared to the shogun.

Pushing past their surprise, the ambassadors made “repeated and profound bows” and kept “their eyes persistently bent on the ground.”⁴⁸⁹ After advancing a few cautious steps, chief ambassador Shimmi spoke, conveying an address which expressed the shogun’s desire to ratify the Treaty of Yedo and to continue friendly relations with the United States.⁴⁹⁰ Interpreter Namura then translated these remarks. Wordlessly, the

⁴⁸⁶ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 73.

⁴⁸⁷ Given the sheer number of incidents in which the American consciously drew attention to Perry’s prior endeavor, it appears clear that the American government did not consider those expeditions to be offensive or audacious, and that it marked a beginning of a relationship between the countries, not an imposition of power against the Japanese.

⁴⁸⁸ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 76.

⁴⁸⁹ Johnston, *China and Japan*, 372.

⁴⁹⁰ Johnston, *China and Japan*, 372.

ambassadors took the treaty out of its elaborate box and handed it to Secretary Cass.

Then, without waiting, the trio solemnly retreated into the antechamber. The ceremony was over, at least the part that was necessary for the Japanese to complete their mission.

A few minutes later, Captain Du Pont rejoined the ambassadors and asked “if the ceremony of presenting the Imperial letter according to our customs was completed.”⁴⁹¹

The trio replied that it was. Likely to the surprise of the ambassadors, Du Pont then informed them that President Buchanan wanted to deliver a response, then and there.

Without much choice, Muragaki and the others complied. The three re-entered the audience room where the President began to speak. He focused on the happiness that the United States felt at being the first Western power to receive an embassy from Japan, and reiterated that he would guarantee the provisions of the Treaty of Yedo enforced.⁴⁹²

Buchanan then expressed his desire that the embassy prolong its trip “to enable you to visit different portions of our country.”⁴⁹³ Much like Cass, Buchanan wanted the Japanese to tour the rest of the US, in order to parade the ambassadors to an anxious and weary public which might be briefly distracted from sectarian division. After he spoke, the President shook the hand of each member of the Japanese trio, and the ambassadors quickly “availed [themselves] of the first opportunity to withdraw to the anteroom.”⁴⁹⁴

The brief, awkward encounter with Buchanan was the most important moment of the trip in terms of duty for the Japanese. Now that they had accomplished their goal, back at the hotel all of the embassy members expressed how “exceedingly happy and

⁴⁹¹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 74.

⁴⁹² Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 75.

⁴⁹³ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 75.

⁴⁹⁴ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 75.

satisfied” they were to have gained “an achievement worthy of any man’s ambition.”⁴⁹⁵ Even Muragaki expressed his pride in the face of earlier nerves: “*Forgetting their meek ignorance, how proudly today Shine the countenances of Japan’s Embassy.*”⁴⁹⁶ The group compared their impressions of the American leaders they met, largely focusing on Buchanan’s plain presentation. The vice ambassador was mildly irritated that he and his colleagues had dressed their best, but the Americans had not reciprocated.⁴⁹⁷ As for how the Americans felt about the reception, Du Pont, Cass, and Buchanan did not comment specifically on the matter. However, a lack of criticism on their part implies general satisfaction. If Buchanan appears relatively disinterested in the procession, this is because it was likely the case, as he left most of the planning to Du Pont and others.⁴⁹⁸

The rest of the embassy’s stay in Washington consisted of visiting important attractions that Du Pont had selected for the group, and attending social events. Two days after the reception, the ambassadors met President Buchanan again for a concert on the White House lawn.⁴⁹⁹ Naturally, given Muragaki’s distaste for Western music, he later complained in his diary that the encounter was “a bad dream conjured up by the legendary tricks of a mischievous fox or badger.”⁵⁰⁰ When visiting foreign legations, the ambassadors learned they could simply leave their card and avoid meeting anyone without causing offense. Other visits included the Smithsonian museum and the U.S. patent office.⁵⁰¹ Mostly, though, the Japanese delegation remained inside Willard’s,

⁴⁹⁵ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 77.

⁴⁹⁶ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 77.

⁴⁹⁷ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 77.

⁴⁹⁸ Marshall, *The Tycoon’s Ambassadors*, 70-71. A contemporary letter expressed that it seemed “President Buchanan...did not know what to do with the Japanese” and was preoccupied with domestic matters.

⁴⁹⁹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 80.

⁵⁰⁰ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 82.

⁵⁰¹ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 55.

where they met with the massive crowd that came every day to see them. Handshakes, signatures, and small trinkets were the currency the Japanese used to gain favor with the American public. Finally, an uneventful ratification ceremony took place on May 22, after which the Treaty of Yedo was entered into full force.

The last key moment of the embassy's time in Washington came on May 23, the day after ratification. It was the scheduled visit to Congress that the Japanese had committed to earlier. Since this was the shogunate's first overseas excursion, visiting Congress represented an opportunity for isolated Japan to view a different system of government other than feudalism. Once the group arrived, Muragaki was impressed with the structure of the building, and called attention to its elaborate marble and many guards.⁵⁰² However, this was all that impressed the group. If the Buchanan administration wanted to highlight the advantages of republican government, they had chosen a poor time to do so. This session of Congress was particularly volatile as divisions between North and South came dangerously close to boiling. "One of the members...[was] on his feet, haranguing at the top of his voice, and gesticulating wildly like a madman."⁵⁰³ The majority raised "their voices in an unmannerly way," reminiscent "of our fishmarket at Nihonbashi."⁵⁰⁴ Because of the disorder in Congress, Muragaki judged that "the constitutional system of this country may [not] last for much longer."⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰² Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 90.

⁵⁰³ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 90.

⁵⁰⁴ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 91.

⁵⁰⁵ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 77.

Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York

After a lengthy stay in Washington, the embassy boarded a special train on June 8, headed for Baltimore, accompanied by Captain Du Pont and the other American minders.⁵⁰⁶ This had not been the original intent of the Japanese. Muragaki had earlier considered Cass and Buchanan's statements that they should explore more of the country as "little more than a compliment."⁵⁰⁷ However, just as the ambassadors were ready to set sail for home, they "learned that [the President] is earnestly desirous that we should see [other cities] before we left."⁵⁰⁸ While the Japanese were perfectly keen to refuse this request – and indeed, tried to do so – they also found that their ship, the *Niagara*, had run into technical problems and would not be functional for several weeks.⁵⁰⁹ Muragaki was wary: "we suspected that the report on the sailing of the 'Niagara' was not quite true; we could not believe that a large vessel of the type of the 'Niagara' would have engine troubles so shortly after she left the port."⁵¹⁰ Concerned that they were being strung along, the ambassadors subsequently informed Captain Du Pont that they would remain in Washington until the repairs were complete.

Du Pont explained to the ambassadors that international norms usually demanded foreign embassies "make a tour of the country before [returning] home."⁵¹¹ This time, however, Muragaki and company were adamant. They escalated their language, refusing

⁵⁰⁶ Lewis Bush, *77 Samurai: Japan's First Embassy to America* (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1968), 187.

⁵⁰⁷ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 101.

⁵⁰⁸ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 101.

⁵⁰⁹ Marshall, *The Tycoon's Ambassadors*, 182-183. Despite the fact that this was convenient for Buchanan's goals, the situation does not appear to have been an intentional sabotage by the United States, as Du Pont was surprised when he heard the news, and needed to scramble to find a new schedule.

⁵¹⁰ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 102.

⁵¹¹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 102.

to “waste our time on a pleasure trip.”⁵¹² With no other cards to play, Du Pont insisted it was physically impossible for the *Niagara* to dock at the capital district’s port, since it was a larger vessel and the Potomac was too shallow. Remaining in Washington was not just undesirable; it was impossible. The ambassadors were furious at this, but there was little they could do to alter the situation. The trio agreed that they would travel to New York City, the closest port that could receive the *Niagara*, with brief stops in Baltimore and Philadelphia along the way. Privately, Muragaki grumbled that in the future, Japanese embassies “should not...travel abroad, except on our own warships.”⁵¹³

Travelling only reluctantly, the Japanese embassy arrived in Baltimore after a short train ride from Washington. When the ambassadors pulled in to the train station at around 10 in the morning, the local citizens greeted them with a similar zeal to the capital. The embassy once again embarked on a parade through the city streets, accompanied by a band and “three battalions of soldiers.”⁵¹⁴ The *Baltimore Patriot* wrote about the procession with a sort of reverence, describing the city’s gratitude for being “for the nonce, the abiding place of three real live princes...from that far off and mysterious land in the East.”⁵¹⁵ The procession halted at the Baltimore City Office, where the ambassadors listened to a speech from Mayor Swann. The mayor highlighted his city’s commercial accomplishments, and expressed his desire that they could be expanded through a relationship with Japan.⁵¹⁶ For the ambassadors, this eagerness did not ingratiate them to the city, as they felt uncomfortable with the mayor’s singular focus

⁵¹² Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 102.

⁵¹³ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 103.

⁵¹⁴ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 110.

⁵¹⁵ “Reception of the Japanese Embassy at Baltimore, from the Baltimore Patriot,” *New York Herald*, June 10, 1860.

⁵¹⁶ “Reception...at Baltimore.”

on trade. After the speech, the embassy travelled to their hotel via carriage, and then later saw a firefighting demonstration and fireworks.

The next morning, the embassy departed for Philadelphia aboard another train. Various newspapers described a city that spent the past several weeks feverishly preparing for the Japanese arrival, to the point where “every wish of the distinguished visitors will be respected, every whim humored.”⁵¹⁷ All of this preparation seemingly paid off: Muragaki wrote that he was considerably more comfortable in Philadelphia than in Washington, and noted that it had “the appearance of a very prosperous city.”⁵¹⁸ In one frequently retold anecdote from the group’s first night there, their hotel staff tried to accommodate Japanese tastes in dining. For the first time since arriving, the Japanese were treated to white rice, “at the very long last.”⁵¹⁹ However: “alas! When we took the lid off, we discovered that the rice in the bowl was fried in butter,” rendering it inedible for the homesick ambassadors.⁵²⁰

Du Pont had arranged more entertainments in conjunction with the city government, and a few occasions stand out as of interest. One example was a visit to the Philadelphia Mint on June 13, which ambassadors Shimmi and Oguri undertook.⁵²¹ American officials were determined to solve Japan’s international currency issues by comparing Japanese *cobangs* against the gold dollar.⁵²² Both sides spent the day performing the necessary tests, and ambassador Oguri told his hosts that he would report

⁵¹⁷ Reception of the Embassy at Philadelphia,” *New York Herald*, June 10, 1860.

⁵¹⁸ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 113.

⁵¹⁹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 113.

⁵²⁰ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 113.

⁵²¹ Patterson Dubois, “The Great Japanese Embassy of 1860: A Forgotten Chapter in the History of International Amity and Commerce,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 49, no. 195 (1910): 253.

⁵²² Dubois, “Great Japanese Embassy,” 255.

their findings to the shogunate to create a proper “system of exchange...between the two countries.”⁵²³ Patterson Dubois, who was present as a young boy, was later convinced that this meeting inspired Japan to based its coinage around the American model.⁵²⁴

Perhaps because the embassy’s stay in Philadelphia was more comfortable, some members of the procession were able to engage with the Americans. Most newspapers delighted in writing about the affairs of Tateishi Onojiro, whom the general public nicknamed “Tommy,” and his relationships with several lovestruck American girls.⁵²⁵ Tateishi frequently flirted with these women during parties and other social events, and wrote them love letters in his rapidly-improving English. Other commenters mocked this behavior, or, at worst, subjected the entire group to “the most disgusting and brutal language” for the implied miscegenation.⁵²⁶ While the Japanese likely understood some of this abuse through their interpreters, it did not appear to bother them significantly, and officials like Muragaki completely ignored Tateishi in their writings.⁵²⁷

New York City was the Japanese embassy’s last stop in the United States. *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* placed the group’s departure from Philadelphia on June 16, when they boarded another luxurious boat and arrived in New York harbor later that same day.⁵²⁸ From this point, the story continued in much the same way as it had in Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia: local officials paraded the Japanese through

⁵²³ Dubois, “Great Japanese Embassy,” 256.

⁵²⁴ Dubois, “Great Japanese Embassy,” 243.

⁵²⁵ Admittedly, Tateishi was only 17 years old at the time of the embassy, but many newspaper accounts went out of their way to refer to him in the diminutive, making statements such as “he is just the boy to play the gallant.” See “Movements of the Asiatics,” *New York Herald*, June 14, 1860.

⁵²⁶ Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them*, 66.

⁵²⁷ Conversely, perhaps Tommy’s antics did bother the rest of the embassy, and they purposely omitted him from their diaries. Available records are unclear.

⁵²⁸ Many Americans hoped that they could prolong the Japanese visit, perhaps adding a stop to Boston as well. However, in New York City, the group rejected the appeals of the mayors of both Boston and Niagara to visit their cities. Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 120-121.

the streets on their way to the hotel, to an enthusiastic crowd.⁵²⁹ Because New York had more time to prepare, though, it was a much larger parade. According to Muragaki, “the number of troops on guard was almost twice as large as what we saw in Washington,” resulting in a much slower procession through the city’s crowded streets.⁵³⁰

The euphoria the embassy temporarily felt in Philadelphia had died down, though, and the ambassadors fell back into old habits. Muragaki complained that the city was “crowded with foreign vessels...over-run by migrants,” and “its citizens [were] invariably callous.”⁵³¹ Because of this discomfort, the ambassadors and their retinue largely remained inside for the first several days. Yanagawa reiterated Muragaki’s concern about immigrants, and noted that, when they did go out, they needed to be “heavily guarded.”⁵³² Still, as a show of gratitude for the security, the Japanese ambassadors donated “20,000.00 to the authorities.”⁵³³

A few days before leaving, a descendent of Commodore Perry referred to as “Mr. Belmont” – likely Perry’s son-in-law August Belmont, a wealthy financier – visited the ambassadors at their hotel.⁵³⁴ Belmont invited the group to visit him at his personal home, which was the type of invitation the ambassadors usually rejected. They did not on this occasion, though. Given Perry’s checkered history with Japan, exploring why they made this decision is important. The Commodore was a divisive figure for the shogunate for certain, and the leaders of the embassy probably did not *like* Perry himself. However, the ambassadors also probably felt a sense of Perry’s importance in the history of the two

⁵²⁹ “The Japanese in New York,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, June 23, 1860.

⁵³⁰ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 117.

⁵³¹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 120.

⁵³² Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 73.

⁵³³ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 75.

⁵³⁴ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 123.

countries. Despite their own feelings, history demanded they pay their respects. Making a visit now would complete the circuit that Perry began back in 1853, with the newly opened Japan finally providing reciprocity.

Part of Belmont's invitation included a visit to Jane Slidell Perry, the Commodore's widow, who lived at a separate residence. This took place first. Upon meeting Mrs. Perry, the ambassadors found her to be "an elderly lady of admirable dignity and gentleness" who "cordially received" them.⁵³⁵ Decorating her house was a significant amount of memorabilia from Perry's voyages to Japan, including presents from the shogun. Also present were "two Japanese spaniels" who realized "that we were Japanese" and "danced at our feet...and would not leave us."⁵³⁶ Mrs. Perry and the ambassadors exchanged some brief pleasantries, during which the host informed the group of how important the voyages to Japan had been to Perry. The Japanese replied by expressing "how we wished the Commodore had been alive to greet us at his home, since we happened to be visiting his country."⁵³⁷ It was an emotional exchange. For the Japanese, the conversation highlighted how much their nation had changed in the last half-decade, while for Mrs. Perry, it acknowledged that her husband was an important man who led an important life. After exchanging "hearty farewells," the group departed, proceeding to August Belmont's house.⁵³⁸

A few days later, it was clear the *Niagara* would be ready to set sail soon, meaning the embassy had to prepare for departure. The group spend a whole day arguing

⁵³⁵ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 124-125.

⁵³⁶ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 76.

⁵³⁷ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 125.

⁵³⁸ There was an unremarkable dinner at Belmont's house, which is not necessarily worth recounting here. The embassy left quickly in order to avoid excess frivolity.

with Captain Du Pont about settling their debts: Du Pont insisted that his government would defray all incurred expenses, but the ambassadors were determined to pay their fees. Eventually, the Japanese offered a compromise by which they would accept the American offer, but would also leave behind a considerable sum to be distributed to the private citizens who had provided for the embassy during its travels. For the time being, Mr. Belmont would hold the money, and then pay it out once the recipients were identified. The Japanese delighted in packing their things and preparing to leave aboard the *Niagara*. Still, Muragaki found room in his heart to express he was “somehow saddened at the thought of parting with these good friends,” in regards to Du Pont and the other minds.⁵³⁹ Yanagawa, however, remained entirely clinical about the departure.

Japan’s Tentative Step onto the World Stage

The *Kanrin Maru* and her crew remained in San Francisco for approximately one month after the Japanese ambassadors left for Panama aboard the *Powhatan*. While the ship underwent significant repairs for the damage endured at sea, Fukuzawa and others used this time to explore the city to their satisfaction. Tamamushi’s earlier account, regarding how the chief ambassadors restricted the movement of their servants, largely seems to have applied only to the eastbound group. The more liberal Admiral Kimura did not seem to mind engagement with the Americans. Some stories from this time include Fukuzawa’s search for a copy of Webster’s dictionary to aid in his study of English, and Captain Brooke’s attempts to arrange a full military parade in honor of the *Kanrin Maru*

⁵³⁹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 130.

crew. Additionally, when one of the crew members passed away, Brooke wrote English characters honoring the man on his headstone.

The repairs to the *Kanrin Maru* were complete by early May, and on the 8th, the ship departed for home.⁵⁴⁰ This time, the Japanese felt comfortable enough to sail without any American help. The return voyage across the Pacific went smoothly this time and included a brief stopover in Hawaii. Unfortunately, there is little to say about this encounter. The Hawaiians accommodated the Japanese as best they could, but Fukuzawa was unimpressed. He remarked that “the natives were pretty miserable,” and, upon meeting King Kamehameha, “we saw only a native couple, the only sign of royalty being that the monarch wore a European wool suit.”⁵⁴¹ Suddenly, the man who had been so curious in San Francisco was less inquisitive when among the Hawaiian “barbarians.”⁵⁴²

A few weeks later, the *Kanrin Maru* arrived at the port of Uraga at the entrance to Edo Bay. During the group’s absence “no news from home – not even a rumor of any happening at home – had reached us.”⁵⁴³ Not knowing what awaited them, the crew likely expected a triumphant crowd of friends and family, ready to celebrate their successful Pacific crossing. This was not the case: instead, the reception was only sparsely attended, with those present clearly uneasy and unwilling to make much of a scene. Ominously prescient, Fukuzawa assumed the worst, and remarked “I’ll guess it. It must be something like an attack on our chancellor.”⁵⁴⁴

What had taken place during the embassy’s absence was a major turning point in

⁵⁴⁰ Hillsborough, *Samurai Revolution*, 126.

⁵⁴¹ Fukuzawa, *Autobiography*, 119.

⁵⁴² Fukuzawa, *Autobiography*, 119.

⁵⁴³ Fukuzawa, *Autobiography*, 121.

⁵⁴⁴ Fukuzawa, *Autobiography*, 121.

Japanese history, with significant ramifications for the mission to America as well. On March 24, 1860, only shortly after the *Kanrin Maru*'s arrival in San Francisco, Ii Naosuke, the head of the *roju*, was assassinated. It was a bloody affair: while traveling to the shogun's palace, Ii's procession was ambushed by samurai from the Mito domain who were ideologically connected to Tokugawa Nariaki.⁵⁴⁵ These samurai rushed the *tairo*'s palanquin and stabbed him multiple times, before a Satsuma samurai beheaded him. After this quick flurry of steel, the "Sakuradamon Incident" saw the leader of the shogunate dead, and the entire country quickly fell into chaos. With Ii dead, anti-foreign supporters of *Sonno Joi* were emboldened, prompting a covert reign of terror for the next several years.⁵⁴⁶ This shift against global engagement came at a very poor time for the ambassadors, who would not return from the East Coast until several months later.

