JAPAN AND ITS EAST ASIAN NEIGHBORS: JAPAN’S PERCEPTION OF CHINA AND KOREA AND THE MAKING OF FOREIGN POLICY FROM THE SEVENTEENTH TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

DISSERTATION

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By
Norihito Mizuno, M.A.

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The Ohio State University
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Dissertation Committee:

Professor James R. Bartholomew, Adviser

Professor Philip C. Brown

Professor Peter L. Hahn

Approved by

Adviser

Graduate Program in History
ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a study of Japanese perceptions of its East Asian neighbors – China and Korea – and the making of foreign policy from the early seventeenth century to the late nineteenth century. Previous studies have overwhelmingly argued that after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Japan started to modernize itself by learning from the West and changed its attitudes toward those neighboring countries. It supposedly abandoned its traditional friendship and reverence toward its neighbors and adopted aggressive and contemptuous attitudes. I have no intention of arguing here that the perspective of change and discontinuity in Japan’s attitudes toward its neighbors has no validity at all; Japan did adopt Western-style diplomacy toward its neighbors, paralleling the abandonment of traditional culture which had owed much to other East Asian civilizations since antiquity. In this dissertation, through examination primarily of official and private documents, I maintain that change and discontinuity cannot fully explain the Japanese policy toward its East Asian neighbors from the early seventeenth to the late nineteenth century. The Japanese perceptions and attitudes toward China and
Korea had some aspects of continuity. I also challenge previous studies’ argument about the change in Japanese attitudes toward China. Although they have argued that Japan turned aggressive soon after the Meiji Restoration. I contend that that kind of change did not occur at the time.

In the first two chapters (Chapter 2 and 3), following the introduction, I examine the early modern Japanese perceptions of China and Korea and foreign policymaking by the Tokugawa shogunate (bakufu) (1603-1867). Chapter 2 focuses on the Tokugawa perceptions of and diplomatic relations with Korea. The Tokugawa bakufu held traditional contemptuous perceptions of Korea and, for political and ideological reasons, needed to establish diplomatic relations projecting Japan’s superior status. However, the reality of diplomatic relations revealed discrepancies with the Japanese vision of a hierarchical relationship with Korea and also the limitations of Tokugawa diplomacy.

Chapter 3, focusing on Tokugawa China policy, examines the Tokugawa vision of the Chinese tributary system and policy toward China. Some previous studies have argued that the bakufu had considered paying tribute to China. I contend that from the very beginning, it had no intention of subjecting Japan to the suzerainty of China. I also disagree with the interpretation, however, that Tokugawa Japan had decided to proclaim superiority over China by the early eighteenth century. China’s status was ambiguous in the hierarchical Tokugawa international relations, though the Tokugawa perception of China was under the sway of ideological and religious belief in Japanese superiority.
In the subsequent two chapters (Chapter 4 and 5), I examine the Meiji government’s perceptions and diplomatic attitudes toward China and Korea in the late 1860s and the 1870s. Chapter 4 focuses on the attempt of the Meiji government to establish a government-to-government relationship with Korea. While desperate to modernize Japan by learning from the West, the new regime, replacing the Tokugawa, did not depart either from the traditional perception of Korea or from traditional diplomatic practices. While intending to install treaty-based diplomatic relations introduced from the West, the Meiji government still sought to spell out the traditional Japanese perception of superiority over Korea in the relationship by employing traditional East Asian diplomatic protocols. The Meiji government was simultaneously the inheritor of another tradition. It had to find a way to break through the diplomatic quagmire by compromising with the Tokugawa legacy of equal relations with Korea, when Korea persisted in maintaining the traditional form of equal relations with Japan.

Chapter 5 deals with two issues of the early Meiji Japanese policy toward China. First, I demonstrate that the Meiji government’s policy of establishing diplomatic relations with China revealed that it was also the inheritor of the traditional Japanese stance to the self-proclaimed Middle Kingdom in two ways. Like the Tokugawa bakufu, the Meiji government had no intention of placing Japan in an inferior position toward China and sought to achieve Sino-Japanese equality in diplomatic relations. Despite its emphasis on the imperial authority which would ideologically imply Japan’s supremacy
over any other country, including China, the policymakers of the new regime did not try to spell out such a belief in the actual diplomatic relations. Second, I challenge the argument that soon after the Meiji Restoration, Japan turned aggressive against China. China viewed the Japanese annexation of the Ryukyus and expedition to the Taiwanese aboriginal territories as aggression into its territory and tributary system, and historians have also argued that those events were the first step toward modern Japan’s aggression toward China. I contend, however, that the Ryukyu-Taiwan policy, motivated by their concerns over national prestige and security in the Western-dominated international environment, did not come out of Meiji Japan’s desire to encroach upon and antagonize China.

This dissertation thus demonstrates the following two points. First, a broader perspective is required to understand Japan’s attitudes toward its East Asian neighbors. Along with change and discontinuity, continuity is a necessary and valid perspective in respect to Japan’s perceptions of and policies toward China and Korea. Second, change did occur after the Meiji Restoration, but it did not occur in the form of an aggressive posture toward China at the initial state of the Meiji period.
To the Nunome family, my mother, my wife,
and the memory of those of whom I was beloved
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VITA

April 25, 1967 ....................... Born - Nagoya, Japan

1991 ............................... B.L. Keio University, Tokyo, Japan

1994 ............................... M. A. History, Washington State University,
                                      Pullman, Washington

1995-2001 ........................ Graduate Administrative Associate, The Ohio
                                      State University Libraries

2001-2004 ........................ Graduate Teaching Associate, Department of
                                      History, The Ohio State University

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CHAPTER 1

PERSPECTIVES ON JAPANESE-EAST ASIAN RELATIONS

The Burden of History

Japan has shared several thousand years of history with its neighbors China and Korea. Since antiquity, its intercourse with these countries has taken various forms, including cultural borrowing from these neighbors. It is impossible to ignore Chinese and Korean influences in talking about the development of Japanese civilization. From chopsticks and bean curd to Chinese characters, there are countless examples of influences from the neighbors. Buddhism, was also introduced to Japan through Chinese and Korean filters. Nor were Chinese and Korean influences limited to culture. In a news conference on his sixty-eighth birthday, December 23, 2001, Japan’s Emperor Akihito (r. 1989-) noted that the mother of his ancestor Emperor Kanmu (r. 781-806) was a descendant of King Muyŏng (r. 501-522) of Paekje (1st century BC? - 660), one of the three ancient Korean kingdoms.

1 Asahi shinbun (Morning Edition), December 23, 2001 (no. 41578), 1.
However, it would be an overstatement to say that Japanese civilization is nothing without Chinese influence or that Japan is only an epigone of China. The intercourse between Japan and its neighbors was not like river water running downhill and the influences have not been one-sided. The three neighbors have influenced one another not only culturally but also politically and economically for thousands of years and continue to do so today. Yamada Tatsuo suggests that multifocal viewpoints – mutual dependency (sōgo izon), competition (kyōzon), and antagonism (tekitai) – are necessary to understand modern Sino-Japanese relations.\(^2\) An approach of this sort can be employed not only in Sino-Japanese relations of modern times but also in Japanese-East Asian relations from antiquity through recent years.

None would disagree, however, that among the three viewpoints, antagonism was the most outstanding feature of modern Japanese-East Asian relations from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. And this is, needless to say, due to the fact that much of the modern history of these intraregional relationships is the history of Japan’s “aggression (shinryaku)” toward its neighbors. With its triumph in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, Japan obtained its first overseas colony, Taiwan, including the main island and its surrounding islands, conceded by Qing China. Taiwan was under Japanese colonial rule from that time until the end of the Second World War in 1945. Its victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-1905 brought Japan a foothold in Southern

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Manchuria. In 1910, Korea was annexed into Japan and had to endure Japanese colonial rule for nearly thirty-five years until the collapse of the Japanese empire in 1945.\(^3\) The Great War in 1914-1918 was seen as a “heavenly grace (tenyū)” by Japan; it gained direct access to the Chinese mainland by ousting the Germans from the Shandong Peninsula and forced China to surrender to the Twenty-one Demands, while the Western powers were preoccupied with the war in Europe. The plot of the officers of the Guangdong Army (Kantōgun) to fabricate Chinese terrorism against the Japanese-owned South Manchurian Railroad triggered a full-scale Japanese invasion of Manchuria, known as the Manchurian Incident, in September 1931, which resulted in the birth of the puppet state, Manchukuo (c. *Manzhouguo*; j. *Manshūkoku*). The Marco Polo Bridge Incident in July 1937 marked the beginning of the Sino-Japanese Conflict, and the Japanese military forces continued to occupy the most populated area of China until Japan surrendered to the Allies in August 1945.\(^4\)

Victims do not forget what has been done as easily as assailants do. Seeing themselves as war victims, the Japanese continue to recall the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki today, even though nearly sixty years have passed since the atomic bombs

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\(^4\) For an overview of modern Sino-Japanese relations, for example, see Marius B. Jansen, *China and Japan: from War to Peace, 1894-1972* (Chicago, Illinois: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1975.)
were dropped on the two cities in August 1945. For China and Korea as well, bitter memories remain of Japanese imperialism and militarism. The generations who directly experienced or witnessed Japanese “aggression” still remember what the Japanese did to them. These memories have been handed down to their children and grandchildren in various ways including public education. Nor have the Chinese and the Koreans been satisfied with Japanese attitudes toward their past conduct; in fact, they have repeatedly demanded apologies and reparations for their sufferings under colonial rule and wartime atrocities. Although nearly sixty years have passed since the demise of the Japanese empire, the past has continued to overshadow relationships between Japan and its former colonies and victims. Anti-Japanese sentiment is still pervasive in China and Korea.

The most conspicuous indication that history continues to hinder the three East Asian countries in their pursuit of amity and mutual fidelity is the dispute over their conflicting historical perceptions (rekishi ninshiki mondai). The justification,

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5 Issues of compensation or indemnity have already been settled between the government of Japan and those of South Korea, the Republic of China, and the People’s Republic of China. In 1952, the Republic of China (Taiwan) renounced its claim to compensation. In 1965, establishing diplomatic relations, Japan and South Korea agreed to Japan’s extension of credits, which South Korea deemed compensation. In 1972, the People’s Republic of China also renounced its claim to compensation. Therefore, current issues of compensations for comfort women and forced labor are those between the Japanese government and corporations and individuals citizens of those East Asian countries.