The *Niagara* left New York on June 30, taking the long route home underneath the Cape of Good Hope.⁵⁴⁷ This consisted of many long, repetitive days of sailing, interrupted by stops in the Cape Verde Islands, Angola, Java, and Hong Kong before finally reaching Yokohama in early November. The sailing was so monotonous that Yanagawa barely commented on each new location they came across. For example, when pulling into Hong Kong, he merely commented that "there is a war going on between China and Great Britain" before ending the diary entry altogether.⁵⁴⁸

Interesting observations primarily came from Muragaki, who continued to "rank"

⁵⁴⁵ Nariaki did not directly order this attack, though, since he was under house arrest at the time, and may have actually tried to prevent the hotheaded samurai from carrying it out. See Beasley, *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy*, 51.

⁵⁴⁶ For more detail on the terror following Ii's death, see Hillsborough, *Samurai Revolution*, 131-135. For a similar perspective, one can also consult Griffis, *The Mikado's Empire*, 359. In Griffis' case, his account has the benefit of originally being published in 1883, much closer to the events in question.

⁵⁴⁷ Bush, *77 Samurai*, 226.

⁵⁴⁸ Yanagawa, *First Japanese Mission*, 80.

Japan's place in the global hierarchy of nations. In Angola, a Portuguese colony, the vice-ambassador commented on the strange appearance of the Africans, remarking that "the natives were as black as charcoal, and it was difficult to distinguish men from women."⁵⁴⁹ From this, he extrapolated that "these natives look more like apes than human beings."⁵⁵⁰ Based on these comments, we can see that the ambassador did not believe African countries ranked very highly, recalling similar language Muragaki used to describe Hawaiians earlier.

As the Japanese long had relations with the Dutch, the embassy members felt more comfortable to go ashore at Batavia, the capital of the Dutch East Indies. In fact, unlike any of the major cities he visited in the U.S., Muragaki copied down the history of the colony in a lengthy journal entry he translated from Dutch.⁵⁵¹ When the group sat down for dinner with the governor of the islands, they learned that the dishes were "arranged by courtesy of the United States Government," highlighting America's long reach on the other side of the world.⁵⁵²

The available English translations of Muragaki's diary end shortly after the embassy's departure from Hong Kong, so unfortunately, we know little about his feelings when the *Niagara* reached Yokohama on November 8.⁵⁵³ Yanagawa merely provided a stale recitation of facts, with no detail on his own feelings. We know there was a reception from Yokohama's foreign population, since the expatriates were excited for the return of Japan's first foreign embassy and for the impact on their pocketbooks in terms

⁵⁴⁹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 142.

⁵⁵⁰ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 142.

⁵⁵¹ Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 156-158.

⁵⁵² Muragaki, *Kokai Nikki*, 160. Unfortunately, Muragaki did not explain quite how the United States had accomplished this.

⁵⁵³ Bush, *77 Samurai*, 239.

of future trade. Only a few Japanese gathered for the *Niagara*'s return. For most of the ambassadors and crew of the mission, very few went on to great careers after their brief stint as diplomats.⁵⁵⁴

How then, can we evaluate the significance of the 1860 Tokugawa Embassy to America? In terms of strictly material benefits, the only outcome was the final ratification of the Treaty of Yedo. This treaty was critical in determining Japan's relationship with the United States over the coming decades, and had already served as the template by which other Western powers based their own treaties. It would not be a stretch to say this accomplishment alone lent significance to the expedition. However, one must also consider that the treaty had already been finalized as early as 1858, and that the ratification in Washington was symbolic. In regard to the Treaty of Yedo, little diplomacy of note actually took place while in America.

The embassy *could* have been an opportunity for Japan to drastically reevaluate its opinion of the United States through firsthand experience. There were two options: either the ambassadors could have come away with a charitable view of those they previously considered "barbarians," or they could have solidified their views that the Westerners were exploitative colonizers with designs on Japan. Upon their return, they could have then transmitted these views to the *roju*, in turn guiding the country's foreign policy. The group certainly did develop these views, as we can see through Muragaki's pessimism or Kimura's feelings of friendship. However, the abrupt death of Ii Naosuke largely negated their potential contribution. By the time the ambassadors returned, it was

⁵⁵⁴ Masao Miyoshi's *As We Saw Them* devotes considerable attention to the lives of the ambassadors after returning to Japan, and I refer the reader to that work for an in-depth analysis. See Chapter 4, "Lives", pages 145-182.

unsafe for them to openly express their opinions about their time abroad. We know that the chief ambassadors made a report to the shogun, but remained tight-lipped beyond that. They also self-censored their diaries, and it would not be until much later that the unredacted versions would see the light of day.

As for the Americans, the embassy also *could* have represented an opportunity to revise opinions of Japan based on firsthand evidence. However, once the ambassadors ceased to be an exotic novelty, many Americans fell into old habits. The Japanese were repeatedly racialized and ranked, much like what Muragaki had done himself. Appealing to the lower classes, newspaper cartoons compared the Japanese to blacks or monkeys.⁵⁵⁵ Because the embassy did not visit any southern cities, southern newspapers barely wrote about the expedition at all and considered it to be an example of the North showing off.⁵⁵⁶ Wealthier Americans fixated on Japan's potential as a new market, which meant they paid little attention beyond their own personal interest. Finally, and most definitively, though, was the fact that only a year after the Japanese arrival, the United States tore itself apart in civil war. President Lincoln's policy towards Japan during the war years was minimal, blunting any long-term impact the mission may have had.

Despite this pessimism, we can assess the mission's true value by viewing it as part of a whole, as part of a series of missions which defined the early U.S.–Japan relationship. By doing so, we can see the 1860 endeavor as a stepping stone between subjugation and self-confidence for Japan. The best way to do this is to compare and contrast 1860 with Perry's earlier endeavors. In the last chapter, we concluded that

⁵⁵⁵ Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them*, 69.

⁵⁵⁶ Scott Lamar Eidson, "With Pomp, Ceremony, and Parade: The American Encounter with the Tokugawa Embassy, 1860," PhD diss., (University of Kentucky, 2011), 6.

Perry's expedition represented gunboat diplomacy conducted via a power imbalance. The Japanese were weaker, and the Americans stronger. On the surface, the 1860 embassy maintained a similar power imbalance. The Americans still behaved more assertively, and took the initiative to plan and execute the expedition. If Townsend Harris had not been there to push for it, it is unlikely that the 1860 mission would have occurred at all.

There are more contrasts than comparisons to be made between Perry and the 1860 Tokugawa mission, however. Primarily, these centered around the American tone. Despite being in a dominant position, the United States was largely noncombative and instead conciliatory towards the Japanese. This stemmed from the fact that Washington already had what it wanted – the Treaty of Yedo – but recognized that it stood to gain something more by developing a relationship with Japan. Commerce, yes, but also recognition as a great power. I believe that the disputes with Britain prior to the embassy's departure were critical. Harris and other Americans realized that the shogunate needed to be wooed, not pushed, or else Edo would cast the United States as another Great Britain, a villain on the world stage. Washington was out to prove that its system of liberal democracy and social equality was different, and more deserving of Japanese attention than the monarchies of old Europe.

Conciliation, even though the United States implemented it in a ham-handed way, allowed the Japanese more freedom to act and preserve agency. The ambassadors frequently controlled their own destiny while abroad. They refused social calls, left dinners early, and met with officials as equals, not subordinates. Du Pont could not command them, only convince them that his plans were in their best interest. The Japanese even had the opportunity to showcase their newborn navy through the voyage of

the *Kanrin Maru*. In effect, this was the first time the country was visible internationally as its own nation, not as an object of imperial conquest. These steps were tentative, to be sure. Muragaki and company were not the best choices for their roles, and they enforced orders which prevented their subordinates from fully participating either. However, we can still use the 1860 mission as a convenient measuring stick to illustrate how far the U.S.–Japan relationship had developed. The United States was more conciliatory, and the Japanese were more active. Conflict between the two was less apparent than in 1854.

As suggested by the assassination of Ii Naosuke, Japan was about to undergo a massive societal shift, which would indeed occur by the end of the decade. By 1871 – the time of the next major trans-Pacific mission – the shogunate had ceased to exist, and the country was being rebuilt as a modernized nation with heavy Western influence. The Iwakura Mission, as that 1871 endeavor would be called, would see this dramatically changed Japan directly grappling with an America that was not quite sure of either's role in the larger world. Still, despite this tension, the relationship between the two was on more equal footing than ever, and actual conflict would be further away than at any prior point in the two nations' relationship.

V. THE IWAKURA MISSION

Introduction and Historiography

Out of all the decades that comprised the volatile nineteenth century, the 1860s saw arguably the most dramatic social and political upheavals for both Japan and the United States. Tensions – centered around race in the U.S., ideological and clan rivalries in Japan, and geographical faults in both countries – were still smoldering at the time of the 1860 Tokugawa Embassy. Although President Buchanan tried his best to mask his country's unrest during the ambassadors' visit, it would not be long before those tensions spiraled out of control and caused both countries to plunge into civil conflict. The story of the American Civil War is well known in Western academia, as is the following decade of Reconstruction, which the United States was still clumsily wading through in 1871.

Less well known in the English-speaking world is Japan's comparable experience, but the story itself is no less dramatic. For eight years after 1860, low-ranking samurai, dissatisfied with the perceived pro-Western Tokugawa, rallied around the figurehead Emperor Komei (and later, his son, Emperor Meiji) to bring about the *bakufu*'s final collapse.⁵⁵⁷ These rebels first carried out a campaign of terror against foreign sympathizers in the vein of the earlier Sakuradamon Incident. Eventually, assassination turned into open conflict, and the Boshin War of 1868 rocked the country and brought the shogunate to collapse. The anti-*bakufu* victors declared an imperial restoration and a new

⁵⁵⁷ Meiji was the era name (*nengo*) given to Emperor Mutsuhito upon his death. For the purposes of this thesis, both names can be used interchangeably to refer to the same person. However, I will usually use Meiji to describe the Emperor associated with the Meiji Period.

government, thereby ending two centuries of Tokugawa rule. In the wake of the Meiji Restoration, these victors turned to the problems faced by the reborn country, but for the next few years, success in this chaotic environment was anything but guaranteed.

As Tokyo struggled to bring order to the country, surprisingly, the new Meiji Government also saw fit to divert resources to another endeavor: yet another trans-Pacific voyage known as the Iwakura Mission (1871-1873). Named after chief ambassador Iwakura Tomomi, this monumental undertaking consisted of forty-six of the highest-ranking officials in the new government, along with eighteen attendants and forty-three traveling students, including five girls.⁵⁵⁸ It was an international journey. The Japanese crossed the Pacific to the United States, and then the Atlantic to Europe, while meeting officials from countries with whom the Tokugawa Shogunate had treaties. This was to explain to the powers that there was a new government in charge. Other goals included the renegotiation of Japan's "unequal treaties," and learning about Western institutions of government, economy, and society in order to improve Japan's own.

As one can likely already surmise, the Iwakura Mission was fundamentally different from the prior 1860 Tokugawa Embassy. Whereas the shogunate sent low-ranking officials without familiarity or interest in the West as representatives, the Meiji government relinquished vital men at the apex of governmental authority. These included officials like Okubo Toshimichi and Kido Takayoshi, two-thirds of the trifecta with the most power in the new government, and rising stars like Ito Hirobumi, who would later

⁵⁵⁸ Kume Kunitake, *The Iwakura Embassy, 1871-73, A True Account of the Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary's Journey of Observation Through the United States of America and Europe, Volume 1: The United States of America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), XVI.

become Japan's first Prime Minister.⁵⁵⁹ These men were genuinely curious about the foreign powers, which put engagement at the forefront of the expedition, not as an afterthought. They were also less willing to cave to Western demands on their itinerary, being unafraid to take control of the journey if they believed it in their best interest. Most importantly, in the United States at least, the ambassadors were willing to take diplomatic risks as long as the potential payoff was worth it.

Washington was rather baffled by this new approach of the previously hermit-like Japanese. They were grateful for trade opportunities and for the openness of the Meiji statesmen, to be sure, but not many Americans understood the magnitude of the changes their Pacific neighbor had undergone. Unlike in 1854 and 1860, this time, the United States was reactive and the Japanese were proactive. In general, during the embassy's time in the United States, the Grant Administration was amenable and accommodating to its distinguished guests, and if anything, the relationship between the two countries could be described as positive. The Japanese representatives would later model many of their nation's own domestic institutions after their American equivalents, which they learned about during their travels. However, Washington still held more cards in terms of diplomatic power, and was not above teaching the ambassadors harsh lessons in international law especially when it came to treaty renegotiation.

Despite the Iwakura Mission's acknowledged importance by scholars of Meiji Japan, the endeavor also remains understudied in Western academia. Most scholarly works discuss the mission abstractly, as a case study representing the Meiji Era's broader

⁵⁵⁹ The other third of the early Meiji trifecta was Saigo Takamori, who remained in Tokyo during the expedition to head the interim government. Marlene Mayo, "The Korean Crisis of 1873 and Early Meiji Foreign Policy," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 31, no. 4 (August 1972): 793.

approach to modernization and Westernization.⁵⁶⁰ Since this chapter is more concerned with the search for conflict and conciliation via the day-by-day contours of the mission, other sources must be consulted. In this case, the two preeminent scholars are Marlene Mayo and Payson Treat. Both highlight the diplomatic challenges faced by the embassy in Washington during talks with Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, and show us how both sides approached the language of Western diplomacy in general.

The primary sources available for the Iwakura Mission are substantial in both quantity and quality. On the Japanese side, the quintessential volume is Kume Kunitake's report compiled in his capacity as the mission's secretary. This was translated into English as *The Iwakura Embassy: A True Account of the Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary's Journey of Observation Through the United States and Europe*.⁵⁶¹ Kume's report is a massive five-volume set, with precise daily details recorded alongside the secretary's insightful commentary. However, the author specified that his work should not be used as a record of diplomacy, as it omits the details of "social events, diplomatic exchanges and political meetings" in order to streamline the focus on Western institutions.⁵⁶² We can still learn important things about the embassy's diplomatic component, but with Kume's work, we need to read between the lines. Far more direct on diplomatic matters is the diary of Kido Takayoshi.⁵⁶³ As a chief negotiator, Kido recorded his impressions of the treaty renegotiation process alongside his frustrations as talks slowed to a crawl over the long, hot summer months. On the American side, Charles

⁵⁶⁰ Two of these pieces include Eugene Soviak's article "On the Nature of Western Progress: The Journal of the Iwakura Embassy," and Alistair Swale's "America, the First Stage in the Quest for Enlightenment." Swale's article is included in Nish's *The Iwakura Mission in America & Europe: A New Assessment*.

⁵⁶¹ From here on, I will refer to this as the *True Account*.

⁵⁶² Kume, *True Account*, 4.

⁵⁶³ Also commonly known as Kido Koin. Kido Takayoshi, *The Diary of Kido Takayoshi: Volume II: 1871-1874* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1985).

Lanman, a journalist, traveled with the embassy as a guide and filled a similar role to Samuel Du Pont in 1860. His thoughts are collected in *The Japanese in America*.⁵⁶⁴

The goal of this chapter is to show how the American phase of the Iwakura Mission represented a significant step for Japan in its dealings with the United States. Far from being timid as its precarious hold on power at home might suggest, this new Japan was prepared to assert itself in a way the country had not done during the Tokugawa Period. The United States was still keen to act in a mentor role, but it was now far less deliberately predatory (as during the Perry expeditions) or excessively controlling (as during the 1860 mission). This meant that mutual parity, while not quite attained, was closer than ever.

The U.S.–Japan Relationship in the 1860s

While a full account of the multi-year-long lead up to the Meiji Restoration is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is impossible to have an adequate understanding of the importance of the Iwakura Mission without at least a partial familiarity with this process of transition. To start, the U.S. role needs to be highlighted. After 1860, important changes had taken place in America's Japan policy, which left the status quo between the countries shaken up and only partially redefined. The United States wanted some relationship with the new Meiji government, but what form this would take was not settled before the Iwakura Mission.

As tensions escalated between the alliance of rebellious domains – predominated

⁵⁶⁴ Charles Lanman, *The Japanese in America* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1872).

by Satsuma and Choshu – and the *bakufu* in Edo, the foreign powers found their loyalties divided as well.⁵⁶⁵ Most well-known are the policies of Great Britain and France. After initial tension with Satsuma in 1863, the British eventually sided with the imperial loyalist camp once they realized that the shogunate could not command the allegiance of a majority of the nation's *daimyo*.⁵⁶⁶ Subsequently, the British covertly provided arms to loyalist samurai, while maintaining an outer façade of neutrality. The French took the opposite approach, backing the *bakufu* with their own arms, experts, and training, and constructing a weapons foundry at Yokosuka.⁵⁶⁷

Despite their earlier activism in Perry's time, the Americans remained more neutral in the unfolding conflict of the 1860s. This was largely due to Washington's preoccupation with its own Civil War. The U.S. did participate in the Shimonoseki Campaign of 1863, during which a coalition of Western powers carried out military action against Choshu. However, this was in response to attacks by the government of Choshu against Western ships, and did not necessarily reflect a pro-*bakufu* position.⁵⁶⁸ Overall though, the United States acknowledged the authority of the shogun, which was a position that made sense for the distracted Americans. The treaties that Townsend Harris had worked so hard to complete indicated that the *bakufu* was the authority responsible

⁵⁶⁵ The domain alliance will henceforth be referred to as "loyalists," as they were the side that identified their cause's justification for violence with loyalty to the Emperor. The *bakufu* made similar justifications that they acted with the Emperor's best interests in mind, but historians generally use the term "loyalist" only when describing the anti-*bakufu* faction.

⁵⁶⁶ The British actually fought a battle against Satsuma in 1863, in response to an incident where a British citizen was cut down by Satsuma samurai after a perceived display of disrespect. Several ships of the Royal Navy sailed to Kagoshima and razed the castle town with cannon and fire. However, despite British technological superiority, the Satsuma military put up a sturdy fight, and ended the conflict with fewer casualties than the British. However, the property damage in Kagoshima was considerable. See Chapter VIII: Bombardment of Kagoshima in Ernest Satow's *A Diplomat in Japan* for a detailed firsthand perspective.

⁵⁶⁷ Ernest Satow, *A Diplomat in Japan* (Middletown: 2015), 174.

⁵⁶⁸ Additionally, the 1863 campaign took place before Choshu had decided to oppose the shogunate in Edo.

for upholding Japanese obligations. Backing a different actor could invalidate those agreements and unnecessarily complicate things. Additionally, at least for the first half of the decade, it was not at all clear that the shogunate would collapse as quickly as it did.

U.S. policy towards the shogunate focused on providing limited military aid. Since 1862, Robert Pruyn, the U.S. Minister to Japan, worked to entice the *bakufu* to purchase American warships. Edo eventually responded to these overtures with substantial cash payments to secure Pruyn's ironclads.⁵⁶⁹ However, the Union Army delayed the delivery of the warships out of military necessity. This delay was exacerbated after dramatic occurrences of anti-Western violence in Japan, such as the previously mentioned Shimonoseki Incident. Washington eventually delivered two of the three promised ships, but by 1866, A.L.C. Portman, the American Charge d'Affaires, advised the Japanese government to send a mission directly to the United States to secure the delivery of the third.⁵⁷⁰

The shogunate agreed to Portman's request, and sent another delegation to America in 1867 to solve the problem. This was to be the last encounter between these governments before the *bakufu*'s collapse.⁵⁷¹ Fukuzawa Yukichi answered Edo's call to participate again, and the reformer recorded his testimony in his *Autobiography*. The leader of the mission was Ono Tomogoro "who, as Okanjo Gimmi-yaku (assistant minister of [the] treasury), was a man of rank and much influence in the government."⁵⁷²

⁵⁶⁹ Mark Ericson, "'Yankee Impertinence, Yankee Corruption': The Tokugawa Shogunate and Robert Pruyn, 1862-1867," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 6, no. 4 (1997): 240.

⁵⁷⁰ Ericson, "Yankee Impertinence," 253.

⁵⁷¹ The reader may question why this thesis will not be devoting a full chapter towards the diplomacy of the 1867 Tokugawa Embassy to the US. It was my original intent to do so, but space and length considerations prohibited a full analysis. Additionally, the long-term impact of this voyage was minimal, due to the *bakufu*'s collapse shortly after.