6 Rekishi ninshiki mondai should, I think, be understood as having two aspects, first as a dispute over historical interpretation and second as one over fact finding. A typical example of the former is a dispute over whether colonization was an inevitable choice for Japan in the international environment of the early twentieth century and the legality of the Japanese colonization of Korea, and so on; typical cases of the latter are the search for whether the Nanjing massacre of 1937-1938 truly occurred, how many Chinese the Japanese troops massacred in the incident, and whether there was a fact of Japanese abduction of Asian women for military prostitution. Yet, for those who do not find any necessity of further fact finding, it is simply a matter of whether the Japanese will admit their past guilt. For example, see Zhang Zeming’s recent remarks in conversations with the representatives of the Japanese
glorification, and senseless neglect of the invasion and colonial rule in the past by the Japanese, especially some politicians, have aroused indignation and censure in the Chinese and Koreans. For example, in September 1986, Japanese Education Minister Fujio Masayuki of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) blamed the Tokyo Military Tribunal for its injustice and justified the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910. 7 Faced with Chinese, Korean, and domestic protests, Premier Nakasone Yasuhiro (t. 1982-1986) dismissed Fujio. 8 Since then, several other LDP ministers and members have continued to make similar comments, infuriating Japan’s neighbors, on the Nanjing Incident, comfort women, and the Second World War. The most recent case is the remarks by Asō Tarō, a prominent LDP member, which prompted South Korean protests. In his speech at the University of Tokyo in May 2003, Asō stated that the Japanization of Korean names (sōshi kaimei) during the Japanese colonization of Korea was done not by compulsion but at the request of Koreans. 9 Because of repeated remarks like these, Japan’s neighbors

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7 Fujio Masayuki, “‘Hogen daijin’ ooi ni hoeru,” Bungei Shunju (October 1986): 122-133.

8 Nakasone dismissed Fujio on September 8, 1986. See Asahi shinbun (Morning edition), September 8, 1986 (36160), 1.

have continued to condemn the Japanese for their refusal to face the “truth” of history and their “distortion” of historical facts.\(^{10}\)

This dispute is best symbolized by the repeated dissension over Japanese middle and high school history textbooks (rekishi kyōkasho mondai). The dispute first broke out, following the report by Asahi shinbun, one of Japan’s leading papers, on the Japanese education ministry’s instruction to some history textbook authors to replace the term “shinryaku (invasion)” with “shinshutsu (inroad),” in July 1982.\(^{11}\) It recurred in the summer of 1986, and in the spring of 2001. For example, in the 2001 case, a middle school history textbook, Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho (New History Textbook), which had passed the official examination (kentei) of the Ministry of Education and Science, invited negative reaction inside and outside Japan.\(^{12}\) Stating that postwar history education had

\(^{10}\) Since Fujio’s dismissal in September 1986, Okuno Seisuke, Ishihara Shintarō, Nagano Kamon, Sakurai Shin, Hashimoto Ryūtarō, Watanabe Michio, and Et Takami have made comments on the Nanjing Incident, comfort women, the Japanese annexation of Korea, and the Second World War, which upset Japan’s neighbors. Okuno, Nagano, and Sakurai were dismissed in response to Chinese, Korean, and Japanese domestic protests.

\(^{11}\) The report ignited the dispute, which escalated into a diplomatic confrontation between Japan and other Asian countries. However, some critics like Watanabe Shōichi say that the report was incorrect; the ministry had not in fact tried to change the term. See Watanabe Shōichi, Banken kyo ni hoeru: kyōkasho mondai no okori o tsuku (Tokyo: Tokuma Bunko, 1997); Nishio Kanji, Rekishi kyōkasho to no 15-nen no sensō: “shinryaku/shinshutsu” kara “ianfu” mondai made (Tokyo, Kyoto-shi: PHP Kenkyūjo, 1997); According to Watanabe, only the Sankei shinbun has officially admitted that the report was incorrect. Another example of the textbook dispute occurred when a group of scholars published a high school history textbook, Shinpen Nihon shi, in 1985. See also Allen S. Whiting, China Eyes Japan (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1989) ; Takasaki Sōji, “Han-Nichi kanjō”: Kankoku, Chōsenjin to Nihonjin (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1993), 55-73.

\(^{12}\) The Japanese term, “kentei,” is often translated as censorship. On the other hand, that English term is often translated as ken‘etsu in Japanese. Since the two Japanese terms are not used in totally the same sense by native speakers, I use the English term “screening” instead here. Nishio Kanji etc, Shihanban atarashii rekishi kyōkasho (Tokyo: Fusōsha, 2001).
been “self-flagellating (jigyakuteki),” a group of Japanese scholars and intellectuals wrote the textbook for the purpose of challenging textbooks which they accused of disseminating Marxist or self-flagellating interpretations of Japanese history and negative images of Japan to the country’s youngsters for decades after the Second World War. Because the Chinese and South Korean governments officially requested that the Japanese government revise the textbook, the dispute led to a diplomatic conflict. South Korea’s recent opening of its doors to Japanese culture, which President Kim Dae-jung (t. 1999-2003) had fostered, was suspended. Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichirō’s announcement that he would visit the Yasukuni Shrine on August 15, 2001 further escalated the criticism of Japan’s neighbors, because seven executed Class A war criminals, including General Tōjō Hideki, are enshrined in the Shinto shrine, along with more than two million four hundred thousand other officers and soldiers who died in the civil war of 1868-1869 and the wars which modern Japan had fought overseas through 1945. Although Koizumi (t. 2001-) eventually attempted to compromise by visiting the memorial two days before the anniversary of Japan’s defeat in the Second World War, strong anti-Japanese sentiment continued unabated, controverting planning for Japanese-Korean cultural interchange (Nikkan bunka kōryūnen), co-hosting of the 2002 FIFA World Cup Soccer Games by Japan and Korea, and the thirtieth anniversary of the

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13 See the homepage of Atarashii kyōkasho o tsukurukai. For example see some works written by one of the co-authors of the textbook. Kobayashi Yoshinori, Nishio Kanji, Sakamoto Takao. For the history dispute of 2001, see Fareed Zakaria, “Keeping the War Alive,” in Newsweek, (August 27, 2001): 33.
restoration of diplomatic relations between Japan and the People’s Republic of China in 1972.

The Perspectives of Change and Discontinuity

The postwar and current clamor for better Sino-Japanese and Japanese-Korean relationships is also a clamor for returning to the idealized historical relationships lost by modern Japanese behavior. It derivs from a popular view that after the Meiji Restoration, or even from the late Tokugawa period, Japan changed its attitude toward its neighbors and that modern Japan’s aggressive East Asian policies were an aberrant shift away from centuries of amity and peace with its neighbors. Yamada Akira states, “The Meiji Restoration was the starting point of Japan’s modernization and was simultaneously the starting point of overseas expansion and ‘dat-su-A (dissociating with Asia or leaving Asia)’.“\textsuperscript{14} As for Japanese-Korean relations, Hatada Akira and Yi Jin-hi have stated that early modern Japanese-Korean relations, based on equal diplomatic relations between the Tokugawa bakufu (1603-1867) and the Yi dynasty (1392-1910), restored after Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s invasion of Korea in the 1590s, were a time of good neighborliness and friendship (zenrin yūkō no jidai).\textsuperscript{15} Emphasizing the amicable aspect of cultural and

\textsuperscript{14} Yamada Akira, Gunbi kakucho no kindaishi: Nihongun no bocho to hokai, Rekishi bunka raiburari 18 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1997), 7.

\textsuperscript{15} For example, Taikei Chōsei tsushinshi has a subtitle, Zenrin to yūkō no kiroku, Taikei Chōsen tsushinshi: zenrin to yūkō no kiroku, 8 vols (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 1996-1998). See also Hatada Akira, Nihonjin no Chōsen kan (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1969), 12-14; idem., “meijiki no Nihon to Chosen,” Kokusai seiji no. 2 (1962); 1; Yi Jin-hi, Richō no tsūshinshī: Edo jidai no Nihon to Chōsen
human interchange between the Korean embassies visiting Japan and Japanese intellectuals and commoners during this period, these scholars and some others such as Kan Chae-on and Nakatsuka Akira have reached the critical conclusion that Japanese policies toward Korea after the mid-nineteenth century were a deviation from a long history of amity between the two countries.  

Sino-Japanese relations after the Meiji Restoration are also contrasted with those in the pre-restoration periods during which time amity is also said to have characterized the relationship. Modern Japan’s attitudes toward China are characterized as betraying an historical relationship. Inoue Kiyoshi has for example contrasted Modern Japan’s attitudes toward China as seventy years of aggression with two thousand years of friendship.

“Datsu-A” is one of the most popular terms used to describe modern Japan’s attitudes toward East Asia in the context of nineteenth century change and discontinuity. “Datsu-A” was coined by the prominent Meiji intellectual and educator, Fukuzawa Yukichi. On March 16, 1885, an editorial, known today as “Datsu-A ron,” appeared in a newspaper.

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16 Kang Chae-on, Chōsen no jōi to kaikoku: kindai Chōsen ni totte no Nihon (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1977); Nakatsuka Akira, Kindai Nihon no Chōsen ninshiki (Tokyo: Kenbun Shuppan, 1993); Yi Jin-hi; Yi Won-shik.


the newspaper *Jiji shinpō*, which Fukuzawa launched. He stated, “Although our country is in East Asia, the spirit of the people has been extricated from the fogginess of Asia and transferred to Western civilization. Nevertheless, there are unfortunately countries nearby; one is called China; another is called Korea.” He went on to say that unless those two countries undertook reforms like the Meiji Restoration, they would be partitioned by the civilized powers. “In order to carry out the design of today,” he concludes, “our nation has no time to wait for the enlightenment of its neighbors and to flourish together with Asia. Japan should simply stop mingling with them, cast its lot with the civilized nations of the West, and should treat them [China and Korea] according to the way the Westerners do. One who associates with them [China and Korea] cannot be free from a bad reputation. I am the one who dissociates from the bad friends of East Asia.”

What prompted him to write this well-known article and what was truly in his mind at the time are still at issue among scholars. Banno Junji and Kinebuchi Nobuo argue that he wrote it when he was frustrated with the failure of the Second Seoul Incident months earlier.20 This coup in early December 1884, led by Korean modernizers such as Kim Ok-kiun who was backed by the Japanese, was crushed by the conservative faction of Queen Min and her kinsmen backed by Qing China. On the other hand, Koyasu

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Nobukuni, Nishio Yōtarō, and Yasukawa Junosuke have contended that Fukuzawa had made similar points in his earlier writings.\textsuperscript{21} As for the gist of the article, scholars have offered conflicting interpretations. Despite the split mentioned above, Banno, Koyasu, and Yasukawa agree that Fukuzawa advocated aggression against Japan’s Asian neighbors.\textsuperscript{22} Ikei Masaru refuses to see the essay as advocacy for invasion of Asia, contending that Fukuzawa stressed nothing more than a need to learn from Western civilization.\textsuperscript{23}

Regardless of what he truly tried to advocate, “\textit{datsu-A}” has a certain validity for characterizing Japan’s attitudes toward East Asia beginning in the late-nineteenth century. The Japanese adoption of Western civilization under the slogan of “\textit{bunmei kaika}” (civilization and enlightenment)” in fact paralleled the abandonment of the tradition, in which Japan had obligations to its neighbors. As for foreign policy, Peter Duus states, “It [the Meiji government] pursued a foreign policy that blended an astute use of Western-style diplomacy and international law.”\textsuperscript{24} The new regime adopted the new diplomacy and international law introduced by the West to the relationships with the neighboring


\textsuperscript{22} Banno, 336; Koyasu, 72; Yasukawa.

\textsuperscript{23} Ikei Masaru, \textit{Zōho Nihon gaikōshi gaisetsu} (Tokyo: Keiō Tsūshin, 1988), 63-64.

\textsuperscript{24} Peter Duus, \textit{The Rise of Modern Japan}. (Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mittlin Company, 1976), 121.
East Asian countries. Moreover, Japan followed the imperialist path and victimized its neighbors. Ishii Takashi states, “The imperial government (Tennō-sei seifū) established through the Meiji Restoration … laid bare coercive and aggressive attitudes towards East Asian nations (China and Korea), with the stance of ‘datsu-A’.”²⁵ Ishii also notes that this was the diplomatic line which the Meiji government had followed even before Fukuzawa asserted in 1885, “What [Japan] should assume as an ism was merely in the two [Chinese] characters of datsu-A.”²⁶

**Past Perspectives**

Some previous studies in different fields seemed to accept in some degree the idea that change and discontinuity might not be the only perspectives for understanding early modern and modern Japan’s attitudes toward its East Asian neighbors. Maruyama Masao has observed that Japan’s independence of the Sinocentric international order was continuous beginning in the Tokugawa era. He has stated that Japan’s independence of the Chinese world order enabled it to make a rather effective response, which was quite different from that of Chinese tributaries like Korea, to Western pressure, thus protecting its independence from Western imperialism and maintaining national independence.

²⁵ Ishii Takashi, Meiji shoki no Nihon to Higashi Ajia (Yokohama : Yūriondō, 1982), 2.

²⁶ Ibid., 3; Fukuzawa, 238.

Defining Tokugawa Japan’s economic self-sufficiency and independence from the Chinese tributary system as “datsu-A,” Kawakatsu Heita indicates that Japan had achieved “datsu-A” before the Meiji Restoration. An intellectual historian, Katsurajima Nobuhiro, also declines to see “datsu-A” as a post-Meiji phenomenon, arguing that “datsu-A” was linked with the anti-Chinese discourse of Motoori Norinaga in the late Tokugawa period. It may thus be possible to use “datsu-A” to refer to patterns which continued through the early modern period (kinsei) and the modern period (kindai). It is questionable to characterize the economic, political, and intellectual phenomena of early modern Japan as embodying “datsu-A” in all aspects. These scholars, however, suggest the possibility of seeing “datsu-A” as a continuous phenomenon that had already appeared before the Meiji Restoration rather than a break from the past created by the new Restoration leaders.

In the field of Japanese-Korean relations, Fujimura Michio pointed out more explicitly that while discussing the aspects of “innovation (sasshin)” in Meiji foreign policy, previous studies had neglected the new regime’s “use (riyō)” of and “succession (keishō)” to Tokugawa diplomacy. He has demonstrated that, in setting up the concession in Pusan in 1877 by emulating the Western practice at open ports, the Meiji government

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was still counting on the legacy of the Tokugawa regime’s diplomatic relations with Korea by taking over the site of the previous Japan House. Japan House was provided by the Korean government for the Japanese stationed in Korea to be engaged in diplomatic administration and trading for more than two hundred years.31 The Meiji government attempted to convince Korea to establish diplomatic relations with Japan by establishing equal status with Korea’s suzerain, Qing China, first and obtaining a superior status over Korea in 1870. He has also argued that the Japanese were still following the traditional hierarchical East Asian diplomatic system until Western-style diplomacy completely eliminated it in 1873.32

Fujimura’s historiographic perspective has not, however, been much evident in other studies. While acknowledging the consistent contemptuous perception of Korea among the Japanese throughout the Tokugawa and Meiji periods, Hatada Takashi has failed to find similarity between the Meiji government’s attitudes and the Tokugawa bakufu’s attitudes toward Korea. He has rather stressed the contrast of the attitudes of the new and old regimes, stating that Tokugawa attitudes toward Korea were respectful.33 Some Japanese and Korean scholars have also found the presence of the traditional contemptuous perceptions of Korea from antiquity in the remarks of Meiji leaders but


33 Hatada, Nihonjin no Chōsenbkan, 12-17.
have made no comparison between the Tokugawa and Meiji perceptions of Korea. Others have merely found continuity as between late Tokugawa (Bakumatsu) and Meiji. Nor have these scholars examined how the traditional perceptions of the neighboring country affected the making of Meiji Korea policy. In one instance, Arano Yasunori argues that the Tokugawa bakufu viewed diplomatic relations with Korea as a hierarchical relationship, which the Meiji government continued and reorganized. I disagree with Arano and contend that the bakufu was aware that diplomatic relations with Korea were an equal relationship which contradicted its ideal of Japan’s superior status, and that the Meiji government also discovered the reality of the Tokugawa diplomacy.

A similar pattern can be found in English language historiography. Japanese history textbooks by Marius B. Jansen, John. Whitney Hall, Peter Duus, and James L. McClain have offered no comparative perspective regarding the attitudes of the Tokugawa bakufu and the Meiji government toward East Asian neighbors. In Japan & Its Wider World, Akira Iriye takes a bird’s eye view of modern Japanese foreign policy

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but also makes no reference to either discontinuity or continuity with Tokugawa foreign policy in modern East Asian policy. In *East Asia at the Center: Four Thousand Years of Engagement with the World*, Warren P. Cohen presents no comparative view of the Tokugawa and Meiji perceptions of and policies toward China and Korea. Although the primary source which he cites in *The Abacus and the Sword* shows that Meiji policymakers had the traditional perception of Korea, Peter Duus offers no observation about what it means in early Meiji Korea policy. In his *Last Phase of the East Asian Order: Korea, Japan, and the Chinese Empire, 1860-1882*, Kim Key-hiuk places very early Meiji Japan’s Korea policy, which he calls “Restoration diplomacy,” in the genealogical line of “Bakumatsu seikanron (arguments for conquering Korea by intellectuals in the last decades of the Tokugawa era).” He suggests that the presence of a consistent contemptuous perception of Korea, is derived from ancient Japanese myths and classics to see this in both the “Bakumatsu seikanron” and “Restoration diplomacy.” On the other hand, like other Japanese and Korean scholars, he does not trace this back beyond the late Tokugawa period and offers no arguments with respect to continuity or

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discontinuity between the Tokugawa bakufu’s and the Meiji government’s perceptions of and policy toward Korea.40

As for the Japanese attitude toward China, there is absolutely no work which attempts to compare the China policies of the Tokugawa and Meiji regimes. This is probably because a government-to-government relationship between the Tokugawa and the Ming and Qing dynasties was absent throughout the Tokugawa era, and such a relationship was not established until the Meiji government and the Qing dynasty concluded a treaty in 1871. On the other hand, many Chinese and Japanese scholars have, in a condemnatory tone, argued that Japan turned aggressive toward China soon after the Restoration, adopting a –so-called “continental policy (tairiku seisaku).”41

A New Perspective

The objective of this dissertation is to demonstrate that change and discontinuity are not the only perspectives for understanding Japanese perceptions of and attitudes toward China and Korea from the early Tokugawa to the early Meiji period. It insists on the importance of continuity by focusing on the perceptions of the Tokugawa bakufu and its successor, the Meiji government, and their formulation of policy toward China and Korea. Regarding the three centuries from the end of the 1590s, I present two arguments.


41 See note 52 below.
First, continuity is more prominent than has been typically assumed, as Japan left the early modern era and entered the modern era. Fujimura’s argument regarding “use” and “succession” has a rather limited focus on conscious actions taken by the Meiji government in the limited area of the Japanese concession at Pusan; the perspective of continuity I discuss is broader than his. I do not deny the validity of such perspectives of change and discontinuity as presented in the “datsu-A” perspective. Meiji Japan displayed an enthusiastic interest in the West, paralleling a swift loss of interest in Asia.42 The Meiji adoption of Western-style diplomacy and international law inevitably required both the renewal and the abandonment of the Tokugawa tradition of foreign policy. The change did not, however, bring about complete discontinuity in the Japanese perceptions of and attitudes toward Japan’s neighbors. The new regime, replacing the Tokugawa bakufu, was the inheritor of traditional perceptions and attitudes, both consciously and unconsciously, both voluntarily and reluctantly.

Also, some phenomena which many historians have seen as representing changes in modern Japan’s attitudes, notably the early Meiji policy toward China, did not necessarily represent changes. Those historians have argued that Japanese attitudes toward China became aggressive soon after the Meiji Restoration, which marked the beginning of the decades long Japanese aggression toward China. For example, Etō

Shinkichi states that the Meiji government began seeking to enrich and strengthen Japan and to raise the country’s national prestige through expansion into weaker adjacent areas in the early Meiji era. Focusing on the Meiji government’s policies toward the Ryukyus and the Taiwanese aboriginal territories, however, I contend that such a change of attitude toward China did not occur in the early Meiji period.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to mention what kinds of source materials I use in this study. Focusing primarily on both the old Tokugawa bakufu and the new Meiji government, their leaders, and government-to-government relationships between Japan and its neighbors, I examine policymakers’ perceptions of China and Korea, policy proposals, and their actions in the policymaking process. The diplomatic archives of the two Japanese governments are the most important sources for my study. For the Tokugawa period, Tsūkō ichiran (Records of Voyages), Ikoku Nikki (Foreign Diaries), and for the Meiji period, Dai Nihon gaikō monjo (Diplomatic Papers of Great Japan), Chōsen jimusho (Archives related to Korean Affairs), and microfilmed archives of the Japanese Imperial Army and Navy, can be taken as typical examples of this kind of evidence. In addition, private archives, such as letters and diaries of policymakers are of equal importance. Although this dissertation will focus primarily on the stories of the Japanese side, Chinese and Korean primary sources such as Ming shilu (Annals of the Ming Dynasty), Chouban yiwu shimok (Barbariaan Affairs), and Choson wangcho shillok

(Annals of Successive Courts of the Choson Dynasty), are also important as supplementary sources.