⁵⁷² Fukuzawa, *Autobiography*, 166.

Ono had also participated in the 1860 mission aboard the *Kanrin Maru*.⁵⁷³ His prior experience – when compared against previous chief ambassador Shimmi Buzen-no-Kami – suggests that the shogunate had begun to take international relations more seriously. While in Washington, the ambassadors met President Andrew Johnson and settled the issue of the remaining ship. The American government promised it would deliver the *Stonewall*, a former Confederate ironclad, to be used in the developing Tokugawa navy. Still, the multi-year-long delay, and the fact that an embassy had to be sent abroad in the first place irritated the shogunate and reduced its faith in the U.S. government. It was an agreeable, although not amicable, end to what had been a festering wound in the nations' diplomacy.

Despite the agreement finalized in Washington, the delivery of the *Stonewall* still did not come to pass. As late as January 2, 1868, Pruyn's successor, Robert Van Valkenburgh, continued to acknowledge that Edo was Japan's supreme authority. He remarked in a letter about how "the Japanese government" (read: shogunate) had been working to improve upon the foreign settlement in Hyogo.⁵⁷⁴ However, by February 24, Van Valkenburgh acknowledged that the Japanese power dynamic had changed in favor of the loyalist camp. One of his letters explained that the imperial court in Kyoto had informed him of the "revolt" of Tokugawa Yoshinobu, the shogun, and demanded American neutrality in the ensuing conflict.⁵⁷⁵ In the same letter, Van Valkenburgh

⁵⁷³ Ericson, "Yankee Impertinence," 254.

⁵⁷⁴ Robert Van Valkenburgh, "Mr. Van Valkenburgh to Mr. Seward," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs, Accompanying the Annual Message of the President to the Third Session of the Fortieth Congress*, January 2, 1868. Hyogo is modern Kobe, in Japan's Kansai region.

⁵⁷⁵ It would be more accurate to say "ex-shogun" here, but I would like to avoid dragging the reader down in details. Yoshinobu had technically abdicated his position through resignation, but maintained a hold on Tokugawa wealth that allowed him to still wield considerable power. This was threatening to the loyalists, who demanded he give up that wealth as well. Yoshinobu refused, and it was this refusal that actually triggered the Boshin War.

explained that he would delay the delivery of the already paid-for *Stonewall* in order to comply with the imperial letter.⁵⁷⁶ When the ship arrived a few days later, the American caretaker crew did not hand it over to the shogunal government. Although ostensibly done to maintain U.S. neutrality in the unfolding conflict, Van Valkenburgh's decision had the effect of shifting his country's loyalty from the shogunate to the court. It acknowledged the legitimacy of the court's letter, and denied Edo a vessel of war that it needed to combat imperial troops.⁵⁷⁷ This was a turning point for America's Japan policy.⁵⁷⁸

Regardless of its ultimate support for the loyalist faction, Washington's waffling and delays weakened what had been a strong position in the 1850s. Successive Republican administrations had (understandably) ignored Japanese concerns, and the British used this opening to consolidate their own influence. Thus, while America was a friendly nation, it was not a critical partner of the Meiji Government. A revitalization of diplomatic relations between the two was needed going into the 1870s.

The Loyalist Shift from *Sonno Joi* to Western Engagement

Before delving into the origins of the Iwakura Mission, another important question must first be addressed. Japan's post-1868 government was dominated by

⁵⁷⁶ Robert Van Valkenburgh, "Mr. Van Valkenburgh to Mr. Seward," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs, Accompanying the Annual Message of the President to the Third Session of the Fortieth Congress*, February 24, 1868.

⁵⁷⁷ Treat might dispute this interpretation, since he writes that Van Valkenburgh was personally "unwilling to commit [himself] too deeply with the Imperial party." However, despite Van Valkenburgh's beliefs, his actions still effectively shifted the United States' allegiance. Payson Treat, *Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and Japan, 1853-1895: Volume I (1853-1875)* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1963), 317.

⁵⁷⁸ Once it was in loyalist hands, the *Stonewall* became the *Kotetsu*, the first warship of the new Imperial Navy.

imperial loyalists, a faction which this thesis has explained consisted of anti-foreign *Sonno Joi* advocates. If the new government was comprised of these reactionaries, why would it engage with the outside world at all, much less send a mission of top-ranking officials on a journey to learn about the West? The answer to that question is critical to understanding the Meiji Government's approach to modernization, and is also an important piece of the Iwakura Mission puzzle.

Paradoxically, scholars can perceive the Meiji Restoration as both a reactionary and a progressive movement, perhaps even both simultaneously. It was reactionary for reasons that have already been identified: the *Sonno Joi* faction was deeply anxious about changes to Japan's policy of seclusion, especially in the wake of Perry's black ships. The phrase *Sonno Joi* speaks directly to this: the latter half of the four-character phrase "Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarians" focused on the need to rid Japan of foreign contagion. The former half gave the movement justification by calling for a return to a mythologized past – in this case, to a benevolent government run by an enlightened ruler - resembling the approaches of other reactionary movements across history.

However, while the loyalist movement may have had its origins in a xenophobic response to the Western threat, as the 1860s went on, it became increasingly clear that the movement had been co-opted by more progressive interests. This had to do with the changing goals of the loyalists: what started off as an anti-foreign struggle shifted to an anti-*bakufu* one. Consider the previously mentioned Shimonoseki Incident in 1863. The anti-foreign government of Choshu fired on Western ships attempting to cross the Strait of Shimonoseki, in an attempt to highlight that the foreign presence would no longer be

tolerated. A similar clash took place in rebellious Satsuma, against the British.⁵⁷⁹ While these and other clashes were not routs against *Joi* supporters, they were still losses, and highlighted the impractical nature of staunch anti-foreignism. Regardless of loyalist desires, samurai spirit alone was not enough to repulse the foreigners, who needed to be tolerated until Japan's technology matched the barbarians. This was a position that was much closer to that of the hated Ii Naosuke in 1854, rather than loyalist champion Tokugawa Nariaki's strategy of resistance. Necessity mandated a shift in strategy.

The *bakufu* presented a more vulnerable target than the foreign powers. While still the country's dominant military power in the early 1860s, the shogunate could not exercise total control over the country's *daimyo*. Cracks had formed since 1853 when Edo first highlighted its insecurity by soliciting the opinions of the *tozama*. Subsequently, these *tozama* plotted to further undermine the Tokugawa power structure and replace it with one in line with their own interests. This enmity presented an opportunity for the loyalists: by allying with the jealous *tozama* and using their resources, this faction became far stronger than it could have through chaos and assassination alone. Overthrowing the *bakufu* could then lead to the formation of a new government, which would then expel the foreigners for good at a later date.

The unity between *tozama* and loyalist ultimately had a moderating effect on the latter party, who often served the *daimyo* as close advisors. The reason for this is, despite their disdain for the shogunate, these *daimyo* were conservative, but not necessarily reactionary. They were less worried about expelling the foreigners than they were about growing their own power against the Tokugawa. To the *tozama*, the Emperor was little

⁵⁷⁹ See footnote 529.

more than a convenient justification for their actions, and they certainly did not have any desire to end feudalism, which was needed to preserve their privilege. The samurai ethic, to which most of the loyalists were personally bound, mandated service to one's lord, and although this may seem like a platitude to a modern audience, it was very tangible to loyalist advisors who were bound by clan loyalties. This meant, for example, that when Shimazu Hisamitsu, the father of the Satsuma *daimyo*, ordered his charges not "to unite in undertaking any rash actions with the *ronin* [that would] obviously be harmful to Satsuma," loyalist Satsuma samurai were compelled to obey.⁵⁸⁰ Therefore, convincing the *daimyo* to support the loyalist position was something only done with much give-and-take, necessarily moderating the reactionary camp. Both sides could agree upon the *bakufu* as an acceptable target, and so the foreign problem was put aside until the government in Edo was defeated.

Even with the gradual backing of the *tozama* lords, a few geographically isolated loyalist domains would still struggle against the full might of the *bakufu*. It is here that we can identify our second co-opting influence: the foreign powers themselves. As previously mentioned, the loyalists understood that fighting the foreigners head-on was a bad idea in the country's current state. However, they also recognized that foreign arms, tactics, and training could provide the crucial edge over the shogunate's large, but underequipped army. With this in mind, the loyalists in charge of Satsuma and Choshu shifted from opposing the foreigners to working with them against the *bakufu*, in one of the most monumental shifts of the Restoration.

⁵⁸⁰ Masakazu Iwata, *Okubo Toshimichi: The Bismarck of Japan* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964), 54. *Ronin* (masterless samurai) were frequently credited with causing much of the anti-foreign chaos in the 1860s, although just as frequently samurai who were still loyal to a lord also participated.

This new receptivity to foreign military might manifested in several key ways. In Choshu, it developed through the local government's relationship with Scottish arms dealer Thomas Glover. According to Hillsborough, during the "final three years of Tokugawa rule, Glover was instrumental in importing more than a half a million rifles into Nagasaki and Yokohama, 7,300 of which ended up in Choshu."⁵⁸¹ Once Satsuma formalized its alliance with Choshu, those same weapons also made their way further south. In addition to their arms advantage, the loyalists of Choshu sent students abroad to receive Western training. These included the "Choshu Five," who went to England and consisted of, among others, Ito Hirobumi and Inoue Kaoru, two future members of the Meiji government. As more time passed, the militaries of these far-off domains became increasingly sophisticated, and more and more anti-foreign samurai changed their views toward temporary foreign accommodation. The link between imperial loyalist and modernizer was no longer a contradiction.

With the loyalist die now strictly cast against the *bakufu* and the *bakufu* alone, the Boshin War erupted in early 1868 to pit these sides against each other. Despite initially outnumbering the loyalist troops almost two to one, Tokugawa Yoshinobu's army faltered against the technological advantage held by the samurai who flew the imperial banner.⁵⁸² To detail the resulting conflict would be tedious, so suffice it to say that the Boshin War was bloody, but at least short. By mid-1868, Yoshinobu had surrendered, Edo was occupied by imperial troops, and the remaining pockets of pro-*bakufu* resistance were only able to hold out for a few more months.

⁵⁸¹ Hillsborough, *Samurai Revolution*, 341.

⁵⁸² Another key factor was morale: most of the Tokugawa troops were conscripts from friendly *fudai* domains that, while officially loyal to Edo, were not sufficiently motivated to make sacrifices to preserve another clan's aristocracy.

The Meiji Emperor was officially coronated in a ceremony on September 12, 1868, with this moment truly cementing the transition that had taken place for Japan.⁵⁸³ No longer were the conservative, cautious Tokugawa in charge of foreign and domestic affairs; instead, the unlikely group of formerly reactionary samurai was now pulling the strings. Most of these men were young and came from non-illustrious backgrounds, many had traveled abroad, and some even had foreign educations. The men at the top, though, also had vision. They saw Japan not as a loose coalition of squabbling domains, but as a unified nation struggling against foreign imperialism. This meant that modernization, above all else, was essential. To modernize, the early Meiji state looked for a greater understanding of the West.

Origins and Composition of the Mission

Unlike prior diplomatic missions, it is difficult to identify the Iwakura Mission as the brainchild of a single person. Certainly, there were individuals who thought another mission to the West would be beneficial for Japan; however, there was no equivalent to a Townsend Harris, someone with a deep personal stake in having a mission take place. What sources do indicate, however, is the almost casual nature of the government's decision to undertake the expedition. No longer was trans-Pacific diplomacy a cipher that demanded precision and caution in its undertaking. Japan had encountered the West before, and international diplomacy was simply something that "enlightened" nations did. Japan was now resolved to act in accordance with this paradigm, even in the wake of a

⁵⁸³ Donald Keene, *Emperor of Japan: Meiji and His World, 1852-1912* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 157.

national crisis like the Restoration.

The most immediate problems for the Meiji government were domestic. Tokyo needed to figure out how the Tokugawa's decentralized system of feudalism could transition into a centralized, modern nation-state. This meant removing *daimyo* from the power structure and ending centuries of samurai privilege. Additionally, the Meiji modernizers needed to create a better government, with superior institutions, than the one the shoguns left behind, in order to make people *want* to transition away from feudalism and toward a modern country.

However, even in the midst of these issues, there was one problem that, while not as practically pressing, was still something that offended the government's pride and thus demanded action. That problem was treaty revision. Over the past decade, Japanese students who studied in the West informed the loyalists that the treaties signed by the shogunate were far more disadvantageous to Japan than originally understood. Clauses like extraterritoriality were humiliating and, worse, threatened the legitimacy of the government. If Tokyo could not punish foreign criminals, why would ordinary Japanese acknowledge the justice system, either?

The issue of the treaties nagged at the Meiji oligarchs during the first three years of the new administration. Iwakura Tomomi, a court noble and premier bureaucrat, wrote up a memorandum in early 1869 expounding on the necessity for immediate revision:

We must revise the treaties of commerce and navigation already concluded with Britain...and the United States and thus protect the independence of our country. Consular jurisdiction cannot be tolerated...Foreigners have the spirit of the tiger and the wolf; and, if we are afraid of their tyranny, our country will become their slave.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸⁴ Ian Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy, 1869-1942* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 266.

This call is accepted by some scholars as the first tangential reference to what would become the Iwakura Mission.⁵⁸⁵ What Iwakura was suggesting, they argue, is that Japan needed to proactively go abroad and demand these revisions.⁵⁸⁶ The nobleman's arguments fell upon receptive ears, and the idea of a mission began to take shape.

A mission abroad would give the Japanese the initiative for difficult conversations that were on the horizon. The first of the unequal treaties, the Treaty of Yedo, was set to expire on July 4, 1872, and renegotiations were scheduled shortly thereafter. However, if it visited the United States in advance of that date, the Meiji government could demonstrate its zeal and negotiate a more favorable treaty than if the foreigners met them in Tokyo. Similar thinking applied to treaties with the Europeans. The government's plan tentatively stated that, by order of the Emperor, a "special Embassy" would be sent "to the courts of the various Treaty Powers next autumn or winter [1869]."⁵⁸⁷

Once the idea of a mission started floating around, Guido Verbeck, a Dutch missionary employed as an *oyatoi gaikokujin*, began thinking of ways that such an endeavor could be used to further benefit Japan.⁵⁸⁸ In a letter to Okuma Shigenobu,

⁵⁸⁵ Nish, in particular, is the strongest voice in advocating for Iwakura's remarks as the genesis of the Iwakura Mission. Marlene Mayo disagrees, believing that Higashikuze Michitomi, the leader of the *Gaikokukan* (Bureau of Foreign Affairs – the Meiji Government's predecessor to the Foreign Ministry), called for renegotiations slightly earlier that same year. Higashikuze sent correspondence to the representatives of several of the great powers, explaining that the Restoration invalidated the shogunate's treaties. Marlene Mayo, "Rationality in the Restoration: The Iwakura Embassy," in *Modern Japanese Leadership: Transition and Change*, ed. Bernard Silberman and Harry Harootunian (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1966), 333. While Mayo's timeline is more accurate than Nish's, the fact that Higashikuze's initiative was largely directed at foreign diplomats, while Iwakura's was an introspective call to action for the broader government, suggests that Iwakura was more important for actually prompting the mission.

⁵⁸⁶ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, 18.

⁵⁸⁷ Albert Altman, "Guido Verbeck and the Iwakura Embassy," *Japan Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (1966): 59. The wording of this quote is slightly confusing, but Altman explains that by "next autumn or winter (1869)," Verbeck was stating "the autumn or winter of 1869." The letter did not predate Iwakura's first call for treaty revision.

⁵⁸⁸ *Oyatoi gaikokujin* refers to a foreign specialist hired by the Japanese government. These men could be specialists in a variety of fields, including science, education, agriculture, and military studies, among others. Their purpose was to oversee the development of modern institutions along Western lines, using

Verbeck described the mission as an opportunity to learn more about the West, not just as a vehicle for treaty renegotiation.⁵⁸⁹ He asked “what is the answer of one man,” – such as himself – “who is a foreigner and therefore perhaps not fully trusted,” on matters of modernization, when Japan’s leaders could simply go abroad and see conditions for themselves?⁵⁹⁰ Such an endeavor could be led by a chief ambassador, who “ought to be a man of high position...such a man’s advice, on his return to Japan, will be very valuable.”⁵⁹¹ Below the leader, delegates should be divided into groups to focus on different elements of Western society. These included “constitutions and laws,” “finances,” “various systems of national and high schools,” and “the armies and navies of the different countries.”⁵⁹² The outline was comprehensive in scope, and many of the Meiji oligarchs were enthusiastic about the potential of Verbeck’s plan.

Unfortunately, the government missed the 1869 deadline. More pressing concerns had come up, and Tokyo delayed the mission to the West to grapple with these problems. The most immediate issue was *Haihan Chiken*, the process of abolishing feudal domains and ending Tokugawa-style feudalism. It was a problem that needed to be dealt with in two stages, each one threatening civil war. First, the throne required the *daimyo* to give up hereditary privilege and landholdings. Then, by late 1871, Tokyo re-organized the domains into Japan’s modern system of prefectures, centralizing power in the capital. Surprisingly, the *daimyo* themselves were compliant with this process, but the samurai

their knowledge to train Japanese students to eventually take over from them. Recruiting *oyatoi gaikokujin* would be an important component of the Iwakura Mission.

⁵⁸⁹ Okuma was the official in charge of foreign affairs.

⁵⁹⁰ Altman, “Guido Verbeck,” 58.

⁵⁹¹ Altman, “Guido Verbeck,” 59.

⁵⁹² Altman, “Guido Verbeck,” 60-61.

class below them was not.⁵⁹³ Out of fear of losing their unique status, the former warriors rioted, which necessitated the government's undivided attention. Although ultimately successful, *Haihan Chiken* put the new government on the defensive, preventing them from moving forward on other issues.

Kido Takayoshi's diary throughout most of 1871 focuses almost exclusively on the process of abolishing feudalism, indicating that this was the primary concern of most government officials. His first whispers of the possibility that the mission to the West was back on came October 2, when Kido discussed "my intention to go abroad" during a talk with Okubo Toshimichi.⁵⁹⁴ However, he did not elaborate further. A more substantial entry from October 26 stated that Kido "went to Lord Iwakura's place by appointment; and we discussed the trip to Europe among other things."⁵⁹⁵ After this, a few more entries creep in about plans for departure, but on the whole, it appears that relatively little of Kido's time or mental energy was spent on such issues. Given Kido's high rank in the government, the casual nature of his preparations is likely indicative of Tokyo's overall approach. For reference, the Iwakura Mission departed that December.

Also on the 26th – and, indeed, perhaps during the same meeting with Kido – Iwakura Tomomi spoke with Guido Verbeck about the Dutchman's proposal from two years prior.⁵⁹⁶ Iwakura was evidently anxious for Verbeck to remember specifics.⁵⁹⁷ Taking a second to think, Verbeck remarked that he did, but that "the times have changed; it might not be expedient now."⁵⁹⁸ To this, Iwakura objected, offering a brief,

⁵⁹³ The *daimyo* agreed to the process for two reasons. First of all, Tokyo made them governors of the prefectures they used to rule. Second, the government wiped their (often considerable) personal debt.

⁵⁹⁴ Kido, *Diary*, 81.

⁵⁹⁵ Kido, *Diary*, 90.

⁵⁹⁶ Altman, "Guido Verbeck," 55.

⁵⁹⁷ Altman, "Guido Verbeck," 55.

⁵⁹⁸ Altman, "Guido Verbeck," 56.

but revealing counter: “it is *just the very thing now*.”⁵⁹⁹ The nobleman’s enthusiasm represented the government’s confidence that the success of *Haihan Chiken* had opened a small window for a voyage abroad. The trip would need to be soon, however, as the Treaty of Yedo’s expiration was approaching rapidly. While the government had since reconsidered about pushing for immediate revisions – by 1871, they considered this too risky – they still wanted to lay the groundwork for this process by listing their grievances with the current treaty structure.⁶⁰⁰

Now that they had committed to the mission, the next major hurdle for the government was to select who would participate in the endeavor, over the course of just two months. Iwakura Tomomi was a safe choice to lead the mission. While he was a critical government figure, he had recently obtained the position of Foreign Minister in July; therefore, it made sense for him to lead the mission.⁶⁰¹ Additionally, his loss at

⁵⁹⁹ Altman, “Guido Verbeck,” 56. The emphasis, I presume, was Verbeck’s himself. Altman does not indicate that he made changes to Verbeck’s original. However, the original letter is in cursive, so differentiating between emphasized words may have been difficult for the translator.