It is also necessary to explain what I mean by such terms as (foreign) perception, foreign policy, and diplomatic relations. “Perceptions (of China and Korea)” and “foreign policy” require clarification. In this particular study, “perceptions” can be rephrased as “foreign perceptions,” namely “perceptions of China and Korea.” More specifically, the term mostly, though not completely, refers to Tokugawa and Meiji policymakers’ visions or ideals of the status relationships which should exist with neighbors in a superior-inferior sense, derived from Japanese ideological and religious tradition and political needs. “Foreign policy” means any non-violent and violent actions taken by the one country toward another by any means available for achieving external and domestic objectives. In this study, specifically, “foreign policy” means non-violent and violent means taken by the Tokugawa bakufu and the Meiji government toward China and Korea. “Diplomacy” is the primary means of exercising foreign policy and consists of official talks and negotiations between one country and another to achieve any objective. When I use the terms in this dissertation, both “talks” and “negotiations,” refer to those conducted by political leaders and bureaucrats in pursuit of foreign policy objectives. Japan’s adoption of Western-style diplomacy toward China and Korea means that the Meiji government attempted to establish diplomatic relations based on Western-style treaties and international law, which had not been part of the tradition of East Asia, for
the purposes of establishing constant communication between governments. “Diplomatic
relations” is here defined narrowly as the direct associations between governments,
government officials, and rulers (monarchs or those who exercised the prerogatives of
foreign policy).

I start this study by examining in the following two chapters the Tokugawa bakufu’s perceptions and policies toward China and Korea in order to clarify the
continuities of the Tokugawa and Meiji East Asian policies by discussing several
historiographical issues. Tokugawa policy toward Korea was initiated in order to settle
the hostilities with its neighbors which had begun with Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s overseas
military adventure in the 1590s and to restore peace with Korea. Although Hideyoshi saw
the conquest of Korea as a first step toward the creation of a Japan-centered East Asian
empire, the seven-year overseas campaign was futile. Soon after Hideyoshi’s death in
1598, Tokugawa Ieyasu began to restore peace with Korea and achieved success when a
Korean embassy came to the shogunal capital, Edo, in 1607. From that time, Korean
embassies made twelve irregular visits by 1811. Most previous studies have agreed that
diplomatic relations between Tokugawa Japan and Korea were based upon equal
relations. On the other hand, many have also pointed out that the Tokugawa bakufu

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44 For example see Hiraishi Naoaki, “Kindai Nihon no kokusai chitsujokan to ‘Ajia shugi,’” in 20-
seiki shisutemu, vol. 1, Kōsō to keisei (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1998), 177-179; Tashiro,
14; Toby, 204. As exceptions, George McCune and Kim Key-hiuk have maintained that Korea was in
a superior position. George McCune, “Korean Relations with China and Japan, 1800-1864,”
(unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1941), 12; Kim, 23. See also
Toby’s criticism of these two. Toby, 41.
inherited the traditional perception, which Japanese political and intellectual elites had shared since antiquity, of Korea as a tributary and subordinate. How should the findings of the parity with and the contemptuous perception of Korea be understood? Few previous studies have suggested an answer to this question. Arano Yasunori and Etsuko Hae-jin Kang indicate that the shogun’s parity with the Korean king would not contradict the Japanese perception of Korea and that not the shogun but his superior, the Japanese emperor (Tennō), in the Japanese domestic hierarchy, represented Japan’s international status.45

In Chapter 2, I disagree with Arano and Kang. For the Tokugawa bakufu, the restored peace with Korea needed to be premised upon Korea’s recognition of Japan’s victory and superiority. Ieyasu wanted the peace to demonstrate domestically that it was the new Japanese regime which had restored peace. Japan envisaged the shogun as superior to the Korean king and believed that the peace should represent Japan’s superior status toward Korea in the restored diplomatic relations. This was reasonable according to the domestic political circumstances and the traditional perceptions of Korea of that time. However, Korea had a conflicting vision of peace with Japan. When the bakufu found no way to realize its ideal, it did not totally surrender to the Korean vision but compromised. As a result, while not jettisoning its traditional contemptuous perception

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and its desire to treat Korea as an inferior, the bakufu restored diplomatic relations with Korea on the basis of parity between the shogun and the Korean king. However, while diplomatic relations continued for more than two centuries, the discrepancy remained between the traditional perception and the ideal status relationship with Korea on one hand and the actuality of diplomatic relations on the other hand. Although well aware of the discrepancy, the bakufu put a priority on maintaining diplomatic relations with Korea as a useful political tool for enhancing shogunal authority at home.

Some Japanese and Korean historians describe early modern Japanese-Korean relations in terms of good neighborliness and friendship. In chapter 2, however, I indicate that the historical perspective of good neighborliness and friendship (zenrin yūkō shikan) fails to explain a number of aspects of the relations.\(^{46}\) Critical of Japan’s policy toward Korea after the Meiji Restoration, which culminated in annexation, these historians maintain that Japanese-Korean relation should have returned to the early modern good neighborliness and friendship. Overemphasizing that aspect, this perspective overshadows analysis of the possible causes of the later tension between the two countries. Tokugawa Japan had contempt for Korea, as did Korea for Japan. As long as they both kept their mutual contempt hidden, however, the peaceful equal relationship

was maintained. Once it came up to the surface as a result of the Meiji Restoration, however, the relationship turned to one of antagonism.

Tokugawa China policy was also initiated with the intention of restoring diplomatic and commercial relationships with Ming China (1368-1644), in parallel with Korean policy. Previous studies are unanimous in respect to the objectives of the policy toward China. They however have given conflicting interpretations as to the Tokugawa bakufu’s attitude toward the Chinese tributary system. Some historians have stated that the bakufu wanted to restore Japan’s participation in the Sinocentric international order as China’s tributary, as the Ashikaga bakufu (1338-1573) had done.\(^47\) Some of them have argued that Tokugawa Japan’s independence of the Chinese tributary system was the result of the failure of the bakufu’s rapprochement policy toward Ming China.\(^48\) Others have argued that after temporarily considering paying tribute to Ming China, the bakufu eventually relinquished the idea of reintegration into the tributary system in consideration of the Japanese domestic political consequences of doing so.\(^49\) Other scholars have stated


\(^{48}\) Fujii Jōji, 40-41, Nakamura, 14.

that the bakufu sought full equality with Ming China before giving up on pursuing the restoration of government-to-government relationship with Ming China.⁵⁰

Chapter 3 attempts to put an end to this interpretive split, contending that the Tokugawa bakufu never desired to be a Chinese vassal. Although paying homage would have been an easy way to rehabilitate diplomatic and commercial ties with China, it was not a viable choice for the bakufu in light of the traditional Japanese political and ideological notions of its relationship with China based on equality and the domestic political conditions under which the Tokugawa gained its hegemony. After repeated proposals for the restoration of peace without tributary relations were rejected by China, the bakufu renounced a formal relationship of any kind with China by the end of the second decade of the seventeenth century. Thereafter, throughout the Tokugawa era, direct contact between the two countries was limited to Chinese merchants’ unilateral visits to the port of Nagasaki. Indirect contact was made through Sino-Ryukyu tributary relations and diplomatic and commercial relations with another Chinese tributary, Korea. Tokugawa refusal to recognize Chinese suzerainty did not mean that it had a replacement for that vision of a status relationship. For a variety of reasons, the bakufu was unable to find an alternative form for the relationship between Japan and China that was mutually acceptable.

Chapter 3 introduces and challenges another issue regarding Tokugawa China policy. Nakamura Hidetaka and Ronald Toby have argued that the Tokugawa bakufu, deciding not to pay tribute to China after it had temporarily considered doing so, had declared Japan’s independence of the Chinese world order by the late 1630s.\textsuperscript{51} Toby further maintains that with the Manchu conquest of China in the mid-seventeenth century, the bakufu placed China at the bottom of its hierarchical international order and then declared Japanese superiority through the trade credential system implemented in the early eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{52} I contend that Tokugawa attitudes toward the Chinese world order were consistent in not accepting the status of a foreign vassal state and also dispute the claim that the bakufu placed China at the bottom of its world order. Chinese merchants visiting Nagasaki were inferior constituents of the Tokugawa international order, but China was not. As a matter of fact, far from claiming superiority, the bakufu was concerned about causing any conflict with the Manchu dynasty, the Qing, over the Kingdom of Ryukyu, which had been subordinated to both China and Japan since the early seventeenth century, and over the trade credentials which Japan introduced in 1715 to regulate the Nagasaki trade.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I turn my focus to early Meiji East Asian policies. After years of domestic turmoil, the imperial court and the pro-emperor (anti-Tokugawa)

\textsuperscript{51} Nakamura Hidetaka: 14-15; Toby, \textit{State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan}, 227.

\textsuperscript{52} Toby, \textit{State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan}, 155-159.
domains led by Satsuma and Chōshū overthrew the bakufu and established a new regime in the name of imperial restoration (Ōsei fukko) early in 1868. Taking a lesson from the failed attempt to expel Westerners (jōi) in the early 1860s, the Meiji government established “friendship and country opening (washin kaikoku)” as a principle of foreign policy and adopted Western-style diplomacy and international law (bankoku kōhō or rekkoku kōhō). Relationships with Japan’s neighbors – China and Korea – were not exempt from Japan’s diplomatic modernization (Westernization).

The East Asian policies of the Tokugawa bakufu and the Meiji government did not share the same objectives, nor did they operate within the same domestic and international environment. When the Tokugawa regime was formed, the country was in the midst of a hostile isolation from the rest of the East Asian world as a result of Hideyoshi’s expansionist ambition. In this situation, the Tokugawa bakufu took pains to restore peace and diplomatic and commercial relations with its neighbors. It was also the first chance for the new regime to demonstrate its capacity and legitimacy in foreign policy. Peace needed to be achieved without sacrificing the bakufu’s domestic authority as a warrior regime. On the other hand, when the Meiji government came into being, there was no outstanding tension to be solved between Japan and its neighbors. The new regime, however, found it necessary to shape East Asian policy in consideration of the presence of the Western powers which possessed superior military might backed by superior economic systems and technology.
Despite the political shift from the Tokugawa bakufu to the restoration regime (*ishin seifu*), their different objectives, the different international settings in which they were situated, and the tide of modernization modeled on the West, the East Asian policy of the new regime did not necessarily bring about a complete change from the policies of the old regime. Chapter 4 focuses on early Meiji Korea policy, and I find that while attempting to introduce Western-style treaty-based diplomatic relations and replacing the shogun with the emperor as the possessor of diplomatic prerogatives, the Meiji government had two kinds of continuities with the Tokugawa Korea policy. First, I argue that the traditional contemptuous perception of Korea remained in Japanese policymakers’ thinking and scrutinize how it continued to influence the actual policymaking process. Those who emphasize the friendship and peace of early modern Japanese-Korean relations have disregarded this continuity or failed to scrutinize the presence of the contemptuous perception.