⁶⁰⁰ Marlene Mayo shares an excerpt from a letter written by Sanjo Sanetomi, a court noble who held the high-ranking position of Chief Councilor, to Iwakura, insisting that “these are not matters which can be settled overnight,” in regards to treaty renegotiations. Mayo, “Rationality in the Restoration,” 353, 355. This was because Sanjo believed that the government needed to revise its political institutions before proceeding with renegotiation. Sanjo, as a fairly conservative leader, represented the opinions of many other conservatives and moderates in this statement. Iwakura eventually concurred, somewhat reluctantly, that the embassy would wait to begin full renegotiations.

⁶⁰¹ Iwakura’s place in the government and the role of the Foreign Ministry are things that should be briefly recounted before proceeding. The Meiji Government’s Foreign Ministry was formed on July 8, 1869, as one of the six main offices of the *Daijokan*, the overarching imperial government. This office was considered to be a “first-rank ministry”, indicating that the government intended to take foreign relations far more seriously than the Tokugawa. Iwakura only served in his position as Foreign Minister from July 1871-November 1871, suggesting that his role was likely only in preparation for the mission which later bore his name. Based on the Iwakura’s later struggles in Washington with Fish, it appears unlikely that he received any significant diplomatic training on Western norms during his time as Foreign Minister. His successor, Soejima Taneomi, did receive this training though, and Soejima would later play a role in the Korean Crisis upon the Iwakura Mission’s return. In one of the lists compiled by Charles Lanman, three of the four First Secretaries of the mission came from the Foreign Ministry, and all of the four Second Secretaries and the sole Third Secretary also belonged to that organ. Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, 12-13. Lanman, *Japanese in America*, 7. What we can see here is a concerted, structural attempt to inject diplomacy into the proceedings of the Iwakura Mission.

home would be counterbalanced by the prestige Japan would gain abroad due to his status as a court noble. Kido Takayoshi, too, could be spared. The statesman had already indicated that he wanted to travel abroad, and upon his return, he could provide valuable firsthand insights to advance domestic Japanese institutions.

More trouble centered around Okubo Toshimichi, arguably the most powerful man in the government, who had also expressed his desire to participate. Okubo served as Finance Minister, which gave him budgeting authority over all other departments. His subordinate, Inoue Kaoru, feared that Okubo's absence would cause the finance department to fall apart, leading to general government instability and weakened institutions.⁶⁰² Alongside influential figures like Itagaki Taisuke and Okuma Shigenobu, Inoue pressed for Okubo to remain, but the Finance Minister overruled them. Much like Kido, Okubo wanted to see the West firsthand, and both men were unwilling to leave the task to less experienced subordinates.

With Okubo committed, there were more important officials going abroad than remaining to run the country, significantly weakening the remaining governing apparatus. In order to minimize the damage, the oligarchs collectively decided to create a caretaker government headed by Saigo Takamori while the embassy was abroad. Saigo, the hero of the Restoration from far-off Satsuma, still commanded a great deal of respect from Japan's samurai, and his leadership would likely quell any uprisings that class might initiate. Additionally, out of the trio of himself, Kido, and Okubo, Saigo was the most conservative, and personally had less desire to travel abroad. Other conservatives like Itagaki Taisuke further supplemented the interim government, while progressives like Ito

⁶⁰² Iwata, *Bismarck of Japan*, 151.

Hirobumi joined the mission abroad. The thinking was, the more conservative the government in Tokyo, the less likely it was to try anything drastic during the mission. This concept later became official policy immediately prior to the mission's departure, when the mission members and interim government agreed that the latter would not undertake any major policy initiatives until the delegation returned.⁶⁰³

Two other important members of the expedition were Kume Kunitake, a former samurai from Saga Prefecture, and Mori Arinori, the Japanese Charge d'Affairs in Washington. Lord Iwakura recruited Kume as his personal secretary, and tasked him with recording events from a Confucian perspective. Kume's skeptical eye allowed him to document the beneficial elements of the West, without becoming swept up in romanticism.⁶⁰⁴ Mori, on the other hand, was an unabashed progressive. As one of the youngest officials in the Meiji government at twenty-four, his knowledge of international diplomacy was limited, but he made up for this with his willingness to talk to people and form relationships with members of the U.S. government.⁶⁰⁵ Since America was less concerned about protocol than was Europe, Mori's post was an ideal fit for him. The young Charge d'Affairs only notified Secretary of State Hamilton Fish of the embassy's

⁶⁰³ Mayo, "The Korean Crisis of 1873," 794.

⁶⁰⁴ In other words, modernization without complete Westernization was ideal for the Meiji government. Kume had never traveled to the West before, and was not particularly well-versed on Western matters either. It appears that Iwakura selected Kume as a counterweight to the more progressive members of the delegation. See Kume, *True Account*, XXXVII.

⁶⁰⁵ Mori did not come from a career in the foreign office: one analyst of his role in the Iwakura Mission wrote that, prior to his assignment as Charge d'Affairs, he experienced "a tumultuous period in and out of various government posts." Benjamin Duke, *The History of Modern Japanese Education: Constructing the National School System, 1872-1890* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 83. Unfortunately, Duke does not clarify which departments Mori did serve in, although he does note that Mori had previously traveled abroad to America and England during the twilight years of the shogunate, which was against the law. His appointment to such a critical role suggests that the foreign office believed enthusiasm was similarly valuable to direct experience and training, at least at this early phase.

visit on January 12, 1872, just three days before their ship arrived in San Francisco.⁶⁰⁶

On November 20, 1871, the Meiji Emperor gave the notification to Kido Takayoshi that he was “hereby ordered to proceed to Europe and America as Associate Ambassador.”⁶⁰⁷ At the Emperor’s request, also to be included in the mission were five girls, in order to improve female education in Japan.⁶⁰⁸ The youngest, Tsuda Ume, was only seven. Kido accepted his charge unquestioningly, but noted in his diary that “there are a great many pending matters over which I am deeply worried.”⁶⁰⁹ A few days later, the highest-ranking ambassadors traveled by train to Yokohama to be fitted for Western suits.⁶¹⁰ This time, the delegates were determined not to be a side-show, and refused to wear Japanese clothing.⁶¹¹ Finally, on December 15, 1871, the entire group had one final audience with the Emperor, during which Meiji conducted Shinto rites for their safety abroad. He also presented the chief ambassadors with their formal credentials.⁶¹² These included a letter from the Emperor to President Grant, which explained the mission’s mandate and powers. The vague, flowery language of the court predominated in this text, and its lack of precise Western diplomatic terminology would later come back to haunt the embassy.

⁶⁰⁶ Kume, *True Account*, XXIX-XXX. How much notification the U.S. had about the Iwakura Mission is somewhat unclear. It seems unlikely that for such a major diplomatic encounter, Washington had absolutely zero notice other than Mori’s notification. Indeed, some newspapers indicate that the embassy was known to the American public prior. The earliest mention came on December 18, 1871 in an article from the *Daily Evening Bulletin*: “A mission consisting of five or six of the highest government officers is shortly to be dispatched for America and Europe, with a view of acquiring information respecting the revision of the treaties.” This suggests that Mori’s notification was more of a formality. “China and Japan,” *Daily Evening Bulletin*, December 18th, 1871.

⁶⁰⁷ Kido, *Diary*, 99.

⁶⁰⁸ Iwata, *Bismarck of Japan*, 150.

⁶⁰⁹ Kido, *Diary*, 99.

⁶¹⁰ Kido, *Diary*, 104.

⁶¹¹ The only exception was Iwakura Tomomi, who continued to wear his court robes, but even he relented partway through the expedition.

⁶¹² Kido, *Diary*, 108.

Crossing the Pacific and San Francisco, Once Again

Chief Secretary Kume Kunitake described the departure of this momentous mission in the *True Account*. As befitting such an august event, “a nineteen-gun salute” came from the shore, but this was abruptly followed by “considerable confusion.”⁶¹³ Owing to the unwieldy size of the mission, the many ambassadors, students, and servants boarded numerous small boats that darted and weaved under the cover of cannon fire, in an effort to get to the main ship floating off Yokohama. The date was December 23, 1871, and the ship they were headed for was the *America*, a mail-boat “reputed to be the most elegant vessel in the Pacific Mail Steamship Company fleet.”⁶¹⁴ This time, it was a private vessel transporting the Japanese delegation, not a government warship, indicating a decrease in formality between governments. Despite the initial confusion, once everyone boarded the ship and found their cabins, the *America* departed on time and Kume noted the magnificent scenery as they “all looked back nostalgically, feeling sad to be leaving the landscape of Japan behind.”⁶¹⁵ The coming weeks saw a mostly eventless journey for the vessel, as the sailors were blessed with good weather. The normally verbose Kume documented little about the crossing itself.

One occasion that did merit preservation by the secretary took place a few days after the new year. The day was the *Daijoe*, or the Great Enthronement Festival, which was a Japanese celebration honoring the Meiji Emperor’s coronation.⁶¹⁶ Iwakura wore every piece of courtly regalia he had for the occasion, and the other ambassadors

⁶¹³ Kume, *True Account*, 30.

⁶¹⁴ Kume, *True Account*, 30.

⁶¹⁵ Kume, *True Account*, 31.

⁶¹⁶ Kume, *True Account*, 36.

“distributed champagne around the ship in order to wish the Emperor a long life.”⁶¹⁷

Despite not being Japanese, American minister Charles DeLong raised his glass and spoke in honor of the occasion, while the ambassadors keenly listened. Speeches during parties were still not Japanese custom yet, but Kume noted that “from this day on,” the “members of the Embassy started giving speeches during the voyage.”⁶¹⁸ DeLong’s enthusiasm to participate suggested Washington’s support for the Meiji government, while the ambassadors’ desire to include the Americans in their own tradition spoke to increased Japanese confidence.

Towards the end of the trip, Kume recorded a meeting with a man named McLean, who was a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, “returning to America on the same ship.”⁶¹⁹ McLean presented the ambassadors with “some documents and other items he had taken that past summer during the forced entry into Korea,” and included Western maps of Asia’s other famously sealed hermit kingdom. Why he did so is unclear, but it is likely that it was out of some combination of friendliness and a desire to show off.

McLean’s charts were referencing the Korean Expedition of 1871, an American intervention against the country then known as Joseon, but to modern audiences as Korea. This event had stark parallels to Perry’s expeditions to Japan, although it ended differently. To briefly explain, Rear-Admiral John Rodgers brought a group of U.S. diplomats to negotiate an end to Korea’s isolation policy, which was similar to *sakoku*.⁶²⁰ However, when he sailed up the Han River, his vessels were met with “a heavy fire” from

⁶¹⁷ Kume, *True Account*, 36.

⁶¹⁸ Kume, *True Account*, 36.

⁶¹⁹ Kume, *True Account*, 36.

⁶²⁰ John Rodgers, “Expedition to Corea: Report of Rear-Admiral John Rodgers,” in *Annual Reports of the Navy Department* (Washington: Navy Department, 1871), 275.

shore batteries.⁶²¹ The resulting battle was a convincing military victory for Rodgers, but the Korean government's tenacity allowed it to avoid signing a treaty or compromising its isolation policy.

Out of all the conversations that must have occurred during the *America's* crossing, Kume ensured that this particular encounter with McLean was preserved. The Japanese were already aware that the Korean Expedition had taken place: Kido Takayoshi wrote about it in his diary back on July 16, and Rodgers' vessels first departed from Nagasaki.⁶²² Rather, I suspect this inclusion spoke to the Meiji government's anxiety that it was not advancing fast enough, and its worry that Japan was still seen by the West as yet another hermit kingdom. On the other hand, perhaps the conversation's inclusion served to highlight Japan's advancements over the past decade, and that it could now view the fate of Korea from the perspective of the colonizer, not the colonized. Regardless, McLean's charts and documents at least reinforced that there was a very real American presence in Asia that Japan needed to respect.

On the morning of January 15, 1872, Kume Kunitake described a "sea fog [that] was so thick that we could not even distinguish objects which were only a foot away from our eyes."⁶²³ After a month of travel, the embassy was close to its first destination. Although their voyage lacked the drama of the *Kanrin Maru's*, one can still appreciate the anticipation likely felt by most of the Japanese envoys. While the West was no longer as baffling as it was in Muragaki's time, there was still little room for diplomatic failure in the coming months if the treaties were to ultimately be revised. A short while later the

⁶²¹ Rodgers, "Expedition to Corea," 276.

⁶²² Kido, *Diary*, 43.

⁶²³ Kume, *True Account*, 60.

fog cleared, allowing the embassy to “distinguish the mountains of California ahead.”⁶²⁴

For now at least, “words [were] inadequate to express [the group’s] pleasure as we gazed upon this golden gateway where sea and sky meet.”⁶²⁵

Mirroring 1860, a large group of San Franciscans was present to welcome the approaching ship. The citizens were excited: Kido remarked that “the local people had been looking forward to our arrival; and they received us very warmly.”⁶²⁶ There was even a special committee of well-to-do community leaders who organized to provide for the embassy’s comfort.⁶²⁷ While this was San Francisco’s second experience hosting Japanese visitors, the city had also changed dramatically over the past decade. According to Kume’s research, the population tripled from 50,070 in 1860 to 149,473 presently.⁶²⁸ San Francisco’s industrial output had also grown significantly, making it perhaps the most important city in the American West in terms of trade and economics.

After disembarking the *America*, the ambassadors of the Iwakura Mission met several of San Francisco’s elites who were gathered at the wharf to welcome them. Charles DeLong did most of the talking as “the members of the Embassy looked on with both pleasure and curiosity depicted on their countenances.”⁶²⁹ After the introduction, Charles Wolcott Brooks, the American Consul for Japan, saw the entire retinue into nearby carriages to be transported to their temporary residence, the Grand Hotel.⁶³⁰

⁶²⁴ Kume, *True Account*, 60.

⁶²⁵ Kume, *True Account*, 60.

⁶²⁶ Kido, *Diary*, 114.

⁶²⁷ “The Japanese Embassy,” *Daily Alta California*, January 10, 1872.

⁶²⁸ Kume, *True Account*, 65. It is perhaps telling that Kume uses the 1860 mission as a yardstick to measure American development. It is also something that Kume will do frequently throughout the *True Account*.

⁶²⁹ “The Japanese Embassy: Arrival of Five Ambassadors from the Emperor of Japan to the Treaty Powers,” *Daily Alta California*, January 16, 1872.

⁶³⁰ The highest-ranking ambassadors, at least. Due to the embassy’s immense size, three hotels were actually necessary to house everyone.

Reporters on the scene were quick to heap praise upon the visiting dignitaries, remarking that all were “men of intelligence, sagacity and keen perception,” even the Japanese students who held no official position within the delegation.⁶³¹

A more formal reception followed the next day. Around noon, William Alvord, San Francisco’s mayor, arrived at the Grand Hotel to give a welcoming speech to the dignitaries as part of a planned lunch.⁶³² In this speech, Alvord briefly highlighted the natural relationship that existed between San Francisco and Japan as “nearest neighbor[s],” before pivoting toward what he likely wanted to say.⁶³³ The mayor hoped that the journey of the Japanese through his country would be “the highest degree interesting and important...especially to the commercial prosperity of Japan and the United States.”⁶³⁴ To this end, the visitors had “every facility for visiting and examining our public institutions,” and would receive “at your disposal all means of information.”⁶³⁵ In effect, Alvord wanted the Japanese to carefully analyze every facet of American society, something which the ambassadors were keen to do.

Lord Iwakura offered this response: “Our mission being one of investigation, we shall inspect with pleasure your manufactures and machinery, your colleges and schools, and your system of justice,” among other things.⁶³⁶ He also mirrored Alvord’s comments about trade: “as commerce is reciprocal, [Japanese success] may be of future direct interest to your city,” with “commerce...[being] an active agent in drawing our respective countries nearer together, in the strongest bonds of friendship.”⁶³⁷ In reality, the group

⁶³¹ “Arrival of Five Ambassadors,” *Daily Alta California*.

⁶³² Kume, *True Account*, 66.

⁶³³ Lanman, *Japanese in America*, 9.

⁶³⁴ Lanman, *Japanese in America*, 9.

⁶³⁵ Lanman, *Japanese in America*, 9.

⁶³⁶ Lanman, *Japanese in America*, 10.

⁶³⁷ Lanman, *Japanese in America*, 10.

was less interested in commerce than Iwakura's comments let on; however, we also detect none of the hesitation found in previous missions in either leader's speech. This was a warm welcome from the Americans, and their Japanese visitors felt comfortable enough to openly reciprocate.

Two days after Alvord's meeting with the group, the Japanese embassy began to split up in the style originally proposed by Guido Verbeck, to see all that San Francisco had to offer. Iwakura was ill, but Kido, Okubo, and most others earnestly participated. Kume's day began with a visit to the Kimball Carriage Factory, "the largest such factory in the state," where his group observed craftsmen using steam-powered machinery.⁶³⁸ Following this was a tour of the Mission Woolen Mill, where employees, including two Japanese immigrants, wove blankets.⁶³⁹ On the way back, the group stopped at Woodward's Gardens, a combination zoo-and-botanical garden that also housed a museum. Kume went on a long aside detailing everything from methods of taxidermy, classification, and his impressions of the various beasts within. The secretary concluded that the Western style of encouraging public gatherings in places like Woodward's was superior to the Eastern policy of public avoidance and disengagement. Many of his later entries would draw similar pro-Western conclusions, although not all of them.

A majority of the embassy's time in the United States during the Iwakura Mission was dominated by tours and visits similar to Kume's day in San Francisco. Almost constantly, the embassy traveled to industrial facilities and institutions of learning, and made house calls to important individuals. To compile a day-by-day analysis of these trips would be exhausting for the reader, as well as largely redundant against how they

⁶³⁸ Kume, *True Account*, 66, 67.

⁶³⁹ Kume, *True Account*, 67.

are presented in the *True Account*. Therefore, these encounters will be omitted from the rest of this chapter, unless they were particularly interesting or impactful. However, the reader should still understand that these visits formed a rhythmic daily undercurrent for the embassy's travels in the United States, and were still going on as the ambassadors grappled with larger diplomatic questions.

The ambassadors spent the coming weeks encountering everything San Francisco had to offer, provided by its eager populace. On the 23rd, they visited the city's telegraph office, "where we telegraphed Secretary of State [Hamilton] Fish, Professor [Samuel] Morse...and the mayor of Chicago."⁶⁴⁰ Washington provided this line exclusively for the ambassadors to communicate with the East Coast. Later that same day, Mayor Alvord held an elaborate banquet for the Japanese, and it was here that Ito Hirobumi gave his most memorable speech of the journey.⁶⁴¹ The young diplomat first explained that his government abolished feudalism "without firing a gun or shedding a drop of blood."⁶⁴² This was evidence of Meiji Japan's rapid modernization, and Ito hammered this point home by stating that "the red disc in the centre [sic] of our national flag shall no longer appear like a wafer over a sealed empire, but henceforth...[be] the noble emblem of the rising sun, moving onward and upward amid the enlightened nations of the world."⁶⁴³ Here, Ito clearly established that the anti-foreign attitudes of the past were gone, and that Japan now wanted a spot at the table among the elites. It was a powerful statement of the new government's approach to diplomacy.

On the 26th, Kume noted that the ambassadors received a telegraph from a group

⁶⁴⁰ Kume, *True Account*, 76.

⁶⁴¹ Also memorably, he gave the entire speech in fluent English, Ito's second language.

⁶⁴² Lanman, *Japanese in America*, 14-15.