I also reject the transformation theories of Fujimura and Kim, maintaining that the traditional notions of foreign relations and perceptions of Korea coexisted with Western diplomacy. While adopting Western-style diplomacy as a part of modernization, the Meiji government still sought to spell out Japan’s superior status in the traditional way, contradicting the Western diplomatic ideal of equality between sovereign nations. The imperial restoration restored diplomatic prerogatives to the emperor (*Tennō*) and sought to establish Japanese-Korean relations between the emperor and the sovereign of Korea,
namely the king. This diplomatic restoration also took it for granted that Korea would be
treated according to the East Asian tradition of a hierarchical distinction between emperor
and king, supporting the ancient Japanese historical perception of its neighbor.

I further argue that another Tokugawa-Meiji continuity is present in the Meiji
government’s reluctant continuation of a nominally equal relationship with Korea despite
its belief in the emperor’s superiority to the Korean king. In the process of difficult
negotiations, the Meiji government chose to become a reluctant inheritor of the
Tokugawa diplomatic legacy. That is to say, it compromised with Korea, which persisted
in maintaining the form of diplomatic relations which Korea had had with the Tokugawa
bakufu. The compromise continued even after the establishment of treaty-based
diplomatic relations in 1876, following Japan’s victory in a minor military conflict. The
1876 Japanese-Korean treaty, mimicking the unequal treaties which the Western powers
had previously forced China and Japan to accept, gave Japan unilateral privileges such as
extraterritoriality. Yet this still did not fulfill the Japanese ideal of spelling out Japanese
superiority over Korea with the traditional East Asian and Japanese diplomatic protocols.
It was not until Japan annexed Korea in 1910 that Meiji Japan overcame the discrepancy
between Japan’s ideal vision of its status relationship with Korea and the reality of the
relationship.

In Chapter 5, I demonstrate that change and continuity coexisted in early Meiji
policy toward China. Facing trouble over the Korean issue, Meiji Japan attempted to
establish Western-style treaty-based equal diplomatic relations with Korea’s suzerain, Qing China, in order to convince Korea and accomplished this by signing the treaty of 1871. The change was that Japan unprecedentedly attempted to introduce a Western-style diplomatic relationship to its relationship with China, as well as with Korea. It was also unprecedented that Japan requested China to establish direct face to face relations and obtained an equal relationship. Fujimura has stated that this attempt to obtain an equal status was the first attempt to deny China’s superiority. I argue, however, that the action in fact showed the Meiji government’s inheritance of the traditional Japanese perception of an equal status with China and of the traditional stance of refusing to recognize China’s superiority. Furthermore, although the old and new regimes also shared the ideological and religious belief in Japanese supremacy over China, the new regime, like the old, did not seek to spell this out in actual treaty-making policies.

Although admitting the coexistence of change and continuity as mentioned above, I disagree with many Chinese and Japanese historians’ allegations that Japan changed its attitudes toward China by carrying out aggression on its territory and tributary states soon after the Meiji Restoration. Modern Sino-Japanese relations were troublesome from the

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54 As Robert Eskildsen points out, few American historians have found the origins of Japanese imperialism in the early 1870s. Robert Eskildsen, “Of Civilization and Savages: The Mimetic Imperialism of Japan’s 1874 Expedition to Taiwan,” *The American Historical Review*, 107-2 (April 2002): 390. Few American historians have explained the Taiwan expedition as Japanese imperialism. As Eskildsen notes, they have not indicated that they have seen the expedition as part of a Japanese continental policy. See Hilary Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea, 1868-1910: A Study of Realism and Idealism in International Relations*; Leonard Gordon, “Japan’s Abortive Colonial Venture in
beginning because of Japanese policies in the 1870s toward the Ryukyus and Taiwan. In 1872, the Meiji government annexed the Kingdom of Ryukyu (1429-1872), which had been under dual subordination to both China and Japan since 1609. It also launched an expedition to the aboriginal territories of Taiwan in 1874 on the pretext of punishing those responsible for the massacre and maltreatment of shipwrecked Ryukyuans and Japanese by Taiwanese aborigines several years earlier. The policies the Meiji government pursued toward the Ryukyus and the Taiwanese aboriginal territories caused a degree of friction with China which had not occurred since Hideyoshi’s invasion of Korea in the 1590s. China regarded these Japanese actions as an encroachment upon its own empire and territory, and this critical view is held by many historians today. China had in fact been the target of some Japanese intellectual and political elites’ expansionist dreams, stimulated by the fear of Western expansionism, since the late Tokugawa period. I argue, however, that the Ryukyu-Taiwan policies in the early Meiji period were not motivated by any such expansionist ambitions toward China. Although those policies

It grew out of Japanese concerns over national prestige and security in a Western-dominated international environment, the Meiji government had no intention to secure Japan’s independence and to aggrandize its national prestige by encroaching on China. It was in fact aware that its own policies had a possibility to become sensitive issues between China and Japan because of China’s claim of suzerainty over the Ryukyus and the fuzzy border between the Chinese-possessed territories and the aboriginal territories on the island of Taiwan. While pursuing the aforementioned policies toward the Ryukyus and Taiwan, it hence did not stop trying to maintain peace and to avoid antagonizing China.

This dissertation contributes the following to debates over nineteenth century Japanese foreign policy. First, it emphasizes the necessity and validity of the perspectives of both continuity and change in Japan’s perceptions of and attitudes toward East Asia, at least up to a point. As mentioned above, I do not deny the striking changes and transformations which Japan underwent after 1868, but behind the scenes, there was the remaining stream of foreign perceptions and attitudes. The Western impact and domestic socio-political and cultural shifts did not create a complete discontinuity with the past.

Second, this study bridges the two different fields of the discipline – the early modern and modern periods of Japanese history. In other words, it suggests the necessity of developing a perspective free from the division of fields of the early modern and modern Japanese histories (kinseishi and kindaishi). It is unanimously held that the Meiji
Restoration of 1868, which divides the two fields, brought to Japan tremendous changes and transformation in politics, culture, economy, and all other aspects of the country. The early modern and modern period hence tend to be contrasted by change and discontinuity; as this study indicates, and as some other studies have already done, continuity may also be applied to other topics.

Third, my counterargument to the interpretation that early Meiji policies toward the Ryukyus and the Taiwanese aboriginal territories marked the commencement of modern Japan’s aggression toward China will add another layer to the politicized dispute over history between Japan and its East Asian neighbors. However, I have no intention of either distorting history or justifying everything that modern Japan has done to its neighbors. Further, I fear that my argument may please those who are eager to justify modern Japanese conduct toward China and Korea. What I want to do here is to rectify the distorted notion that Japanese aggression toward China began at the early Meiji period, by stressing that Meiji policymakers did not see their own policies toward the Ryukyus and Taiwan as designed to bite the Chinese melon.

Finally, along with the perspective of change and discontinuity, the perspectives of continuity which I suggest in this dissertation may contribute to fields other than that of Japanese history. The changes and transformations which Japan underwent in the nineteenth century did not either disconnect it from its past or alter its attitude toward its East Asian neighbors. The Meiji government still saw and thought of policies toward
China and Korea in the traditional way, and in ways similar to those of the previous regime, both consciously and unconsciously. The Meiji government also tried but did not find it easy to free itself from the Tokugawa legacy. The approach which I attempt may be applicable to the examination of other countries’ attitudes in their foreign relations, and especially to the cases of those countries which had their own tradition of foreign relations when they encountered Western imperial nations.
Diplomatic relations with Korea were a constituent of the limited foreign relations of early modern Japan under the so-called “sakoku (national seclusion)” or “kaikin (maritime prohibition)” policy of the Tokugawa bakufu. The relationship between the bakufu and Chosŏn Korea (Yi dynasty) began when Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder of the warrior government, rehabilitated relations after the war of conquest which Toyotomi Hideyoshi had launched against the country and its suzerain, Ming China. Since Korea’s dispatch of an embassy to Japan in 1607, marking the restoration of peace and the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between the bakufu and the Yi dynasty, twelve Korean embassies had visited Japan by 1811. Meanwhile, the bakufu did not dispatch envoys and instead mandated Tsushima-han, a small island domain located between Japan proper and the Korean Peninsula, to take charge of diplomatic administration and communication with Korea and granted it the privilege of a trade monopoly with the neighboring country. This was partly because the Koreans, whose distrust and animosity
against Japan remained after the invasion, did not allow the Japanese to enter their territory. The only exceptions were Tsushima retainers, who were allowed to visit and stay in Pusan, a port city at the southern extremity of the Korean Peninsula. This pattern also developed because the bakufu did not find it necessary to dispatch its own envoys to Korea. The bakufu attempted to exploit the presence of the foreign missions on Japanese soil as a political tool to vindicate the legitimacy and authority of its own regime. The value of these missions as political ornaments did not vanish until the very end of the Tokugawa era.

A popular interpretation asserts that early modern Japanese-Korean relations operated on an equal footing. Tashiro Kazui, for example, states, “There is no doubt that state-level diplomacy was practiced on equal terms between the bakufu representing the Japanese government and the Yi dynasty representing the Korean government.” Ronald Toby, through his analysis of the diplomatic protocols and language exchanged between the bakufu and the Yi dynasty, also draws the conclusion that Korea was placed on an equal footing with Tokugawa Japan.


3 Toby, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, 204.
Meanwhile, some studies show that bakufu policymakers had a contemptuous perception of Korea, a reality which contradicts the actual parity of their diplomatic relations. Arano Yasunori notes that the bakufu continued to hold the traditional contempt toward Korea which went back to antiquity. Referring to the parity projected through diplomatic protocols and language, Toby also states that there was a view of the Korean embassy as a tributary mission or as a sign of Korea’s subordination to Japan, not only among the public but also inside the bakufu, and points out that such a perception had traditional roots.

The question is raised: how should this “parity” and “contemptuous perception” be understood comprehensively? This question can be restated more explicitly: was the bakufu aware of the contradiction? If so, how could the bakufu tolerate equal relations which obviously contradicted the Japanese perception of Korea that the bakufu policymakers also shared? How did the bakufu deal with the contradiction? Most previous studies have not truly provided an answer to these questions. For example, in *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan*, Toby indicates, though indirectly, that there was a discrepancy between the Japanese perception of Korea and the actual

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5 Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan*, 119-120, 147.