⁶⁴³ Lanman, *Japanese in America*, 16.

of Japanese students who had gone on ahead. The text stated that “heavy snows in the Rocky Mountains had made the Union Pacific Railroad tracks impassable.”⁶⁴⁴ This news caused the ambassadors to briefly re-consider their next move. Not wanting to get stuck in the mountains, they delayed their departure for a few more days and visited a winery, which inspired Kume to comment on the importance of quality control when doing business.⁶⁴⁵ By the 31st, though, the group decided they had waited long enough, and gathered their things before boarding “a train of the California Pacific Railroad Company.”⁶⁴⁶ From that terminal in Oakland, the ambassadors departed the Bay Area, headed for their next destination.

Crossing the United States

On May 10, 1869, only a couple years before the arrival of the Iwakura Mission, workers drove a golden spike into the ground of remote Utah, linking the eastern and western tracks of the Trans-Continental Railroad. This revolutionary mode of transportation connected Iowa with Sacramento, California, and allowed well-to-do passengers to travel in luxury and comfort across a vast swathe of the American frontier. It also removed the need to travel through Panama to get from the West Coast to the East Coast. While there were a few nascent railroad lines back in Japan, the Iwakura ambassadors had never encountered anything on the scale of the locomotive crossing they were about to embark on, which connected them with parts of the United States they

⁶⁴⁴ Kume, *True Account*, 81.

⁶⁴⁵ Kume, *True Account*, 85.

⁶⁴⁶ Kume, *True Account*, 104.

would have never been exposed to otherwise.

The first stop was Sacramento, the state capital of California.⁶⁴⁷ The mission arrived after a single day of travel, at dusk, and when they departed from the train, Kume and the others were surprised at how much smaller and less energetic the city was than San Francisco. “Apart from a few shopping streets, most of the town consists of ordinary farmhouses.”⁶⁴⁸ However, the state government, represented by Charles Maclay, the Chairman of the Senate Committee, was determined not to be outshined by the coast. In his welcoming address, Maclay expressed his desire to showcase “the machinery by which the State Government itself is moved.”⁶⁴⁹ He declaimed, “It [would] be a matter of pride and mutual congratulation,” if “you, the representative of a powerful, enlightened and progressive people can find...features which may be translated to your Empire.”⁶⁵⁰ If Maclay was hoping that the Japanese would be receptive to republican government, though, he would be disappointed. The group did visit the chambers of the upper and lower houses of the state legislature, but Kume’s notes focused on the architectural design of the building and the layout of the debate floor.⁶⁵¹ While the embassy was open to learning about republicanism, the Meiji officials present were skeptical of its applicability to Japan, especially in the country’s currently unstable state. After their first day in Sacramento, the ambassadors ducked out of a party to go to bed early, “because we still had a long journey ahead of us.”⁶⁵²

⁶⁴⁷ There was also a minor stop in Stockton, prior to Sacramento. The group visited an insane asylum there, and Kido Takayoshi requested a “copy of the rules and regulations for the place,” in order to implement something similar in Japan. Kido, *Diary*, 121.

⁶⁴⁸ Kume, *True Account*, 107.

⁶⁴⁹ “Japanese Embassy: Address of Welcome by the Legislative Committee,” *Daily Alta California*, February 1, 1872.

⁶⁵⁰ “Address of Welcome,” *Daily Alta California*.

⁶⁵¹ Kume, *True Account*, 109.

⁶⁵² Kume, *True Account*, 110.

Quite early the next morning, at around 3 o'clock, the group of ambassadors boarded their train on the Trans-Continental Railroad, heading east. The tracks quickly got rocky as their locomotive lurched into the mountains. Kume and Kido both commented on the changing scenery surrounding them, including mountain streams that glowed red, and Kume was impressed with how the trains navigated the sharp inclines and declines. The American officials traveling with the delegation informed the Japanese about the process of modern gold mining, ensuring that even this break was productive. The embassy passed through small towns in Nevada and Utah, and also saw Native Americans for the first time, living "in dug-out dwellings among the rough sagebrush."⁶⁵³

Alas, the Iwakura Mission should have paid more attention to the warning from the students who had gone ahead. On February 4, densely packed snowdrifts forced the delegation to disembark from the train and board another, bound for nearby Salt Lake City. This visit was not part of the group's original plan, and aroused controversy with the American public because of the young western town's large Mormon population. At this time, mainstream Christianity still considered Mormonism to be a heretical cult, and many Americans did not want the Japanese exposed to these beliefs. Historian Wendy Butler states that "Non-Mormons of the day saw the stranding of this large and influential delegation in the heart of Mormondom as an embarrassment" to the United States.⁶⁵⁴ Even more controversial was the presence of Brigham Young, the current leader of the Mormons, in the city. Young was under house arrest in February of 1872. Just a month earlier, he had voluntarily returned to Salt Lake and was confined on charges of murder,

⁶⁵³ Kume, *True Account*, 126.

⁶⁵⁴ Wendy Butler, "The Iwakura Mission and its Stay in Salt Lake City," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 30.

which whipped the press up into a frenzy. The *Marin Journal* dramatically reported that Young was under arrest, “not for violation of a law of the United States...[but] an offence which is held to be such against the laws and religious faith of all civilized people.”⁶⁵⁵

While it is not clear how much the Japanese embassy was aware of the controversy surrounding the detour to Salt Lake, the ambassadors still tried to make the most of their visit. Two days after arriving, the delegation began its day with a visit to Salt Lake City Hall, where they met the governor of Utah Territory and listened to speeches. Then – inevitably, given the religion’s ubiquity – the Japanese began inspecting the small town’s Mormon institutions. They focused on the magnificent Mormon Tabernacle, described by Kume as “the great temple of the Mormon sect.”⁶⁵⁶ However, Kume again restricted his observations, focusing solely on the temple’s architecture. He did, however, remark that the Mormon character was reflected in how generously they gave to support the construction of such an impressive building.

After visiting the Tabernacle, the embassy called on the confined Brigham Young. Charles DeLong was the one who arranged the meeting, perhaps indicating Washington’s reluctant acknowledgement that Young held unofficial power in Utah.⁶⁵⁷ Historical records diverge on how the Japanese approached this visit. The *Salt Lake Tribune* published a scathing piece that quoted Iwakura as stating he did not want to make the visit because “we came to the United States to see the President of this great nation; we do not know how he would like for us to call on a man who had broken the laws of his country and was under arrest.”⁶⁵⁸ However, the *Deseret News* reported that

⁶⁵⁵ “Brigham Young Under Arrest,” *Marin Journal*, January 6, 1872, 2.

⁶⁵⁶ Kume, *True Account*, 137.

⁶⁵⁷ Kido, *Diary*, 124.

⁶⁵⁸ “Japanese Etiquette,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 7, 1872.

the embassy had “expressed a great desire to see President Young [and] took the earliest opportunity of visiting him at his mansion.”⁶⁵⁹ Of the two, the *Deseret News* may be the more reliable interpretation. It seems unlikely that a man with Iwakura’s pedigree would be so disrespectful towards a leader like Young, and rejecting him outright would have violated the spirit of the entire mission. The *Tribune*’s piece reads like one designed to appeal to anti-Mormon Americans.⁶⁶⁰ Regardless, the meeting took place, although for all its controversy, not much of substance occurred. The encounter was genial, and Kume only remarked that Young’s estate was “as magnificent as the castle of a Japanese feudal lord, whose power his resembles.”⁶⁶¹

The fifth year of Meiji began on February 9, 1872.⁶⁶² Kido recorded that on the day, “a great many people came to [my] room to celebrate the New Year,” including the Utah governor and other Americans traveling with the delegation.⁶⁶³ The Japanese did not want to spend any more time in Salt Lake, but snowy impediments continued to block the railroad. There was little for the delegation to do to occupy time.⁶⁶⁴ Eventually, Kume stopped adding commentary, and the days blended together the longer the group was trapped in the mountains. On February 20, sixteen days after arriving in Salt Lake, there was a glimmer of hope at “a report that the great snowdrifts in the Rocky Mountains had

⁶⁵⁹ Butler, “Salt Lake City,” 42.

⁶⁶⁰ Important to note, though, is that the *Deseret News* is a paper *owned* by the Church of Latter-Day Saints: naturally, it is unlikely that it would publish anything critical of the Mormon Church, or of Brigham Young. Nevertheless, I stand by my opinion that it still represents a more accurate interpretation of the Iwakura delegates’ approach to the meeting, largely because it seems unlikely that Iwakura would behave so rudely as described in the *Salt Lake Tribune*. Additionally, if the *Tribune*’s account is accurate, then it does not seem that the Japanese would have visited Young at all, which they certainly did, as confirmed by Kume. Somewhat concerning, Butler does not mention the fact of the *Deseret*’s ownership in her article.

⁶⁶¹ Kume, *True Account*, 139.

⁶⁶² The new year was still determined by the Japanese lunar calendar.

⁶⁶³ Kido, *Diary*, 127.

⁶⁶⁴ On February 11th, the group visited the Tabernacle again to see how the Mormons prayed. However, Kume failed to see what was so different about the service from a mainstream Protestant one. See Kume, *True Account*, 145.

at last been breached,” but this was soon dashed at the realization that the rivers were overflowing “and the railroad track had been washed away.”⁶⁶⁵ Despair overtook the group, and “our spirits grew gloomier by the day.”⁶⁶⁶

Fortunately, the embassy’s fears turned out to be overblown. On the 22nd, there was a notification that the damaged track had been fixed, and the group could proceed.⁶⁶⁷ Without any ceremony or sentimentality, the Japanese re-boarded their train, abandoning a “grand military and civic ball” that Salt Lake had planned for that evening.⁶⁶⁸ The next five days were spent riding the rail across the remainder of the Rockies and the Great Plains, and neither Kido nor Kume had much to say other than commentary on the landscape. However, that does not mean that significant goings-on were not still taking place within the train cars.

During this cross-country railroad trip, the monumentality of the task before them seems to have hit the envoys hard, particularly the progressive Ito Hirobumi. This was the Meiji government’s first footsteps onto the world stage, yet so far, the expedition had only consisted of pleasantries. While the information they were learning about the U.S. was certainly useful, the question of treaty revision had since crept back into the envoys’ minds. At the moment, the group was only allowed to explain to Washington how the Treaty of Yedo had negatively affected Japan. Ito composed a memorandum, clarifying that “we have not been authorized to conclude new treaties nor to abrogate or revise the existing ones.”⁶⁶⁹ What would happen, though, if Washington considered this lack of

⁶⁶⁵ Kume, *True Account*, 146-147.

⁶⁶⁶ Kume, *True Account*, 147.

⁶⁶⁷ Kume, *True Account*, 147.

⁶⁶⁸ “The Japanese Embassy on the Dance,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 22, 1872.

⁶⁶⁹ Marlene Mayo, “A Catechism of Western Diplomacy: The Japanese and Hamilton Fish, 1872,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 26, no. 3 (May 1967): 391. Due to my lack of Japanese language ability, I must rely on Mayo’s interpretation of Ito’s documents.

power to be a sign of unpreparedness? What if they were *expecting* renegotiations, given the high rank of the ambassadors? This was problematic. Unpreparedness might be understood as weakness, which could in turn weaken Tokyo's overall position. The first leg of the trip needed to go well, since that would set the tone for the visit to Europe, which the ambassadors believed would be more hostile to their diplomatic aims.

Ito Hirobumi suggested the group take upcoming discussions with Washington far more seriously. Another paper he drafted listed concrete steps Japan could take to alleviate Western concerns, including abolishing the segregated foreign settlements in treaty ports.⁶⁷⁰ These steps would be bargaining chips in treaty renegotiations. The rest of the embassy, sharing Ito's concerns about embarrassment with Washington, tentatively agreed to his approach. This unofficially redefined the mission's goals yet again, reverting the primary goal to full-on treaty revision. Ito accepted that if this could not be accomplished in the embassy's limited time in Washington, then the ambassadors would at least pursue a verbal understanding, to be used as a basis for further talks.

Kume's narrative-focused writing did not record any of this turmoil amongst the ambassadors. His focus remained singularly on documenting the group's travels, until the train finally pulled into Chicago on the evening of February 26. There was a warm reception awaiting the Japanese in the midwestern metropolis, which included General Philip Sheridan, one of the heroes of the American Civil War.⁶⁷¹ This was in spite of the Great Chicago Fire in October of the previous year, which had burnt a significant portion of the city to the ground. Likely in an effort to make a good impression, the ambassadors commemorated their visit "by presenting to the Mayor the sum of five thousand dollars,

⁶⁷⁰ Mayo, "Catechism of Western Diplomacy," 392.

⁶⁷¹ Kido, *Diary*, 132.

for the benefit of the poor of that lately devastated city.”⁶⁷² Joseph Medill, Chicago’s mayor, tendered his “most grateful thanks for this wholly unexpected and munificent gift” in response.⁶⁷³ He added that the embassy’s generosity “will esteem it as additional proof that the great nation you represent has enrolled itself among the progressive and civilised [sic] powers of the earth.”⁶⁷⁴ Following a brief and rushed evaluation of Chicago’s industry and institutions, the group departed a couple of days later, headed for Washington.

Meeting the President and Secretary of State

The Iwakura Mission’s train sped through Pittsburgh and Baltimore, where it made only minimal stops out of the ambassadors’ concern that reception at Washington was long overdue. Finally, on February 29, the delegation pulled in to “the station, which was near the Capitol,” where a modest welcoming committee greeted them.⁶⁷⁵ Most notably, an eager Mori Arinori was at the helm of the reception. Aside from the vague introductory letter he sent Hamilton Fish earlier, Mori’s preparations for the Embassy focused on recruiting *oyatoi gaikokujin* – American specialists who could help the ambassadors learn about Western institutions. For the time being, though, the welcoming committee escorted the delegation to accommodations at the Arlington Hotel.

There was notably an absence of high-ranking Americans present at the Japanese arrival in Washington, and, indeed, who were available to meet with the group over the

⁶⁷² Lanman, *Japanese in America*, 28.

⁶⁷³ Lanman, *Japanese in America*, 29.

⁶⁷⁴ Lanman, *Japanese in America*, 29.

⁶⁷⁵ Kume, *True Account*, 191.

next few days.⁶⁷⁶ This was not intended as a snub to Washington's visitors: the American government was simply overwhelmed by a concurrent foreign policy crisis. The United States had been dealing with the fallout from its Civil War for the past half-decade. Although primarily a domestic conflict, there was also an international dimension to the struggle in that a British shipyard had built warships for the Confederacy. These ships, specifically the C.S.S. *Alabama*, inflicted significant damage on the Union's navy and Washington considered their production to be a breach of Britain's neutrality. Both governments had technically resolved the situation with the Treaty of Washington (1871), but the US government still believed it was due financial reparations. Tensions, therefore, smoldered between nations, even to the point of threatening war. While Washington was certainly keen to meet the Japanese, the *Alabama* claims preoccupied the attention of both President Grant and Secretary of State Hamilton Fish.⁶⁷⁷

On March 4, the group got their first opportunity to meet with a high-ranking official, in the form of a ceremonial reception with President Grant. As described by Lanman, the encounter was "admirably arranged," although some newspapers incorrectly asserted that this meeting was "the first time in the history of our government that the President has received an ambassador from a foreign power" – conveniently ignoring Buchanan and the 1860 mission.⁶⁷⁸ Lord Iwakura began by speaking in Japanese, offering a statement of purpose for the mission that highlighted the Emperor's desire to see Japan grow and develop along Western lines.⁶⁷⁹ He then presented Grant with "their credential letter, folded in an envelope some two feet long and six inches wide, and curiously

⁶⁷⁶ The highest-ranking American present was General William Myers of the U.S. Army.

⁶⁷⁷ Mayo, "Catechism of Diplomacy," 405.

⁶⁷⁸ "The Japanese Embassy," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, March 5, 1872.

⁶⁷⁹ Lanman, *Japanese in America*, 36.

wrought with flowers of gold.”⁶⁸⁰

It is relevant here to share some excerpts of what Grant – and therefore, Fish – received from the Emperor. Meiji’s letter began by asserting that “from time immemorial,” Japan had “not despatched [sic] any embassy to the courts and Governments of friendly countries.”⁶⁸¹ History can easily prove this statement as incorrect, but it was understandable why the comment was included. It highlighted that the shogunate – the “improper” old government of Japan – was no longer in control, and that a government more representative of the true spirit of the country, controlled by the Emperor, was. This equated the Japanese state with the institution of the Emperor, one of the central goals of the 1868 Restoration. The letter then presented the diplomatic powers that Meiji granted his emissaries. The group was “invested with full powers...to declare our cordial friendship, and to place the peaceful relations between our respective nations on a firmer and broader basis.”⁶⁸² Treaty revision was technically included, but only alluded to. The Meiji Emperor stated that Japan “expect[ed] and intend[ed] to reform and improve [the treaty situation] so as to stand upon a similar footing with the most enlightened nations.”⁶⁸³ One can see the problem: the group of ambassadors, at the request of the progressive Ito, had since revised their goals to include direct treaty negotiation, but nowhere in their official orders was there explicit authority to do so.

Grant replied congenially in an address of his own. He expressed his gratitude that the United States was the first foreign nation on the embassy’s world tour, and made

⁶⁸⁰ Lanman, *Japanese in America*, 36.

⁶⁸¹ Lanman, *Japanese in America*, 36.

⁶⁸² Emperor Meiji (Mutsuhito), “Letter from Emperor Meiji (Mutsuhito) to President Ulysses S. Grant,” 1871.

⁶⁸³ “Meiji to Grant.”

some general remarks about how he welcomed the ambassadors' inspection of his country's institutions. Grant then made his only statement about treaty revision: "It [would] be a pleasure to us to enter upon that consultation upon international questions in which you say you are authorized to engage."⁶⁸⁴ It was a vague comment, although in fairness, Grant was not the one who would conduct negotiations. That responsibility fell to Hamilton Fish, who was present in the room along with the rest of Grant's cabinet. Once his speech was over, the President introduced the Japanese to his cabinet.⁶⁸⁵ After introductions, both sides retired to the nearby Blue Room for informal conversation. Lord Iwakura evidently carried on a long conversation with Mrs. Grant, reflecting that the Japanese had begun to get over their awkwardness around women in social settings.⁶⁸⁶

Finally, on March 11, almost two weeks after arriving in Washington, the Japanese got their first chance to address the substance of why they were there, in the form of a meeting with Hamilton Fish. Available Japanese diaries spent little time talking about preparations, although it is likely that since meeting with Mori, Kido and the others had been collaborating about how they would approach this critical encounter. Fish, for his part, had also done basic preparations. Despite the distraction of the *Alabama* matter, he read the Emperor's letter and spoke with Charles DeLong about the problems he identified with the text.⁶⁸⁷ Although the Japanese did not know it yet, Fish would be a tough opponent to face in the diplomatic arena. The Secretary of State was one of the few members of Grant's cabinet whose term was not mired in scandal, and he was known for

⁶⁸⁴ Lanman, *Japanese in America*, 40.

⁶⁸⁵ Lanman, *Japanese in America*, 40.

⁶⁸⁶ Mori acted as Iwakura's interpreter.

⁶⁸⁷ Mayo, "Catechism of Western Diplomacy," 395.

being a strait-laced follower of procedure with a “devotion to the supremacy of law.”⁶⁸⁸

This was problematic for the comparatively green Japanese, since Fish would hold them to a high standard of command over Western diplomatic norms.

The Japanese had prepared a supplemental paper to further clarify their intentions for Fish, and they began the meeting by presenting their work. The document stated that, because the embassy had been “so recently assured of your [government’s] generous friendship,” the ambassadors requested Fish “to assist in forming the protocol of a treaty, [which would be] binding in firm and permanent relations, [and] mutually beneficial, [for] the countries represented.”⁶⁸⁹ Fish replied, seemingly confused, that the Emperor’s letter did not give the Japanese the power to do this. They could discuss the treaties, certainly, but nothing binding could be signed under the mission’s current credentials.