7 Ibid. Nakao raises the question but does not answer it.
diplomatic relationship. He argues that the bakufu’s reception of Korean embassies engendered a fantasy of Korea’s subordination to Tokugawa shogun-ruled Japan among the Japanese population for the sake of displaying the authority of the ruler. However, possible answers to the questions raised above cannot be discovered in his arguments. Though he also shows, in an earlier article, that some bakufu policymakers shared the fantasy of the Korean embassies as tributary missions, does this mean that the bakufu itself was blind to the discrepancy between their perception of Japanese-Korean relations and the reality?8

The interpretations of Arano and Etsuko Hae-jin Kang barely suggest that the parity between the shogun and the Korean king caused no contradiction with the Japanese perception of superiority over Korea. These two scholars refuse to identify the shogun-king parity with the bakufu’s perception of the status relationship between Japan and Korea. Based on his argument regarding the view that Tokugawa public authority (kōgi) consisted of the bakufu and the Tennō, Arano states that from the Japanese point of view parity (tekirei) did not contradict the Japanese perception of Korea, given the superior status of the Japanese emperor (or heavenly sovereign), “Tennō,” over the shogun.9 Kang, in a comparative examination of the diplomatic and ideological perspectives of both

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9 Arano, 48-9. “Tennō” has diplomatically been translated as “emperor” since the 1870s; it is questionable that this English term precisely expresses the meaning of the Japanese term. “Heavenly sovereign” is Joan R. Piggot’s translation. See Joan R. Piggot, _The Emergency of Japanese Kingship_ (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997).
Japan and Korea from the Ashikaga period (1338-1573) through the mid-Tokugawa period, also demonstrates that the presence of the Tennō subjectively functioned as a rationale for Japanese superiority over Korea in the Japanese diplomatic perspective.\(^{10}\)

The presence of the emperor certainly played an important role as rationale for the Japanese claim to international status; yet it should be remembered that the emperor had been kept out of foreign affairs until the mid-nineteenth century by the bakufu itself. While exploiting and relying on its authority, the bakufu restricted the role of the imperial court compared to the previous Toyotomi regime.\(^11\) Hideyoshi did not necessarily intend to keep the emperor invisible in foreign affairs as he unsuccessfully attempted to force the Korean embassy of 1590 pay tribute to the imperial court.\(^12\) On the other hand, as the Ashikaga bakufu had done, the Tokugawa bakufu expected the shogun, who executed diplomatic prerogatives, as well as domestic political ones and represented Japan vis-à-vis outside world, to embody Japan’s superior status over Korea without either relying on or infringing on the imperial authority. As discussed below, the diplomatic title, *Taikun* (Great Prince or Sovereign Lord), well exemplified the bakufu’s expectation of the shogunal representation of Japanese superiority over Korea.\(^13\)

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\(^{11}\) Imatani Akira calls Hideyoshi’s attitudes and treatment of the imperial court “the Toyotomi Restoration.” See his *Buke to Tennō: Ōken o meguru sōkoku*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1994).


\(^{13}\) “Great Prince” is Toby’s translation; “Sovereign Lord” is George Elison’s. “Great Prince” seems a more literal and less controversial translation. On the other hand, I personally wonder whether the
This chapter will argue that the Tokugawa Korea policy certainly contained discrepancies, and that the bakufu was neither ignorant of the implications of diplomatic protocols nor self-flatteringly imbued with a belief in Japan’s superiority over Korea. It was obviously aware of the discrepancy between its own ideal vision of relations with Korea and the actual state spelled out through diplomatic protocols. It therefore intended to conceal the actuality of Japanese-Korean diplomatic relations to the greatest extent possible (but not perfectly) from public eyes so as to make diplomatic relations function as a political tool furthering the image of Korea’s subordination to shogun-ruled Japan.\(^{14}\)

In the particular environment of post-Hideyoshi Japan, the Tokugawa bakufu, as a new unifier replacing the Toyotomi, needed to end the belligerency through a Japanese victory, or Korean surrender and subordination. The restored relationship with Korea was necessarily supposed to be premised upon a conclusion of the war. It was nevertheless difficult to realize the idea because of the absence of an indisputable Japanese victory and because of Korea’s conflicting vision of peace and restored diplomatic relations with Japan. The parity between the shogun and the Korean king, which also implied parity between Japan and Korea, projected in the diplomatic protocol resulted from the limitations of the Tokugawa Korea policy in realizing the ideal vision of Japanese-

\(^{14}\) Some intellectual elites were aware that the diplomatic relations were on an equal footing, as Ogyū Sorai, for example, noted in his work, *Seidan*, in *Nihon Shisō taikei*, vol. 36, *Ogyū Sorai* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), 349.
Korean diplomatic relations. Although it never renounced its contempt for Korea and could not have done so in order to maintain the authority and claim of legitimacy of the regime domestically, the bakufu inevitably had to accept a compromise because of the lack of the capacity to achieve its own vision. The irony was that as long as it continued to see a political value in diplomatic relations, the Tokugawa regime needed to maintain those relations and had to put up with the state of parity and the discrepancy they engendered.

This chapter will further indicate that the historical perspective of good neighborliness and friendship (zenrin yūkō shikan) cannot explain every aspect of early modern Japanese-Korean relations. There has been a debate among historians whether early Tokugawa East Asia policy after the war was peaceful or not. A Korean historian, Pak Hegyon, regarding Ieyasu’s use of a military bluff against Korea, argues that it was not necessarily peace-oriented. Asao Naohiro also states that after the failure of the Korea campaign, the Tokugawa bakufu did not renounce applying “bui no ronri (the logic of military power),” which means military strength as a determinant of survival for warriors in the warring state period, to policies toward the neighbors.

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I would like to ensure that objective and method are not confounded. Consideration of arms and use of the bluff per se were by no means the objective but were rather the method of the Tokugawa East Asia policy. The objective was coherently to restore peace and diplomatic and commercial relationships lost by Hideyoshi’s military adventurism with the neighbors. That is to say, no matter what measures it considered using, the early Tokugawa policy toward Korea, as well as toward China, was peace-oriented.

Also, as for early modern Japanese-Korean relations sustained by the diplomatic relations between the bakufu and the Yi dynasty, some Japanese and Korean historians describe it as a relationship of good neighborliness and friendship. I do not deny that there were peaceful cultural and intellectual intercourse and amicable episodes between the Japanese and Korean embassies. This contrasted with the antagonism caused by the Toyotomi regime and the post-Tokugawa Japanese-Korean relations which culminated in the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910.

Nevertheless, in overemphasizing the aspect of good neighborliness and friendship, one might overlook or pay little attention to the aspect of tension and the latent causes of antagonism. As this chapter will demonstrate, in the very early decades, the Japanese and the Koreans disputed repeatedly over diplomatic protocols. After the diplomatic protocols were basically settled in the late 1630s, the Japanese contemptuous

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perception and the sense of superiority mentioned above lurked beneath the diplomatic relations on which cultural and human intercourse was based. The presence of such contempt for Korea would not necessarily mean the absence of an intention to have a peaceful and amicable relationship with Korea. Nor did seeking a peaceful and amicable relationship necessarily mean expecting an equal relationship based on mutual respect. As mentioned above, the Tokugawa ideal was in fact to give Japan a superior status represented by the shogun in a peaceful relationship with Korea, and Korea also had contempt for the Japanese behind its vision of an equal status relationship with Tokugawa Japan under Chinese suzerainty. When either of the contemptuous views and senses of superiority got actualized in attitudes, good neighborliness and friendship had the possibility of turning to antagonism.

The Tokugawa Vision of Peace with Korea

Tokugawa Korea policy began in the aftermath of the war of conquest Toyotomi Hideyoshi had waged against Japan’s neighboring countries in East Asia. The peasant-born unifier had launched an overseas military campaign and dispatched large expeditionary forces across the sea to the Korean Peninsula in 1592. As the name of the military campaign, “Kara-iri”, indicates, Hideyoshi’s ultimate goal was to conquer the vast territory of China via its tributary state, Korea, and even India, which Japanese

called *Tenjiku*, though the motivation for his zeal for conquest is still an issue among historians. In the early stages of the war, Japanese troops gained a series of sweeping victories on the peninsula, and some even crossed the Korean-Manchu border, encroaching upon Manchuria (called *Orankai* by Japanese at that time). However, confronted with Korean military and popular resistance backed by the Chinese rescue forces, this military adventurism was soon caught in a quagmire. The engagements on strange soil dragged on for nearly seven years, until Hideyoshi’s death in 1598, without achieving any of his ambitions. Meanwhile the war had a significant impact on the socio-political landscape of both Japan and its hostile neighbors. The campaign exhausted Japan. Outside Japan, the Japanese intrusion also laid Korean soil to waste and endangered a deep abhorrence and distrust of the Japanese in the minds of the population. The Chinese rescue forces also hastened the decline of the Ming dynasty, which in the end fell to the Manchus in 1644.

Tokugawa Korea policy essentially began when Ieyasu became involved in the termination of the overseas expedition soon after Hideyoshi’s death. One week after Hideyoshi’s death, on September 25, 1598 (Keichō 3/8/25), the senior executives of the

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21 As for the Korean campaign, see Kitajima Manji, Nakamura Hidetaka, and Elisonas, 265-293.
Toyotomi regime, known as the Five Elders (gotairō) and the Five Commissioners (gobugyō), dispatched an order to the expeditionary forces in Korea. As a leading Elder, Ieyasu’s name was placed at the far right of the second signatures. In the order, which continued to conceal Hideyoshi’s death, the senior leaders of the Toyotomi government instructed the expedition commanders to call a truce with the enemy and evacuate from hostile soil. They simultaneously ordered them to reach an agreement with the enemy on bringing a Korean prince as a head of a peace mission to Japan and added that they expected that Korea would pay tribute to Japan even if they failed to win the enemy’s agreement on the demand.

In issuing this order, the senior executives apparently acted in accordance with the late hegemon’s dying wish. Hideyoshi had referred to his wish to conclude the prolonged overseas campaign in a letter to Katō Kiyomasa, one of the generals most loyal to him and a participant in the campaign. In July 1598 (Keichō 3/6), Hideyoshi’s worries about the unfavorable complexion of the war and his own declining health probably persuaded him that he could not continue to station a large army overseas. Yet Hideyoshi did not

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intend to acknowledge the virtual failure of the military campaign since he stated in the letter that Korea was first to dispatch an envoy to Japan as a condition of peace. According to the diplomatic tradition of the East Asian world, dispatching a diplomatic note, tribute, or a mission to another country first meant surrender or subordination.\textsuperscript{26} Thus both Hideyoshi and his senior executives, including Ieyasu, sought to terminate hostilities and bring about peace in such a way as to convey an impression of victory.