Kido recalled the moment when Fish informed the group of this snag, stating that he now “had a sinking feeling in [his] heart,” as he realized the depth of the group’s error.⁶⁹⁰ It was not the only problem either: the Secretary of State further picked apart the envoys’ proposal, circling around to the group’s imprecise use of Western diplomatic language. This included the word “protocol,” which had a specific meaning in the Western context that was not reflected in how the Japanese used the term. He was also curious about how the Japanese intended to later negotiate with the Europeans: “although Japan had informed the other Powers of its desires, no reply had yet been received from any of them.”⁶⁹¹ If the Europeans would not negotiate, it would be a waste of Fish’s time to open talks in the first place.

⁶⁸⁸ Mayo, “Catechism of Western Diplomacy,” 396.

⁶⁸⁹ Mayo, “Catechism of Western Diplomacy,” 398.

⁶⁹⁰ Kido, *Diary*, 137.

⁶⁹¹ Treat, *Diplomatic Relations*, 430.

The Secretary of State did not absolutely reject the possibility of treaty renegotiation, though. Despite the issues, Fish still asked the assembled diplomats to list what changes they wanted in a hypothetical new treaty. Lord Iwakura “replied that there were a great many articles” of dissatisfaction with the Treaty of Yedo, but for now, he would settle to propose only the seven most pressing goals.⁶⁹² Among these were tariff autonomy, extradition of criminals, neutrality in wartime, and “a revision of the regulations establishing Consular Courts.”⁶⁹³ Fish agreed to consider these articles, and informed the Japanese that he would deliver a counterproposal during their next meeting. Finally, the Secretary of State warned that, if negotiations were going to begin, they needed to be completed quickly, since there would be a new Congress next year that could reject any treaty that was agreed upon. Owing to Japan’s authoritarian system of legislation, this was something that the Iwakura ambassadors had not anticipated either.

With that, the first major diplomatic encounter of the Iwakura Mission concluded. It may be needless to say, but the Japanese were disappointed, and considered this meeting with Fish to be a stark defeat. Their orders were incompatible with the type of negotiations that they hoped to undertake with Washington, and unless this was resolved, the entire trip so far was a waste. Due to how distraught the diaries of Kido and the other officials were, one may conclude that the United States had been needlessly hostile to a novice in the field of international diplomacy. However, this ignores the Secretary of State’s perspective. While Fish had been blunt about the issues that would hamper the delegation’s goals, he was not condescending, and tried to chart a path forward even in the midst of these difficulties. This was noticeably different from Commodore Perry’s

⁶⁹² Treat, *Diplomatic Relations*, 431.

⁶⁹³ Treat, *Diplomatic Relations*, 431.

heavy-handed approach twenty years prior. Payson Treat wrote that “no-where else, on their travels, did the Ambassadors meet with such a co-operative spirit” as they had encountered with Hamilton Fish.⁶⁹⁴

Despite their frustrations, the Japanese acknowledged that the concerns brought up by the Secretary of State were valid, and needed to be addressed in order to salvage the trip. That meant first responding to the matter of their incomplete credentials. Once the meeting was over, the ambassadors regrouped in their hotel to plan their next move. Unfortunately, the problem was not something that could be solved with a simple telegraph back to Tokyo asking for new credentials. The ambassadors needed to formally confer with the interim government and persuade Saigo and the others to approve any changes. Therefore, some members of the Japanese delegation would necessarily need to return to Japan, a highly intrusive step.

The individuals who volunteered were Okubo Toshimichi and Ito Hirobumi, and there appears to have been little debate they were the best choices to return. Ito, being the group’s most prominent progressive, felt the strongest about the necessity to engage the Western powers diplomatically, and therefore could craft a strong case for expanded powers. He was also the one who first created the diplomatic snag aboard the Trans-Continental Railroad earlier. Okubo, as the strongest figure in the government, could apply pressure to dissident factions to ensure Ito’s success. While ultimately necessary, the pair’s departure was a big loss for the mission. Not only would these officials have to miss out on learning about the West in the meantime, but their absence hamstrung the remaining delegates into staying in place until their return.

⁶⁹⁴ Treat, *Diplomatic Relations*, 432.

These were painful steps, but for the time being, the Japanese embassy was prepared to take them if it gave them a shot at revising the humiliating “unequal treaties” with the West. However, that meeting in March would be but the first of many, and gradually, the group realized they were in for a long, hot summer in Washington.

Negotiations Grind to a Halt

Kume Kunitake and the other nonessential members of the Iwakura Mission spent the next few days touring Washington, where they saw displays of Western firefighting and visited “a college for black students,” which inspired Kume to write on the evils of slavery.⁶⁹⁵ The main diplomats, however, had more long meetings with Hamilton Fish instead. The follow-up to the initial meeting took place on the 13th, and as promised, the Secretary of State presented a series of proposals for what the United States wanted out of treaty renegotiation. These included increased freedom of movement for Americans in Japan, the right for foreigners to own real estate, more open treaty ports, and most controversially, full freedom of religion.⁶⁹⁶ The most-favored-nation clause would also remain intact. This was the American negotiating position, from which Fish and the Japanese would try and find common ground.

Lord Iwakura questioned the freedom of religion clause – did it apply to Japanese citizens, or just foreigners? Fish explained that “we wish it to apply to all. We think it necessary to the development of a nation that every individual shall have liberty to think

⁶⁹⁵ Kume, *True Account*, 215. Kume remarked proudly that slavery was long ago prohibited in China and Japan, and its persistence in the West was a moral failure on the part of the great powers.

⁶⁹⁶ Treat, *Diplomatic Relations*, 433.

as he pleases.”⁶⁹⁷ This mindset was not entirely comfortable to the Japanese delegates. Although the persecution of Christians under the early Meiji government was significantly less than under the Tokugawa, Tokyo was still nervous about opening the floodgates to Western religion. Mori, usually the progressive, voiced his objection, stating that his government was already “disposed to grant the privileges of thought and action to the people as fast as it was safe to do so,” indicating that such a provision was unnecessary.⁶⁹⁸ Fish remained unconvinced.

As to the rest of the points, some were easier to solve, others more difficult. Fish’s criticism of several of the original Japanese proposals boiled down to minutia and details. For example, why was a declaration of neutrality necessary, when the United States had never landed troops in Japan before?⁶⁹⁹ Fish was also confident that Washington would end consular jurisdiction once Japan developed a Western-style legal system, which the ambassadors agreed was a fair prerequisite. The issue of treaty ports, however, was more complicated. The Japanese insisted on having control over what ports foreigners had access to, and were unwilling to compromise. Foreign movement in the interior of the country was also a problem. Fish believed that, until Japan was entirely open to foreigners, “he was not sure that it ought to claim all the privileges that other Governments exercise.”⁷⁰⁰ The Iwakura ambassadors, however, remained resolute, fearing that freedom of movement would lead to further extraterritoriality. Both sides discussed these issues over multiple subsequent meetings, and after each one, the

⁶⁹⁷ Treat, *Diplomatic Relations*, 436.

⁶⁹⁸ Treat, *Diplomatic Relations*, 436.

⁶⁹⁹ Of course, Fish conveniently forgot that the United States had, in fact, landed troops at the Kurihama Beach ceremony during Perry’s expeditions, among several other occasions in 1853 and 1854. The Japanese ambassadors, however, neglected to call the Secretary out on this point.

⁷⁰⁰ Treat, *Diplomatic Relations*, 437.

negotiators on the Japanese side returned to their hotel and strategized, drawing up draft treaties and trying to find points of agreement.⁷⁰¹ The situation got more difficult still with the departures of both Okubo and Ito – Okubo on March 20, and Ito on the 21st.

With these two representatives gone, it became clear that the mission needed to resume investigating Western institutions *alongside* negotiations, in order to make the most of the delay in Washington. This meant once more subdividing the embassy into smaller groups, each led by a chief ambassador, which focused on different areas of Western learning. Kido Takayoshi, for example, tasked himself with learning about Western education systems. On March 22, he wrote that he “met Nijjima for the first time today,” referring to Joseph Hardy Neesima, an *oyatoi gaikokujin* whom Mori had recruited in advance of the embassy’s visit.⁷⁰² Joseph Neesima, born Nijjima Shimeta, was a Japanese who traveled to America on his own, where he attended university and converted to Christianity. Since Neesima was the first Japanese to earn a bachelor’s degree, Mori recruited him to introduce the ambassadors to his contacts in the American education system.⁷⁰³ When not negotiating with Fish, Kido worked closely with Neesima, and came away with a very positive impression of the man, praising him for his “kindness and sincerity.”⁷⁰⁴ Other, similar examples of this process occurred with the other ambassadors.

As the group learned more about American institutions, the talks with Fish stalled.

⁷⁰¹ Kido, *Diary*, 139.

⁷⁰² Arthur Sherburne Hardy, *Life and Letters of Joseph Hardy Neesima* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1891), 115.

⁷⁰³ Since Neesima did not go abroad with a government mandate and considered himself a free agent, I believe it is more accurate to classify him as an *oyatoi gaikokujin* than a visiting Japanese student. He had also been Americanized considerably by his time in the U.S.; still, he officially maintained his Japanese citizenship.

⁷⁰⁴ Kido, *Diary*, 144-145. Kido also worked closely with Tanaka Fujimaro, the future Minister for Education for the Meiji government.

Mori Arinori, now one of the delegation's last progressives, began to act out, becoming more frustrated in the absence of his ally, Ito Hirobumi. This was exacerbated when Ito, writing from New York before his departure, sent instructions to the group despite his junior status. This irritated Kido and the other leaders of the mission.⁷⁰⁵ Kido believed that Mori and Ito were determined to conclude new treaties immediately, damned the consequences and concessions, while they ignored problems that even "a three-year-old could see."⁷⁰⁶ Infighting led to the cancellation of a meeting with Fish on March 30, and on April 7, Mori "stamped out of the room" after an argument, leaving Kido appalled at his "incomprehensible conduct...considered [to be] the height of discourtesy."⁷⁰⁷ At this point, ambassador Kido simply gave in to his despair, blaming the progressives for the discord: "To my great regret there are some who are guilty of the sin of struggling for personal distinction rather than serving the country or considering its people."⁷⁰⁸

By April 23, after much struggling, the Iwakura Mission envoys had forged a draft treaty proposal for Washington's consideration. Some interesting points included a conditional most-favored-nation clause – which stated that foreigners needed to respect the laws of both their native country and of Japan – and an absence of specifics about increased freedom of movement for Americans.⁷⁰⁹ The group was well behind schedule, having spent almost two months in Washington, but Secretary Fish continued to be distracted by the *Alabama* matter. Finally, on June 1, both sides gathered to discuss the draft treaty. According to Kido's diary, it was a short meeting, because Fish was reluctant

⁷⁰⁵ Kido, *Diary*, 142.

⁷⁰⁶ Kido, *Diary*, 142.

⁷⁰⁷ Kido, *Diary*, 147.

⁷⁰⁸ Kido, *Diary*, 147.

⁷⁰⁹ Treat, *Diplomatic Relations*, 442-43.

to discuss the proposal since Okubo and Ito had not yet returned with their full powers. It was one thing to talk generally about treaty revision; it was another to negotiate a draft treaty. Kido, Iwakura, and the others could not offer an objection to the Secretary of State's position, and Kido bitterly commented that "a stumble at the start produces an unfavorable effect on what follows."⁷¹⁰ It was now clear that no more progress could be made until Tokyo had given its approval for broader powers.

The weather in Washington had intensified, as well. On June 9, Kido recorded "scorching heat," which defined the summer months in the capital.⁷¹¹ As Congress was not in session, most other government business in Washington had ceased, further reducing the Japanese embassy's access to key figures. Given that the group had already exhaustively plumbed Washington for knowledge about its institutions, the ambassadors decided that a retreat was in order. After some brief deliberation, the Iwakura envoys decided to go on a sightseeing tour, to see the major cities of the industrial northeast.⁷¹²

The journey began on June 9, the same day when the Washington heat finally got the best of Kido Takayoshi. The group boarded a train which passed through New Jersey all the way to New York, the American mercantile capital. General William Myers served as guide for the Japanese, although his guidance did not factor much into the diary entries of the envoys, leading the modern reader to determine that the embassy selected its itinerary. Over the next twelve days, the group visited New York City, West Point Academy, Niagara Falls, Saratoga Springs, and Boston, among other cities and landmarks, as they continued to explore the institutions that made the West so powerful.

⁷¹⁰ Kido, *Diary*, 170.

⁷¹¹ Kido, *Diary*, 173.

⁷¹² Much like as was the case in 1860 – however, unlike the Tokugawa envoys, the Iwakura Mission made this decision largely of their own volition.

Kume Kunitake's entries from this period make for a compelling travelogue, but one also gets the sense that despite all this education, these outings were definitely intended as a break for the beleaguered embassy. Kido's diary certainly focused more on meditation and relaxation. At West Point Cemetery, he contemplated the Boshin War while seeing the "graves of soldiers who had met gallant deaths in battle," and bathed in the mineral waters of Saratoga Springs.⁷¹³

The group returned to Washington on June 22 and, while not necessarily eager to resume negotiations, the ambassadors were certainly prepared to do so. Ambassador Yamaguchi Masuka and Mori Arinori called upon the Secretary of State's office, but this time, they were rebuffed. Hamilton Fish no longer had time to devote to the talks, as the *Alabama* situation with Britain had grown worse. Ironically, the Secretary of State planned to soon depart Washington himself, in order to focus at his retreat in Boston. Kido was bitter about the news, remarking that "we shall, consequently, waste two more weeks" waiting for his return – even though neither Okubo nor Ito were back themselves.⁷¹⁴ The ambassador then remarked that "more than ever, I believe that concluding a treaty here will be disadvantageous to us."⁷¹⁵

Kido's attitude seems to indicate that the Japanese no longer had the heart to see these negotiations through and, if so, this mood was not reversed after talking with Maximilian von Brandt. Von Brandt, the German consul to Japan, was passing through the United States during the Iwakura Mission, and called upon the ambassadors around June 27 to share his thoughts on the renegotiation process. When he found out that the

⁷¹³ Kido, *Diary*, 175.

⁷¹⁴ Kido, *Diary*, 179.

⁷¹⁵ Kido, *Diary*, 179.

Japanese wanted to complete a draft treaty, he strongly advised the group against continuing. The reason was the Treaty of Yedo's most-favored-nation clause, that tiny provision in place since Samuel Wells Williams snuck it in to the Kanagawa Convention. This was extremely problematic, von Brandt explained. According to this provision – which was also in all of Japan's treaties with the European powers – any concession that Japan granted the United States would automatically be granted to other nations, without those nations needing to make concessions of their own. Therefore, even if the U.S. was extremely liberal in giving the Japanese what they wanted, the Iwakura envoys would still lose out when negotiating with Europe. It was in Japan's best interest to cut off talks and try to postpone renegotiation.

The meeting with von Brandt was critical for the embassy. It can seem surprising that the Meiji government still did not understand the implications of the Treaty of Yedo more than a decade after its signing. However, we need to remember the comparative lack of Western diplomatic experience held by the envoys. Both the Tokugawa and Meiji governments had never gone through a treaty renegotiation process before. There was also a significant language barrier, since the group's highest-ranking English speaker, Ito Hirobumi, had returned to Japan. Despite the best efforts of other translators, diplomatic concepts like the most-favored-nation simply did not exist in the Japanese vocabulary yet, and it took a direct explanation from the German consul for the ambassadors to understand the consequences of such language.

Despite these frustrations, it should be noted that the Japanese continued to accept the Western diplomatic model through the negotiation process. The group did not reject the underlying logic of Hamilton Fish's negotiating terms, and agreed to the Secretary of

State's demands for things like strengthened credentials regardless of the inconvenience. Kido's frustration certainly suggests that the group may have wanted to. However, unlike Hayashi Daigaku-no-Kami during the Perry Mission, the Iwakura ambassadors did not try to reframe the debate based on a diplomatic model with which they were more familiar. This represented an important turning point in the Japanese relationship with Western diplomacy.

Failure in Washington

The ambassadors both took von Brandt's advice to postpone negotiations, and ignored it. They agreed that one-on-one negotiations with the United States were no longer a desirable option, and that they would break off talks with Hamilton Fish at the next opportunity. However, the Japanese also acknowledged that they needed to do this in a way that did not offend Washington, out of fear of diplomatic repercussions. Therefore, instead of leaving the country to continue their journey, Kido and the others forged a new plan. They would continue working on their own treaty proposal as part of a new effort to renegotiate all of the "unequal treaties" at once. The idea was to convene a conference of treaty powers in Europe and, accompanied by a representative of the U.S., all present nations would negotiate a new set of treaties with Japan. This would avoid the pitfalls of the most-favored-nation clause, while also solving the treaty problem in one fell swoop, thereby making the Iwakura Mission a success far beyond its original mandate.

In retrospect, given the group's exhaustion, the European conference plan was not

a good idea. Under the best of circumstances, it was a tall order, but the group had also not spent much time considering this option before Iwakura, Kido, and the others decided to proceed. Additionally, they failed to read the diplomatic mood in Washington. On July 7, 1872, President Grant – who had gotten wind of the Japanese embassy’s frustrations himself – sent a letter to Hamilton Fish asking him “to deal with them generously enough to insure the negotiation [sic] of a treaty.”⁷¹⁶ Fish, still preoccupied with the *Alabama* affair, resented Grant’s accusation that he had not *already* been more than generous with the Japanese, especially given their lack of formal negotiating power.⁷¹⁷

A few days later, on July 20, the Japanese delegation presented the Secretary of State with their new plan for a conference in Europe to resolve the treaty issue.⁷¹⁸ However, Fish immediately rejected the idea, leaving no room for argument. Such a proposal “would not comport with the dignity of the United States...to follow the Ambassadors across the Atlantic for the purpose of concluding elsewhere the treaty.”⁷¹⁹ It would violate the long-standing Monroe Doctrine which required aloofness towards European affairs. Fish then stated that a treaty would be concluded in Washington, Tokyo, or not at all. Since this would lead back to von Brandt’s problem of the most-favored-nation clause, both sides had finally reached an insurmountable deadlock in the negotiation process.

Two days later, Okubo and Ito arrived back in Washington with fresh credentials in hand, but it mattered little at this point. After briefly getting the returnees up to speed,

⁷¹⁶ Ulysses S. Grant, “To Hamilton Fish,” in *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant: February 1-December 31, 1872* (Carbondale: SIU Press, 2000), 192.

⁷¹⁷ Mayo, “Catechism of Western Diplomacy,” 406.

⁷¹⁸ By the 20th, Fish had since returned to Washington from his retreat.

⁷¹⁹ Treat, *Diplomatic Relations*, 445.

Lord Iwakura arranged one final meeting with Hamilton Fish later that afternoon. During the encounter, Iwakura informed him that Tokyo was terminating negotiations, to which “the Secretary of State appeared very much disappointed.”⁷²⁰ Kido felt much the same, lamenting that “even though we have worked diligently for more than a hundred days...all our efforts have come to naught with a few official conversations.”⁷²¹ The ambassador did not blame Hamilton Fish, who “always took our feelings into consideration,” but rather Ito and Mori, who were too overzealous and consumed with personal glory.⁷²² After that final meeting, the former samurai remarked that “today’s interview was indescribably more difficult than facing enemies coming from all sides on the field of battle.”⁷²³

The End of the American Phase of the Iwakura Mission

The Iwakura Mission had spent far too much time in America, and many members of the delegation were eager to depart for Europe. Without outward displays of frustration or moping, the ambassadors collectively bade farewell to President Grant and his cabinet at the White House.⁷²⁴ Subsequently, in a display perhaps intended to highlight that they were still committed to diplomacy, the Japanese “visited various embassies and consulates...to announce our departure and make our farewells.”⁷²⁵ To cap of the group’s time in Washington, the Iwakura ambassadors invited the members of

⁷²⁰ Kido, *Diary*, 187.

⁷²¹ Kido, *Diary*, 187.

⁷²² Kido, *Diary*, 187.

⁷²³ Kido, *Diary*, 187.

⁷²⁴ Kido, *Diary*, 188.

⁷²⁵ Kume, *True Account*, 327.

Grant's cabinet to one last party they hosted at their hotel – a far cry from the Tokugawa embassy's chronic fear of social engagement in 1860.