Ieyasu’s vision of peace and Hideyoshi’s dying wish also revealed a strong coincidence. \textit{Chōsen tsūkō tāiki} (Grand records of relationship with Korea), compiled by a Tsushima retainer Matsuura Masatada (Kashō) in the early eighteenth century, claims that Ieyasu summoned a daimyo of the Tsushima domain, Sō Yoshishige, and his chief retainer (\textit{karō}) Yanagawa Shigenobu to Fushimi Castle in the southern suburb of Kyoto in 1599. The House of Sō had been conversant with Korea because its association can be traced back to the Kamakura period (1192-1333). He stated, “Intercourse would benefit both countries. The invasion of the \textit{taikō} [meaning retired \textit{kanpaku} (imperial regent), namely Hideyoshi in this particular case], however, terminated it [the intercourse between the two countries]. Send a confidential letter and attempt to sense [whether Korea desires to rehabilitate its broken ties with Japan]. If [the country] intends to respond [to a signal of peace], you may reveal that it is the will of the public authority (\textit{kōgī}).”\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Hō Chōrō Chōsen monogatari}, (Priest Hō’s narrative on Korea) written by

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} Kitajima Manji, \textit{Toyotomi seiken no taigai ninshiki to Chōsen shinryaku}, 239-40.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Matsuura Masatada comp., \textit{Chōsen tsūkō tāiki} (Tokyo: Meicho Shuppan, 1978), 65.
\end{itemize}
Kihaku Genpō, a Tsushima Zen Buddhist monk in the late seventeenth century, records a similar story. In 1602, when Sō Yoshishige was granted an audience at Edo, the headquarters of the Tokugawa since 1590 and the shogunal capital beginning in 1603, Ieyasu mentioned, “I had no personal grudge against Korea. Hence I will grant peace if the country wishes it. However, an overture of peace must not be a matter for Japan to propose first.”

There are several explanations for Ieyasu’s need to settle peace with Korea. Amenomori Hōshu, Neo-Confucian scholar and retainer of Tsushima in the early eighteenth century, observed that Ieyasu worried about possible revenge by Korea and China. For Ieyasu, to try to obviate any potential external threat to national security would have been a natural course of action to prove his capability as a new unifier after Hideyoshi and to secure the territory which he was supposed to control. Scholars like Nakamura Hidetaka and Tanaka Takeo have also noted Ieyasu’s great interest in overseas trade and stated that he expected normalization of relations with Korea to facilitate the restoration of trade with Ming China.

They do not, however, explain why Ieyasu needed to restore peace with Korea in that particular way. Here some explanations regarding this question can be attempted.

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28 Kihaku Genpō, Hō Chōrō Chōsen monogatari (Tokyo: Kondō Kappansha, 1902), 21; Ibid., 68.


First, despite his ambition for hegemony, he still needed to behave as a vassal of the Toyotomi after Hideyoshi’s death in order to protect himself from his political rivals who blamed him for the stretch of authority; hence he had to comply with Hideyoshi’s dying wish to pursue a “victor’s peace.” After the hegemon’s death in the autumn of 1598, Ieyasu enhanced his authority considerably as some of his contemporaries called him “tenka-dono (lord of the land).” He even ignored his own oath to Hideyoshi, to comply with the dead hegemon’s orders and wishes. However, his execution of political prerogatives, not only in domestic affairs but also in foreign affairs, did not come exclusively from his relative predominance over other daimyo, but was also legitimated by Hideyoshi’s appointment of him as his juvenile heir, Hideyori’s, caretaker. In other words, his extended authority and power still depended on the name of Toyotomi. In fact, he either did not conceal or exploit his caretaker status, which necessarily and inevitably meant his vassal status to Hideyori, as he admitted that he was still a Toyotomi vassal after Hideyoshi’s death. For example, in diplomatic letters to Padani, located in the Malay Peninsula, in 1599 and to Ming China in 1600, he stated that he had been chosen a caretaker of the juvenile lord. It should also be noted here that he justified his military

31 Kitajima Msamoto, Tokugawa Ieyasu (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1082), 123. The translation of “tenka-dono” is borrowed from John Whitney Hall. See Hall, 104.

32 Fujino Tamotsu, Tokugawa seikenron (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1991), 64.


34 For example, see Kagoshima-ken Ishin Shiryō Hensanjo ed., Sappan kyūki zatsuroku kōhen (hereafter cited as Kyūki zatsuroku kōhen), vol. 3 (Kagoshima-shi: Kagoshima-ken, 1983), no. 1012.
action against the anti-Tokugawa forces such as Ishida Mitsunari in the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600 as an expression of loyalty to the House of Toyotomi and an attempt to eliminate villainous subjects.\(^{35}\) It is therefore reasonable to believe that the “public authority” which he referred to in the meeting with Sō Yoshishigte in 1599 referred to the Toyotomi regime. Ieaysu thus needed to proceed with the peacemaking policy in accordance with the guidelines which Hideyoshi had set forth, as long as he exploited the Toyotomi authority to legitimize and to secure his power before eliminating his rivals in the crucial battle of 1600.\(^{36}\)

For other reasons, it may be possible to conjecture that Ieyasu would have pursued a “victor’s peace,” even without Hideyoshi’s dying wish. Arano Yasunori states, regarding Ieyasu’s ambition for post-Hideyoshi hegemony, that the diplomatic issue may have provided him with an opportunity to demonstrate his political ability vis-à-vis other domestic forces. Moreover, Ieyasu was also a warrior ruler, and this destined him to pursue a victor’s peace when he had not captured hegemony yet, and when the end of the war had not been declared yet on an official level.\(^{37}\) The vicissitudes of warrior houses were essentially determined by their success or failure in demonstrating their martial might (bui). Hideyoshi was a perfect example of a humbly-born man who rose to be a unifier through the successful demonstration of his military genius. Ieyasu was said to be

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\(^{36}\) Kitajima Masamoto, *Tokugawa seikenron*, 125.

\(^{37}\) Arano, 174.
critical of the overseas military adventure from the beginning because of his concern over the management of a new domain in the Kanto Region granted by Hideyoshi after the Odawara campaign of 1590. However, once he took charge of the termination of the war, the consequences of peacemaking would have affected his fame and authority. As a warrior, achieving the appearance of a glorious conclusion to the war, regardless of its reality, would have been quite a reasonable choice for him, especially in order to take advantage of the vacuum of power in the period after Hideyoshi’s death.

In addition to the political reasons, ideological reasons may offer further explanation. While Hideyoshi’s motivation for undertaking his overseas military adventure is still under debate among historians, the Toyotomi regime probably inherited the traditional Japanese contempt for Korea. As the Kojiki (Record of Ancient Things) and Nihon shoki (Chronicles of Japan) show, the Japanese had traditionally regarded Korea as a subordinate or a tributary state since antiquity. The diary of Yoshino Jingoemon indicates that the ancient perception of Korea was still prevalent in the 1590s. The retainer of Matsura Shizunobu of Hizen, who participated in the Korea campaign, noted in his diary Yoshino nikki (Yoshino diary), “The wife of the fourteenth human

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38 Kitajima Masamoto, Tokugawa seikenron, 110-112; Fujino, Tokugawa Ieyasu, 47.

39 In addition, Ieyasu would have had to reckon the faces of other daimyo, that is, those participated in the overseas campaign, as he desired to be a hegemon over them.

emperor Chūai (r. 192-200 AD) Jingū, as Empress, subjugated three Korean kingdoms (San-Kan). Since then, [Japan] has not been subordinated to a foreign country; Korea and the Ryukyus have paid tribute to our country every year. This is the precedent of antiquity.”41 Hideyoshi seemed to share this kind of historical perception as he paid homage to the Iminomiya Shrine in Nagato (present-day Shimonoseki city, Yamaguchi prefecture) to pray for victory on his way to his wartime headquarters, Nagoya in Kyushu, from Ōsaka.42 He also described traditional Japanese-Korean relations as “gyūji no mei (an alliance of cow ears).”43 The term obviously came from a Chinese classic, Chun qiu Zuoshizhuan (Spring and Autumn Annals and Zuo Commentary), and meant hierarchical bonds or a partnership between two parties. Hideyoshi’s use of this term in his state letter to the Korean king in 1590 referred to Japanese-Korean relations on the basis of Japan’s superior position. Since it is unlikely that the poorly educated warrior ruler was familiar with the Japanese and Chinese classics, this knowledge probably came from those around him. Kang Hang, a captured notable Korean Neo-Confucian scholar well-known for his contribution to the development of Neo-Confucianism in Japan, mentioned that such ill-informed perception and knowledge was infused by a Zen monk serving Hideyoshi as a diplomatic advisor, Saishō Jōtai.44 The diplomat monk remained in charge of the

42 Ibid., 92.
43 Kitajima Manji, Toyotomi seiken no taiagi ninshiki to Chōsen shinryku, 100-101.
diplomatic administration of the Tokugawa regime and maintained his influence over its Korea policy. As mentioned below, other Tokugawa policymakers were also the inheritors of the traditional perception of Korea. This would leave little doubt that Ieyasu had a perception of Korea similar to that of his contemporaries.

**Peacemaking Negotiations**

Negotiations with Korea were arduous for the Japanese. The Japanese generals managed to arrange a truce fulfilling the order of the executive officers of the Toyotomi regime, including Ieyasu, and evacuated all the expeditionary forces from hostile soil by the end of 1598. The Japanese seemed to expect that a Korean peace mission, which was agreed on in the truce, would arrive shortly, by the end of 1599 at the latest.\(^{45}\) Nevertheless, from the beginning the expectation of a Korean mission was quite unlikely to be fulfilled. A cease-fire was never effected because the fighting lasted until the very moment when the Japanese intruders withdrew from the peninsula.\(^{46}\) As a matter of fact, the Koreans were not included in the parley over the truce. The promise of a Korean envoy’s visit to Japan was made between the Japanese and the war-weary Chinese generals, without either the consent of the Korean court or the approval of the Ming imperial court in Beijing.\(^{47}\) Although informed of the content of the Sino-Japanese

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\(^{45}\) Nakamura Hidetaka, vol. 3, 265.

\(^{46}\) Kitajima Manji, *Toyotomi seiken no taigai ninshiki to Chōsen shinryaku*, 46.