When the group left Washington on July 27, Kume Kunitake wrote out a comprehensive list of what he learned about in the capital. Although he omitted any mention of treaty negotiation, the secretary did discuss “such ministries and official institutions as Congress, the Treasury, the Post Office, the Patent Office, the Department of Agriculture, the Naval Academy at Annapolis and the Military Academy at West point.”⁷²⁶ Kume then spent several pages detailing his understanding of the laws and government of the United States. While the ambassadors did struggle during their talks with Fish, Kume's entry at least suggest that the group still made productive discoveries all around Washington that would later influence Japan's future development.

The Iwakura Mission traveled north once more, through Baltimore up to Philadelphia. The group had earlier accepted an invitation from Jay Cooke, a “wealthy Philadelphia banker” and one of the country's most prominent men, to call at his mansion.⁷²⁷ During dinner with Cooke, the financier discussed his railroad investments in the Rocky Mountains, giving the Japanese some context for the developing industries they had seen on the Trans-Continental Railroad. Both sides also discussed how, as the West Coast states developed, trade between the U.S. and Japan would increase. Cooke specified that he wanted his firm to develop Puget Sound, in Washington territory, and turn it into the new nexus of trade with Asia, displacing San Francisco.⁷²⁸ Kume detailed Cooke's plan in the *True Account*, indicating the secretary's interest and likely the

⁷²⁶ Kume, *True Account*, 328.

⁷²⁷ Kume, *True Account*, 338.

⁷²⁸ Kume, *True Account*, 339.

interest of the rest of the delegation. However, the group did not discuss any more specifics during the dinner. Perhaps this was for the best, since Jay Cooke's firm would collapse in 1873 and bring about a worldwide economic depression – had the Japanese become more entangled, the Meiji state could have suffered even more.⁷²⁹ After sightseeing in Philadelphia for a few days, the group took the train further north, for brief stops in New York City and Boston.

Finally, on August 6, Kido Takayoshi wrote that the Iwakura embassy boarded the passenger steamer *Olympus* to depart for Europe.⁷³⁰ The departure was spectacular: so many people crowded the pier, the *Boston Daily Advertiser* reported, that the embassy's going-away party became "uncomfortable" in size.⁷³¹ There was a "firing of guns from everywhere, from the forts, from steamers, and from vessels that had nothing whatever to do with the affair except the joining with everybody...in doing honor to the departing guests."⁷³² Despite the setbacks in Washington, Kido Takayoshi was convinced enough of the goodwill of the American people, writing that "seven steamships, large and small, with nearly a thousand people on board [had come] to see us off," making the farewell "a very lively event."⁷³³ With that, the American leg of the Iwakura Mission concluded.

⁷²⁹ Over the group's remaining time in Philadelphia, they visited the same U.S. Mint the 1860 ambassadors had toured, along with Girard College and Independence Hall.

⁷³⁰ Kido, *Diary*, 196.

⁷³¹ "Local Matters: Departure of the Japanese Embassy," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, August 7, 1872.

⁷³² "Local Matters: Departure of the Japanese Embassy."

⁷³³ Kido, *Diary*, 196.

The Journey in Europe and the Mission's Aftermath

After sailing across the Atlantic, Kido Takayoshi noted that the group arrived in Liverpool on August 17, 1872. This marked the beginning of a whirlwind tour of the European continent, comparable in scope to what the group undertook in the United States. The ambassadors visited more than a dozen nations, including France, Germany, Russia, Italy, and Holland, and Kume Kunitake took copious notes at each new locale.⁷³⁴ In France, the Japanese were impressed by easily accessible cultural spaces – like museums – that the government maintained for the benefit of the public. Kume even quipped that Notre Dame made “the Honganji in Kyoto seem hut-like.”⁷³⁵ In Germany, the ambassadors met Chancellor Otto von Bismarck who, having just triumphed in the Franco-Prussian War, gave a lecture on the importance of power in international relations. As a result, the Japanese took special note of Prussian military institutions. Russia, so threatening during the shogunate’s twilight years, appeared little more than an underdeveloped, impoverished nation, and while in Italy, Kume compared ancient Rome to China as the sources of Western and Eastern power, respectively. Finally, in Holland, the Iwakura ambassadors were surprised to find that the Western nation with whom they had exclusively traded for two centuries was in fact a relatively minor power. Regardless, almost everywhere they went, Europe welcomed the Japanese and extravagantly treated them beyond what was possible in the United States.

One thing that the embassy did not try, though, was more treaty negotiation.

⁷³⁴ Kume, *True Account*, XX.

⁷³⁵ Ian Nish, *The Iwakura Mission in America & Europe: A New Assessment* (Tokyo: Japan Library, 1998), 75.

When they first arrived in England, Iwakura and the others spoke with foreign minister Lord Granville to see if his country would be amenable to talks; however, Granville's response was chilly, which discouraged the group.⁷³⁶ After this, there were no more serious attempts at re-starting the diplomatic process with the West. The Japanese accepted that, if they were going to make good use of their time abroad, they needed to focus on Western institutions exclusively. With this admission, we can consider that treaty negotiation for the mission as a whole was a failure.

On March 19, 1873, while the group was in Germany, Kido Takayoshi received a letter from the interim government in Tokyo requesting his return.⁷³⁷ He and the others had been gone too long now, and a foreign policy crisis developed in their absence. The embassy, too, was facing difficulties. While the group remained committed to its mandate, internal squabbling left hurt feelings amongst the ambassadors. Kido and Okubo, in particular, had been arguing. Okubo also received a summons back to Tokyo, and apparently the rancor was so great between them that they took separate ships home. The rest of the embassy, now headed by just Iwakura, remained to finish touring Europe.

The Korean Crisis, or *Seikanron*, developed in the absence of moderate leadership in Tokyo while the Iwakura Mission was abroad. Since the Restoration, tensions had grown between the Meiji government and Korea, as the latter still regarded the Tokugawa shogun as the legitimate leader of Japan. Nationalist samurai considered this to be an affront to the Emperor, but there was little appetite for direct action due to the preoccupation that was *Haihan Chiken*. However, by the time of the Iwakura Mission, that process was over, and the interim government – led by the bellicose Saigo Takamori

⁷³⁶ Nish, *A New Assessment*, 4.

⁷³⁷ Kido, *Diary*, 302.

– grew more and more incensed at Korea. Saigo himself planned to travel to Korea to first seek a diplomatic solution; however, Saigo was no diplomat, and he was aware that he would likely fail in this endeavor.⁷³⁸ If he was murdered – as he suspected he would be – the Hero of the Restoration’s death would galvanize Japan’s samurai to fight a war for the country’s honor on the Asian mainland.⁷³⁹

Saigo developed his plan despite the caretaker government’s pledge that it would not undertake any major policy decisions during the Iwakura Mission’s absence. When Okubo Toshimichi arrived in Japan on May 26, 1873, he found that the government was seriously considering this option.⁷⁴⁰ His own subordinate, Inoue Kaoru, resigned after confronting the others with the massive financial burden that an invasion would require, but Saigo’s faction remained unmoved.⁷⁴¹ Even though Okubo was uniquely powerful, the absence of Kido and the others meant that he could only delay any rash actions. He warned that the financial ruin caused by a misguided Korean expedition would leave Japan weak, and allow foreign powers to “be the fisherman standing by to snare the fish” and subjugate the country.⁷⁴² These arguments were stronger because Okubo now had firsthand experience with the West that the rest of the government did not. Despite their

⁷³⁸ Charles Yates, “Saigo Takamori in the Emergence of Meiji Japan,” *Modern Asian Studies* 28, no. 3 (July 1994): 465. Important to note is that Saigo had approval from Soejima Taneomi, the Foreign Minister who had not participated in the Iwakura Mission, for his plan. Soejima knew more about Western diplomatic norms thanks to his extensive discussions with Charles LeGendre, an American diplomat working in China, and the two formulated a foreign policy based on limited aggression and power projection. Mayo, “The Korean Crisis of 1873,” 801-802, 804. Soejima went to China in early 1873 to discuss a number of issues with the Qing government, and he came back with “carte blanche” on war with Korea. However, China had actually stated that it would not interfere in this conflict, and this was more of an informal agreement than an official one. Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, 22.

⁷³⁹ This would solve another lingering problem of the early Meiji state: the samurai class could be put to work as part of Japan’s invading army, thus employing them and minimizing trouble at home.

⁷⁴⁰ Iwata, *Bismarck of Japan*, 162.

⁷⁴¹ Iwata, *Bismarck of Japan*, 161.

⁷⁴² Okubo Toshimichi, “Reasons for Opposing the Korean Expedition,” in *Sources of Japanese Tradition: Volume II*, ed. Ryusaku Tsunoda, WM. Theodore de Bary, & Donald Keene (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 153.

earlier quarrelling, Kido Takayoshi backed Okubo upon his return a month later.

The rest of the Iwakura Mission arrived back in Japan on September 13, 1873.⁷⁴³ Having seen the futility of antagonism against the West – both in America and Europe – the returning group backed Okubo with “great singleness of purpose,” and organized to oppose Saigo’s faction.⁷⁴⁴ This tipped the scales in favor of moderation, and Saigo resigned in protest. With him out of the picture, Okubo and his supporters formed a new government, firmly placing the Iwakura Mission members in control of Japan. This brought an end to the *Seikanron* and, more broadly, to the Iwakura Mission as a whole. Now, the same group that learned harsh lessons about international diplomacy from Hamilton Fish was in charge, guiding Japan toward a more conciliatory policy with the West in the 1870s.

The Iwakura Mission and an Assertive Japan

How can we evaluate the Iwakura Mission, and contextualize it within the framework of the developing U.S.–Japan relationship? Answering this question is tricky. On the surface, the mission can look more like a failure, and a diplomatic breaking point between nations. Treaty renegotiation, so earnestly desired by Ito, Okubo, Kido, and the rest of the ambassadors, was unsuccessful, and it would be another decade before Japan finally got the outcome it desired from Washington. It can also appear that the Iwakura Mission represented an increase in tensions between the United States and Japan. While things may have initially looked rosy in San Francisco, the meetings with Hamilton Fish

⁷⁴³ Iwata, *Bismarck of Japan*, 162.

⁷⁴⁴ Mayo, “The Korean Crisis of 1873,” 813.

soured both sides to each other, leading to a confusing diplomatic situation.

It is my hope, though, that the reader has come to a different conclusion. Instead of a failure, I believe we can look at the Iwakura Mission as one of the first diplomatic success stories from Japan since 1850. Unlike during Perry's endeavors, the Japanese negotiated with Americans on the basis of equality, and the Americans reciprocated. Although the Japanese were not as fluent as their hosts, both sides now spoke the same diplomatic language. Even though negotiations were difficult, neither side resorted to threats or intimidation. Unlike the Tokugawa Embassy in 1860, the Meiji ambassadors were not some side-show to be gawked at; this time, the general American public largely treated the group the same as any other high-ranking foreign delegation. The Japanese dressed like Western diplomats, attended Western-style diplomatic functions, and were keen to engage with as much of what the U.S. had to offer as possible. For good or for ill, Japan had become drastically more Westernized since the last mission abroad.

Even though they were unsuccessful at obtaining revised treaties, other parts of the Iwakura Mission's mandate were undoubtedly successful. There is no doubt that the ambassadors learned about Western institutions while in the U.S., from government to economics to religion. Since Japan's own modern institutions were not yet solidified, the advice these ambassadors retained was critical, as was the expertise they brought back home with them. Joseph Neesima accompanied the group across Europe, working with Tanaka Fujimaro to create an American-style public education system for Japan. Tsuda Ume – the young girl appointed by the Emperor – later established Tsuda University many years after receiving a full education in the United States. The Meiji government even brought back American agricultural specialists to develop Hokkaido, Japan's

northernmost island, in a similar vein to the fertile American farms that Okubo, Kido and the others observed in the Midwest.

Perhaps most important, though, is that the Iwakura Mission's time in America, while disappointing, did not signal a downturn in U.S.–Japan relations. At all phases of the trip – even after Washington – the group received warm welcomes from host cities, not patronizing ones as had been the case in 1860. At the end of the day, when the time came to assign blame for the failure of negotiations, Kido Takayoshi and his colleagues were more ready to blame their own unpreparedness and internal strife rather than Hamilton Fish and the Grant Administration. Both countries thought that the American model could serve as a model for Japan's development going forward. For these reasons, the idea that the roots of American-Japanese antagonism grew during this phase of their relationship, I believe, does not hold water.

VI. CONCLUSION

Former President Grant's Visit to Japan

On May 17, 1877, then-former U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant departed from Philadelphia on a worldwide trip that would last two years. The stated purposes of this lengthy excursion were sightseeing and visiting relatives in Europe. Unofficially, though, Grant hoped to increase his popularity back home, which had sagged after two terms of a presidency infamous for corruption and scandal. A great deal of pomp and circumstance was planned – including meetings with Queen Victoria and Otto Von Bismarck – that was intended to bolster the Hero of the Union's public image and set him up for the Republican nomination in the 1880 election.⁷⁴⁵ Still, though, Grant, his wife Julia, and other family members and hangers-on travelled as private citizens, on the dime of A.J. Drexel, a prominent financier.⁷⁴⁶ The conduct of the trip reflected this designation: Grant dined with foreign heads of state, gave speeches in front of crowds of admirers, and generally basked in the glow of the world's welcoming reception, but he did not conduct official government business for the country he once governed.

China and Japan, the last two destinations that Grant visited, were the exceptions to this rule.⁷⁴⁷ After receiving a request from the government of China to resolve a

⁷⁴⁵ "Ex-President Grant," *Daily Inter Ocean*, May 9, 1877, 5.

⁷⁴⁶ William McFeely, *Grant: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 454.

⁷⁴⁷ As to why Grant specifically chose to visit Japan, Richard Chang, author of one of the only articles studying the General's time in Japan, remarked that the precise reason "is not known." Richard Chang, "General Grant's 1879 Visit to Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica* 24, no. 4 (1969): 374. Several of Grant's advisors seemingly encouraged him to visit Australia instead. When we take the earlier Iwakura Mission into account, however, we can perhaps come to an answer: during that encounter, Grant intervened on behalf of the Iwakura ambassadors with Hamilton Fish, trying to encourage the Secretary of State to

territorial dispute with the Meiji government, Grant surprisingly took up the role of diplomat – despite the fact that he had no authority to do so – for the final leg of the voyage. The resulting encounters with Japan highlighted America’s radically changed perspective towards the country since Perry’s time. Unlike those representatives before like Perry or Harris, Grant genuinely liked and respected Japan. Although not without a note of paternalism, the General mediated fairly between the two countries, and did not try to push American interests as a wedge between East Asian powers. Also unlike his predecessors, Grant respected Japanese laws and customs, when his status would have afforded him the opportunity not to. I believe this was not just because he was trying to put on a positive image for an international audience; contemporaries and scholars have argued that Grant felt a unique respect toward Japan as a rapidly developing nation, and that he wanted to ensure a strong relationship between his country and its Pacific neighbor. The Japanese, for their part, were as taken with Grant as he was with them, including the Meiji Emperor. This makes the former President’s journey an excellent place to end this thesis’s discussion of early U.S.–Japanese diplomacy, since it illustrates a brief moment of détente between nations.

Visiting China and the Ryukyu Challenge

On May 17, 1879, exactly two years after departing from Philadelphia, Grant and his travelling companions arrived outside of Shanghai for a month-long visit to China.⁷⁴⁸

negotiate more generously. The General’s predisposition towards Japan, as demonstrated there, likely informed his decision to visit the country in 1879.

⁷⁴⁸ John Russell Young, *Around the World with General Grant* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1879), 338.

The General was welcomed heartily by the Chinese government, which had collaborated with the foreign powers to make the landing at the French Concession a special one, marked with massive crowds and salutes from docked vessels.⁷⁴⁹ As has been intimated in previous chapters, China had a much harsher experience with the foreign powers than Japan, having been forced to relinquish territory after losing multiple armed conflicts. However, the Qing Government still tried to modernize in spite of these losses, and showing off these developments was one of the reasons for the warm welcome they delivered to General Grant. As described by Michael Fellman, “the Chinese regarded the Americans as useful barbarians, as potential white counterweights to the more aggressive European powers.”⁷⁵⁰

The Grant procession made its way from Shanghai to Tientsin (near modern Beijing), where Grant was introduced to “the famous Viceroy, Li Hung Chang, the most eminent man in China, whom some admirers call the Bismarck of the East.”⁷⁵¹ Indeed, Li could have been considered the most powerful man in government, since the Guangxu Emperor was only eight years old. During this initial meeting, Li “took an interest almost romantic” in his visitor, claiming that the pair of them were the greatest men in the world since they had “suppressed the two greatest rebellions known in history.”⁷⁵² In the viceroy’s case, he was referring to the Taiping Rebellion, a shockingly brutal conflict that left thirty million people dead and coincided roughly with the American Civil War and

⁷⁴⁹ Young, *Around the World*, 339. This included representatives from the Japanese consulate in Shanghai.

⁷⁵⁰ Young, *Around the World*, 343. Fellman is primarily a Civil War scholar and is the editor of John Russell Young’s diary of Grant’s voyage around the world. While his description of the Chinese here does not reflect a background in Chinese history, I believe that his phrasing is apt for this description. Donald Keene also relies on Young’s diary with Fellman’s commentary for his chapter on Grant’s voyage in *Emperor of Japan*, indicating the work’s broader acceptability in the community of Asian scholars.

⁷⁵¹ Young, *Around the World*, 343.

⁷⁵² Young, *Around the World*, 344.

Japan's own *bakumatsu*. Grant reportedly had a high opinion of Li after the meeting, remarking on his "friendship and esteem," and the two spoke several more times before he left the country.⁷⁵³

It was during these meetings with Li Hung Chang that Grant became familiar with the diplomatic problem between China and Japan. Since the beginning of the decade, the two countries squabbled about which held sovereignty over the Ryukyu Islands. In 1873, Japan sent a mission led by Soejima Taneomi of the Foreign Ministry to discuss the issue with Li, but Soejima returned without a definitive resolution and tensions persisted.⁷⁵⁴ Japan held *de facto* control over the islands since the early 1600s, but China maintained a historical claim that stretched back further, owing to the fact that the Ryukyus were a part of the country's old tributary system. Not seeing another solution to the stalemate, Li, alongside Prince Kung, another important government figure, implored General Grant to bring the Chinese complaints directly to the Meiji Emperor and, "in securing justice remove a cloud from Asia."⁷⁵⁵ Although not a diplomat, and having little experience in foreign policy (Hamilton Fish handled these issues during Grant's presidency), Grant agreed to take up the discussion and try to resolve the "Loochoo question."⁷⁵⁶

Meeting the Meiji Emperor

At his best – and when not surrounded by corrupt cabinet officials – Ulysses S. Grant represented what was aspirational for the American people. After numerous

⁷⁵³ Young, *Around the World*, 369.

⁷⁵⁴ Mayo, "The Korean Crisis of 1873," 807.

⁷⁵⁵ Young, *Around the World*, 369.

⁷⁵⁶ Young, *Around the World*, 369.

failures throughout his professional career, he succeeded in the military far beyond any observer's best prediction. Despite his meteoric rise, Grant maintained a public image of unpretentiousness and simplicity, which were values held in high esteem by his countrymen.⁷⁵⁷ Although William McFeely, one of Grant's prominent biographers, believed that this was a façade to cover the President's craving for public approval, these values were still prominently on display in Grant's interactions with Japan. Since, despite his worries to the contrary, the General himself remained popular back home, his conciliatory approach to the new, modernized Japan can be considered indicative of the general American mood of the late 1870s. This is further evidenced by the jubilant way in which newspapers described Grant's encounters with Japan – far from the mocking tones of “Twang Twanky, Emperor of the Faithful” that preceded Perry's expedition.

Grant arrived in Nagasaki on June 21, 1879, where he was met by a welcoming committee led by Prince Date Munenari, the former *daimyo* of Uwajima and one of the highest-ranking figures in the government, both pre-and post-Restoration.⁷⁵⁸ When describing Prince Date, and the concept of *daimyo* in general, John Russell Young compared the system to “the clans of Scotland,” the first of many observations designed to Europeanize the Japanese.⁷⁵⁹ There was also a massive welcome given by the private citizens of Nagasaki, comparable to the receptions at San Francisco received by the 1860 Embassy and the Iwakura Mission.

Young was careful to point out some of the details of the landing that took place. He explained that “from the time that General Grant came into the waters of Japan it was

⁷⁵⁷ McFeely, *Grant*, 450.

⁷⁵⁸ Keene, *Emperor of Japan*, 310.

⁷⁵⁹ Young, *Around the World*, 395. Young was one of Grant's travelling companions. The fact that Grant never objected to Young's record of the trip is indicative that the General approved of his depiction.

the intention of the government that he should be the nation's guest."⁷⁶⁰ This time, the Meiji oligarchs would handle the specifics, not the Americans. Prior to Grant's arrival, there were discussions between Prince Date and the local community of foreigners about where he would be received. The foreigners pushed for Grant to land at either the foreign settlement or the Dutch Concession, but the government rejected both. Instead, officials determined they would receive the former President in a part of the city that was exclusively Japanese.⁷⁶¹ Neither Grant, nor anyone in his party, ultimately objected to this. The *Daily Inter Ocean* published a record of the General's speech he made to mark the occasion: in it, he avoided talking directly about commerce. Instead, he highlighted that "America has nothing to gain except what comes from the cheerful acquiescence of the Eastern people," and that he was proud to believe American influence "has always been exerted in behalf of justice and kindness" in Japan.⁷⁶² He concluded by asking the crowd "to unite with me in a sentiment: 'The prosperity and the independence of Japan.'" While perhaps re-writing history, Grant's comments also suggest that he was enthusiastic for a closer U.S. relationship with Japan, by minimizing past American aggression.

After making his initial appearance in Nagasaki and spending a few days among the eager citizens who held a private banquet in his honor, General Grant sailed for Yokohama for the next part of his visit. Once again, his vessel docked at the part of the city with no foreign presence. Waiting there was Lord Iwakura Tomomi, who, upon meeting with the General, eagerly shook his hand; after all, this was something of a reunion for the two. The group of Americans and their hosts then travelled by train to

⁷⁶⁰ Young, *Around the World*, 395.

⁷⁶¹ Young, *Around the World*, 395.

⁷⁶² "Grant in Japan," *Daily Inter Ocean*, August 15, 1879, 5.

Tokyo, allowing Grant the opportunity to finally see the former shogunal capital that had so eluded Perry in 1853 and 1854. Grant's guides, including Prince Date and a mix of Japanese and American diplomats, immediately took the former President to the Emperor's palace.⁷⁶³ This urgency was because the Meiji government did not want "any special honors paid to [Grant] until he had seen the Emperor," the focal point of the nation reborn.⁷⁶⁴ It was also because the government desired that the meeting take place on July 4th, the American Independence Day. This was not because the U.S. delegation requested it, but because Japanese officials were "impressed with the poetry of the idea."⁷⁶⁵

The Meiji Emperor was only twenty-seven years old at the time of Grant's visit. Prior to the Restoration, Japan's imperial line maintained only a small footprint in public life, acting as religious figureheads and staying cloistered at the old palace in Kyoto. All political, social, and military affairs were managed by the shogun, and later, the *roju*. After the Restoration, the Meiji Emperor was theoretically the most powerful figure in government, with wide-ranging authority over all facets of society. However, in practice, oligarchs like Okubo Toshimichi, Iwakura Tomomi, and Date Munenari held real power. Still, since these individuals derived their authority from the Emperor's consent, the Meiji Emperor could exercise a limited degree of authority – considerably more than he could pre-Restoration, at least.⁷⁶⁶ For now, though, the Emperor remained a young adult, doing his best to uphold the dignity of his station. Donald Keene, the author of the most

⁷⁶³ The palace was located in a renovated Edo Castle, where the shogun used to live, highlighting the societal shift that Japan had undergone.

⁷⁶⁴ Young, *Around the World*, 403.

⁷⁶⁵ Young, *Around the World*, 403.

⁷⁶⁶ During the 1870s, this exercise was limited due to his age, but later on in his life, the Emperor grew his power and functioned as an actual decision-maker within the government.

prominent English biography on Meiji, described him as uneasy and stiff with most foreign visitors.⁷⁶⁷

As intended, the first meeting between Grant and the Meiji Emperor took place on the Fourth, in a subdued ceremony that nevertheless reflected several broken historical precedents for Japan. Instead of wearing traditional court garb, the Emperor was dressed in a European-style military uniform to complement what Grant himself was wearing. Additionally, once Grant had entered the room, Meiji approached the General and shook his hand; a gesture which, pre-Restoration, would have been unthinkable for the divine Emperor. Young noted that his manner in shaking hands was “constrained, almost awkward,” but Meiji completed the task regardless.⁷⁶⁸ The Emperor then commanded one of his attendants to read a speech of welcoming to the American President. The speech explicitly thanked Grant for the kindness that he showed Lord Iwakura during his earlier voyage. He also gave his congratulations to the United States, “on the anniversary of American independence.”⁷⁶⁹ In response, Grant expressed gratitude for the Emperor’s hospitality, and reiterated his desire for Japan’s long-term independence and positive relationship with the United States. With these remarks exchanged, Empress Shoken spoke next, welcoming Julia Grant and hoping that she would “prolong [her] stay,” to which the President’s wife remarked earnestly “I have seen [no country] so beautiful or so charming as Japan.”⁷⁷⁰ Overall, the meeting, while perhaps a bit awkward, gave the impression of mutual respect between equals, like how Grant had been treated by the European heads of state. This alone was groundbreaking for the U.S.–Japan relationship.

⁷⁶⁷ Keene, *Emperor of Japan*, 311.

⁷⁶⁸ Young, *Around the World*, 408.

⁷⁶⁹ Young, *Around the World*, 408.

⁷⁷⁰ Young, *Around the World*, 409.

At the conclusion of the first meeting between Meiji and Grant, government representatives escorted the Americans back to their lodging in Tokyo, the Enryokan, a former vacation home of the shogun.⁷⁷¹ Even though the building was unassuming compared to the extravagant European palaces the Grants had stayed in earlier, the General was satisfied with the location as “a place for contemplation and repose,” and even hinted that he had a preference for such lodging.⁷⁷² His was not a spartan vacation, though: there were dozens of servants who attended to the group with wine, cigars, and other amenities for the Grants’ comfort. These servants were perhaps even too eager to please. Young noted that they were omnipresent whenever the Americans were within the Enryokan compound, to the point where “the sense of being always under observation was at first oppressive.”⁷⁷³ Unlike Perry and his antagonism toward Japanese “spies” in Okinawa, though, the Grants learned to live with their observers. Young remarked that this custom was something they would simply have to get used to, and eventually, the group became “unconscious of [its] retinues.”⁷⁷⁴

It was during this time at the Enryokan that Grant met with several senior officials of the Meiji government, and they discussed some of the issues that Japan was facing.

⁷⁷¹ Chang suggests that the Enryokan, a Japanese-style building, was not the first choice for the Meiji government, which would have preferred to house Grant in a Western-style building. However, the issue was that there was then “not a single Western-style hotel in Japan.” Chang, “General Grant,” 376. While this may be true, that is not to say that there had *never* been such a building: K. Abe notes in his article “Early Western Architecture in Japan” that the Tsukiji Hotel, built in 1868 in Tokyo, was built in a Western style, but burned down in 1872. K. Abe, “Early Western Architecture in Japan,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 13, no. 2 (May 1954): 14. Additionally, we know that foreigners had constructed several buildings in the Western style that Grant could have stayed at. With this information in mind, we can conclude that the Meiji government’s desire was for Grant to stay specifically at a Western-style hotel *that Japan had created*. In the absence of that, rather than have Grant stay at a foreign legation, the government preferred him to stay in a Japanese-style accommodation like the Enryokan.

⁷⁷² Joel Tyler Headley, *The Life and Travels of General Grant* (Boston: W.H. Thompson & Co., 1879), 504.

⁷⁷³ Headley, *Life and Travels*, 505.

⁷⁷⁴ Headley, *Life and Travels*, 505.

Grant did not bring up the dispute with China quite yet, but they did discuss another minor crisis which had unfolded over the past months. Occurring contemporaneously with the General's visit was an outbreak of Cholera in the middle provinces of the country, including Kyoto. The outbreak began because of the actions of a German naval commander, who insisted on coming into port against the wishes of the Japanese government, both parties knowing that his ship carried the disease. According to the treaty that existed between Germany and Japan, the naval commander had the right to do this. Although it was then a moot point, the Japanese authorities still asked Grant for what he would have done in their situation. According to Young, Grant's response was that "you ought to have fired on the vessels," and that his countrymen would have backed the Japanese completely had they chosen to do so.⁷⁷⁵

Nikko and Subsequent Negotiations

About two weeks after the first meeting with the Meiji Emperor, the Japanese government saw the Grants on a guided tour of Nikko, a mountain town with spectacular waterfalls outside Tokyo.⁷⁷⁶ While there, more informal meetings like the ones at the Enryokan took place. Most prominently, on July 22, Ito Hirobumi paid a visit to the former President, during which the Ryukyu issue finally came up.⁷⁷⁷ Unfortunately, most records of Grant's travels only briefly mention this important encounter, but we do know

⁷⁷⁵ Headley, *Life and Travels*, 509.

⁷⁷⁶ The site was likely chosen for its cool weather, against the sweltering heat of mid-summer Tokyo. Chang notes that the Nikko Local Assembly, representatives of the city, were extremely excited for the visit, calling it the "highest honor that we have ever received." Chang, "General Grant," 379.

⁷⁷⁷ Keene, *Emperor of Japan*, 314.

that Ito insisted Japan would not yield any territory to China. Grant explained that he believed China and Japan were natural allies against European encroachment in Asia; however, rather ominously – and accurately – he admitted that Japan’s military was far stronger than China’s, and that it was “impossible for China to injure Japan” in a fight.⁷⁷⁸

While Grant was enjoying Nikko and talking with the Emperor’s advisors, Meiji himself wrote the General to request another meeting upon his return to Tokyo. This was unusual for the young sovereign, as in previous encounters with foreign heads-of-state, Meiji displayed little interest beyond ensuring they had a positive experience in his country, with or without his presence. The Emperor’s request was for an informal chat to which Grant responded positively, writing that “he was entirely at the pleasure of his Majesty.”⁷⁷⁹ Accordingly, once Grant was back from Nikko, the pair of leaders and their wives met at the Emperor’s summer home along with some translators and other officials. Once they sat down, Meiji began the conversation by explaining that he wanted Grant to expand on some of his thoughts he had expressed at the Enryokan and at Nikko. Grant agreed, and added that there was no one with “a higher interest in the country or a more sincere friendship for its people.”⁷⁸⁰

The two men began by speaking about Japan’s proposed adoption of a legislature. This was a controversial topic that the government had grappled with for about a decade. Conservative factions believed Japan needed to wait, and that the people were not enlightened enough for effective self-government, while liberal factions believed the opposite. The Meiji Emperor asked for General Grant’s opinion on this sensitive

⁷⁷⁸ Keene, *Emperor of Japan*, 314.

⁷⁷⁹ Young, *Around the World*, 412.

⁷⁸⁰ Young, *Around the World*, 413.

domestic matter. Somewhat surprisingly for the representative of the world's quintessential republic, Grant advised caution: he believed that a legislature would ultimately be necessary for Japan, but moving too fast on the issue could lead to instability. The two also spoke about borrowing from foreign nations. Grant strongly cautioned the Emperor from taking out loans, specifically from Europe, since these could lead to a loss of Japan's independence if the country was unable to pay them back. In a way, this rejected the Perry-era promotion of commerce by any means. The former President had no way of knowing this, but the Emperor carefully took note of this advice, and would push for these stances in future policy debates.

Grant then brought up the issue of the Ryukyus, and of Japan's broader relationship with China, while Meiji listened intently. The General began by explaining that he "would rather not have troubled himself, as [the issue] belonged to diplomacy and governments," and Grant belonged to neither.⁷⁸¹ However, because the Chinese government approached him and sought a solution of peace to the trouble, Grant stated that he could not refuse to mediate. He admitted that he did not know much about the historical claims of either society to the Ryukyu Islands; more research, conducted in good faith by both sides, was needed first. However, what the President did believe was that China and Japan should not let this matter tear apart their centuries-long relationship. Both were "now the only two countries left in the East capable...of becoming...even partially independent of European dictation and laws."⁷⁸² Japan was the stronger of the two, and therefore Grant implied that the Meiji government should be benevolent toward her mainland neighbor. Sanjo Sanetomi, who was present at the discussion, interjected,

⁷⁸¹ Young, *Around the World*, 415.

⁷⁸² Young, *Around the World*, 415.

reiterating Ito's earlier point that Japan *had* been friendly with China over the Ryukyu issue, but that the government would not yield its dignity to resolve the issue. Grant acknowledged the government's situation, but continued to stress that war "would bring unspeakable calamities to China and Japan," and attract foreign nations intent on colonization.⁷⁸³ The best course of action would be to hold a summit with China and completely cut out other powers from the negotiating process, "as no foreign power can do them any good."⁷⁸⁴ In short, Grant was preaching a variant of the Monroe Doctrine towards a nation which only two decades ago, the United States sought to forcibly bring into the wider global community.

On these serious topics, the Meiji Emperor, being young and inexperienced, mostly just listened to the advice of the former American President. In between, though, he inquired about lighter matters. What, for example, did Grant think of customs in India?⁷⁸⁵ Did he get the chance to visit the Great Wall in China?⁷⁸⁶ While seemingly unimportant, the fact that Meiji was comfortable enough to ask Grant these questions spoke to his growing confidence and his positive initial impression of the Hero of the Union. Observing the interaction, Young remarked that "while he treated English, Russian, and German princes as princes, [the Meiji Emperor] treated General Grant as a friend," at least as best as the young Emperor could, in respect to their age difference.⁷⁸⁷ Grant viewed Meiji's questions with indulgence, and replied to each one with detailed answers. This was not something that he did across the board in his interactions with

⁷⁸³ Young, *Around the World*, 416.

⁷⁸⁴ Young, *Around the World*, 416. There is definitely some irony present, given that Grant himself could be seen as a representative of a foreign power.

⁷⁸⁵ Keene, *Emperor of Japan*, 313. India was one of the countries Grant visited during his world tour.

⁷⁸⁶ Keene, *Emperor of Japan*, 313.

⁷⁸⁷ Keene, *Emperor of Japan*, 311.

other world leaders: when the embassy was back in China, Grant refused to meet with the Guangxu Emperor entirely, because he considered minor heads-of-state to be beneath his personal dignity. Rather, it appears that Grant respected Meiji as a representative of the most developed power in Asia, and so he offered his candid thoughts.

The meeting between the leaders ended shortly after, without much specific advice from Grant on how to solve the Ryukyu crisis. This makes sense, given the General's lack of foreign policy experience. Still, it was an amicable meeting, which allowed both sides to express mutual respect. Grant's visit to Japan went into August, and included a visit to Kamakura, the capital of the ancient Kamakura Shogunate, led by "[Minamoto no] Yoritomo, the Napoleon of his day."⁷⁸⁸ Finally, on August 25, the Americans attended an elaborate celebration at Tokyo's Ueno Park, where both Grant and Meiji made departing remarks. Grant went first, reiterating some familiar themes: he wanted "non-interference in the internal and domestic affairs of [Japan] by the outside nations," and was grateful for "the great hospitality and kindness I have received at the hands of all during my most pleasant visit to this country."⁷⁸⁹ The Meiji Emperor, in his own speech, felt reassured that "America and Japan being near neighbors, separated by an ocean only, will become more and more closely connected."⁷⁹⁰ He thanked Grant for "the pleasure of frequent interviews with you," and wished him a pleasant journey home.⁷⁹¹ After the ceremony, Grant rode back to his lodging, his carriage surrounded by Japanese admirers and well-wishers. Keene described this as "hatred [for the United States having] mysteriously turned to love. The plain former soldier had captured the

⁷⁸⁸ Headley, *Life and Travels*, 522.

⁷⁸⁹ Headley, *Life and Travels*, 565.

⁷⁹⁰ Headley, *Life and Travels*, 566.

⁷⁹¹ Headley, *Life and Travels*, 566.

hearts of the Japanese...by his unaffected ways and his delight in Japan.”⁷⁹²

Grant’s Visit as a Capstone for Early U.S.–Japan Relations

Even during the Grants’ visit to Japan, there were rumblings that the future of the U.S.–Japan relationship would be more turbulent than this genial expedition suggested. One record of the trip published by Joel Headley, a contemporary, presciently observed that within the next twenty years, the United States would become “mixed up inextricably with the Eastern question.”⁷⁹³ The United States, as represented by Grant, wanted a peaceful relationship with Japan, but this was because Washington recognized an aggressive stance could lead to huge backlash. It was better to support Japan now than to risk conflict later. This account’s predictions would eventually come to pass, roughly within that twenty-year timeline, once Japanese immigration to Hawai’i and California began to increase.

Still, though, these were ultimately just observations made in the background of what can otherwise be considered a very successful trip. Admittedly, Grant’s “diplomacy” did very little for China’s benefit: while he conducted the talks with the interests of both nations in mind, the Meiji government largely ignored the General’s advice and increased antagonism toward the mainland.⁷⁹⁴ In the 1890s, this culminated in

⁷⁹² Keene, *Emperor of Japan*, 318.

⁷⁹³ Headley, *Life and Travels*, 531.

⁷⁹⁴ Chang puts a great deal of emphasis on an effort made by the Japanese government to sign a treaty regarding the Ryukyus with China in 1880, as inspired by Grant’s suggestions. This treaty effort was a failure, but Chang appears to put the blame on the Chinese. Chang, “General Grant,” 382. However, it is hard to blame China for not negotiating, due to the continued aggressive presence of Japan in the Ryukyus. If Meiji Japan truly wanted to decrease tensions, pulling out of the islands would have been much more convincing than a bad-faith treaty effort.

the Sino-Japanese War. Not that Grant's advice was particularly perceptive itself, either, since he offered little beyond encouraging a summit between nations, which both had already tried back in 1873. However, while Grant did little for the diplomacy between China and Japan, he did cement a positive relationship for the United States and Japan as a result of his efforts. Unlike before, Grant came to Japan and negotiated on the basis of relative equality, giving Japan reasonable advice instead of constant platitudes about the virtues of trade. By the end of his trip, the vast public approval he secured from the Japanese suggested that things had finally calmed down between the two nations, and that peace – however temporary – was possible.

Of course, to adequately conclude this thesis, it is important to view Grant's endeavor within the context of the events which came before. To briefly re-cap, pre-1853, the United States and Japan existed in a state of growing unease. This culminated in Perry's antagonistic voyages, during which the United States used its military might to force diplomatic concessions from Japan. By 1860, the U.S. was less antagonistic but still paternalistic toward a country that wanted little to do with the outside world. The Tokugawa ambassadors learned from the Americans, but only reluctantly. After the monumental shift of the Meiji Restoration though, the new Japanese government was more willing than ever to try and stand on the same ground as its former enemy. This did not manifest in the way Iwakura and others wanted for their expedition, but there can also be little doubt that the U.S.'s superiority over Japan had come into question. Finally, by placing Grant's voyage at the end of this arc of early U.S.–Japan relations, we can see a brief moment of mutual parity and *détente*, where power differences between the countries were minimized and respect governed their relationship.

Analyzing this early arc of diplomacy between countries is important, because it suggests conflict, while always a part of the U.S.–Japan relationship, was not necessarily its defining feature. The 1850s represented antagonism, the 1860s transition, and the 1870s respect. Only later did antagonism resurface and lead to struggle on both sides of the Pacific. In a world where the economic rivalry between the U.S. and Japan has largely concluded, this conclusion is particularly important, because it suggests something beyond conflict and competition is possible for the two nations. As geopolitical realities and fault lines in Asia rapidly shift, the United States will likely find that Japan remains its primary ally for the foreseeable future. Respect and parity will likely lead to dividends.

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