\(^{47}\) Kim Un-tae, “Zenkindai no Higashi Ajia seiken to Chōsen” *Rekishigaku kenkyū* no. 67
agreement, the Koreans had no intention of accepting this outrageous peace condition.\textsuperscript{48}

Moreover, even after the invaders left the peninsula, the Koreans did not relax their animosity and precautions against the Japanese. While Ieyasu and the other Japanese were waiting for the “promised” peace mission, the Korean Court was deliberating over retaliatory military operations against Tsushima on the pretext of its betrayal to their long peaceful relationship.\textsuperscript{49} Despite its long history of communication with the Korean Peninsula, the daimyo of the Japanese island, who had no way to resist the hegemon’s order, was in the vanguard of Hideyoshi’s invasion.\textsuperscript{50}

Tsushima, following Ieyasu’s instructions, repeatedly dispatched emissaries to Korea to sue for peace. It had begun to approach Korea even before receiving Ieyasu’s instruction, as early as the end of the year the war ended, for the agriculturally-poor domain was eager to reactivate the Korean trade, a lifeline of its economy and security.\textsuperscript{51} However, all Tsushima’s attempts to approach Korea resulted in failure. None of the Tsushima retainers sent to Korea set foot on their homeland again. They were executed


\textsuperscript{51} Tashiro, \textit{Kinsei Nitchō tsūkō bōekishi no kenkyū}, 56.
by Koreans or disappeared into Chinese territory. 52 The primary reason for Korea’s attitude was its memory of the Japanese invasion and remaining hostility and distrust. 53 This was also partly due to Korea’s sensitive and intricate relationship with its suzerain – both the Ming imperial court and the generals of the rescue forces remaining on Korean soil even after the Japanese withdrawal – over the initiative of Japan policy and conflicting visions of peace. 54

Tsushima then adopted both appeasement and threatening measures to convince Korea to settle with Japan. On the one hand, it attempted to mollify the Koreans with the return of war captives. On the other hand, it simultaneously threatened that Korea would suffer another military assault unless the country accepted the Japanese gestures of goodwill. 55 Tsushima employed this military bluff in accordance with Ieyasu’s instructions. Before Tsushima’s reference to another Japanese invasion in correspondence with Korea in April 1600 (Keichō 5/3), Ieyasu suggested, during the audience with Sō Yoshishige in 1599, that a resort to arms could be an alternative if the peace talks failed. Subsequent to these instructions, he continued, “Should the country (i.e., Korea) not comply with our offer of peace, [we] would terminate further communication with a

52 Ibid., 57-9.
53 Min, 104-6.
54 Kim, 39.
resort to arms.” There are other examples of similar references by Ieyasu. On March 12, 1600 (Keichō 5/1/27), a letter was sent to the general of Fuzhou, China, Mao Guoqi. The senders were three daimyo of Kyushu – Shimazu Yoshihiro and Tadatsune (later renamed Iehisa) of Satsuma and Terasawa Masanari of Karatsu; however, the letter was in fact drafted by Saishō Jōtai under orders from Ieyasu. While asking Ming China to restore the tally trade (kangō bōeki), in which Ashikaga Japan and Ming China had been engaged from the early fifteenth century to the mid-sixteenth century, it threatened China, along with Korea, with another Japanese military assault if they did not accede to the Japanese request for peace and normalization by 1602. Two months later, Ieyasu made a similar reference in a letter to Naoe Kanetsugu, a chief retainer of Uesugi Kagekatsu, a daimyo of Aizu (present-day Fukushima prefecture) and a fellow member of the Five Elders. He asked Kagekatsu to visit Kyoto to confer on the Korea issue, mentioning that crossing the sea to chastise Korea again might become necessary within a few years unless the country sent an envoy to Japan.

Repatriated Korean war captives brought similar reports back to the royal court in Seoul. After his return in 1600, Kang Hang stated that Ieyasu’s concern over anti-Tokugawa daimyo in the Kyushu Region might cause him to use another war against

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56 Chōsen tsūkō taiki, 65; Taishū hennenryaku (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 1974), 54.
Korea to wear them down.\textsuperscript{59} Two years after this report, Kim Kuang submitted a similar warning to the Korean court. Kim, returning from Satsuma and said to be a Korean royal, warned that Ieyasu might take up arms as a way to deal with the untrustworthy daimyo who had enjoyed Hideyoshi’s favor and whose loyalty to the Tokugawa regime was still uncertain.\textsuperscript{60} A letter from an unidentified repatriated Korean national, accompanying Tsushima’s blackmail to Korea in January 1603 (Keichō 7/12), reported Japanese domestic rumors that the leaders of the country were disappointed with the state of the peace talks and that daimyo in the Chugoku and Kyushu Regions were awaiting an order from the Tokugawa bakufu to cross the sea to Korea.\textsuperscript{61}

Between 1604 and 1605, the peace talks with Korea saw some progress. In the spring of 1604, the Korean court decided to dispatch emissaries for the purpose of investigating the political posture of Japan. This decision was accompanied by another decision to reopen trade access to Tsushima. Min Tok-ki mentions that Kim Kuang’s report perhaps affected the decision.\textsuperscript{62} Etsuko Hae-jin Kang similarly states that the reports which the Korean war captives, including Kim, had brought back convinced the Koreans to reconsider their unyielding attitudes toward Japan.\textsuperscript{63} Miyake Hidetoshi argues

\textsuperscript{59} Sonjong taewang sillok, vol. 48, 160-36-3, 6; Min, 119-20.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 154.

\textsuperscript{61} Min, 131-2.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 122.

\textsuperscript{63} Etsuko Hae-jin Kang, 218.
that the devastation of war made it impossible for the Koreans to maintain tense relations with Japan.\textsuperscript{64} In the summer of 1604, informed of the arrival of the emissaries, Ieyasu ordered Tsushima to bring them to Kyoto.\textsuperscript{65} The emissaries, Son Munik and Song’un, had no reason to resist Ieyasu’s request because the Korean court had, in anticipation, given them the authority to enter Japan proper if necessary.\textsuperscript{66} They entered Kyoto by early 1605 and were granted an audience with Ieyasu at Fushimi Castle on May 2, 1605 (Keichō 10/3/15).\textsuperscript{67}

Though some historians still claim that the audience marked the virtual restoration of peace, in fact Ieyasu was perceptive enough to understand the emissaries’ purpose of coming to Japan.\textsuperscript{68} Ieyasu certainly seemed pleased to see the Koreans, as he awarded additional fiefs in northern Kyushu to Sō Yoshitoshi and Yanagawa Shigenobu.\textsuperscript{69} It is also likely that he saw the event as a sign that the rehabilitation of the relationship with Korea would be achieved soon, as Honda Masanobu and Saishō Jōtai notified the Koreans that Ieyausu wished for a Korean embassy to his son, Hidetada, in the following year.\textsuperscript{70} However, meeting Song’un in a clerical robe, he did not fail to recognize that the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{64} Miyake, 143-6.
  \item \textsuperscript{65} Hayashi Akira comp., \textit{Tsūkō ichiran}, vol. 3 (Osaka-shi: Seibundō Shuppan, 1967), 205.
  \item \textsuperscript{66} \textit{Sonjong taewang sillok}, vol. 48, 163-5.
  \item \textsuperscript{67} \textit{Tsūkō ichiran}, vol. 3, 206.
  \item \textsuperscript{68} Arano, 156.
  \item \textsuperscript{69} \textit{Tsūkō ichiran}, vol. 3, 207.
  \item \textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
emissaries themselves were not on a formal peace mission to put an end to the hostility between the two countries.\footnote{Nakao Hiroshi eds., \textit{Taikei Chōsen tsūshinshi: zenrin to yūkō no kiroku}, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Asahi Shuppan, 1993), 49; Min, 128.} A Korean record, \textit{Kosa ch’waryo} (A brief account of diplomatic affairs), claims that Ieyasu denied his role in the earlier invasion and referred to his wish for peace during the audience.\footnote{O Sukkwon comp., \textit{Kosa ch’waryo}, (Keijō: Keijō Teikoku Daigaku Hōbun Gakkai, 1941), 66.} On the other hand, another Korean source, \textit{Sonjo taewang sillok} (The veritable record of King Sonjo), states that he did not refer to peace at all in the audience.\footnote{\textit{Sonjong taewang sillok}, vol. 48, 170-7.}

An event subsequent to the audience indicates that the latter was accurate. In the summer of 1606, as mentioned below, the Korean court requested that Ieyasu to ask for peace by submitting a letter. One of the reasons was that the emissaries had not obtained any reference to peace directly from him.\footnote{Ibid.} Some Japanese sources also report the same story as the \textit{Sonjo taewang sillok}, stating that it was not Ieyasu but rather Honda Masanobu and Saishō Jōtai who notified the Koreans of Ieyasu’s wish for peace.\footnote{\textit{Tsūkō iciran}, vol. 3, 207; \textit{Chōsen tsūkō taiki}, 70.} Ieyasu’s avoidance of any direct reference to peace indicates that he was still behaving in accordance with his own guideline of not suing for peace from the Japanese side which would contradict seeking a “victor’s peace.”
Ieyasu also seemed intent on exploiting the appearance of the emissaries for his own domestic and foreign political needs. He originally went to Fushimi to transfer the shogunal title to his son Hidetada. On May 12, 1605 (Keichō 10/3/25), Hidetada entered Kyoto with about one hundred thousand soldiers. The Koreans were among the crowd watching this large-scale military parade. Their presence was by no means voluntary but was in compliance with Ieyasu’s request. Ieyasu probably sought to kill two birds with one stone. He expected the large military force to convince Korea to comply with the request for peace of Japan which had strong military power. Simultaneously, he was maneuvering to take advantage of the public presence of the foreign mission as a tool to enhance the new shogun’s authority by fabricating an image of international recognition of the succession.

However, even the shrewd warrior ruler could not foresee what happened next. After the Korean emissaries’ visit, the Japanese seemed to think that Korea would send a peace mission eventually. Tsushima, who should have known much better than Ieyasu the difficulty of peace talks with Korea through years of tough experience, also harbored such an expectation.

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78 Tsūkō ichiran, vol. 3, 209.

79 Min, 135.
Yet, despite Tsushima’s repeated request to the Korean court under increasing pressure from Ieyasu, no peace mission appeared. On the contrary, in July 1606 (Keichō 11/6), Japan unexpectedly received as preconditions to the restoration of peace two demands from Korean officials in Pusan. First, the Korean court demanded that the Japanese surrender the criminals who had excavated and desecrated their royal tombs during the previous war. Though it is still unknown even today whether these criminals were in fact Japanese, the Koreans have seemed to have no doubt. Second, Korea also requested Ieyasu’s submission of a letter (j. kokusho; k. kukso). This second demand was particular evidence of Korea’s remaining suspicion about the sincerity of the Japanese wish for peace. As the Sonjo taewang sillok states, the Koreans, through the emissaries’ report, had heard nothing about peace from Ieyasu directly; this caused them to be suspicious of his sincerity. In addition, the reported presence of Toyotomi Hideyori in Osaka caused uncertainty among them about the authenticity and stability of the Tokugawa rule over Japan. For them, the Japanese government which they associated

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80 Ibid.

81 Miyake, 104; Nakamura Hidetaka, vol. 3, 164. Miyake Hidetoshi suggests the possibility that Chinese rescue troops might have been the true criminals.


83 Sonjong taewang sillok, vol. 48, 173.
with had to be a legitimate central regime in order for them not to lose face by making peace with a false central regime.

There must have been another reason for Korea’s need of a letter from Ieyasu before it would dispatch an embassy to Japan. It is probable that Korea also understood the possible implications of making a request for peace from itself in the context of the East Asian diplomatic tradition. It considered Ieyasu’s submission of a written request for peace as indispensable to the rehabilitation of the relationship.84 That is to say, this probably indicates that Korea, having suffered and having turned back the Japanese intrusion, also sought a “victor’s peace.”

From the Japanese point of view, the Korean demands meant that their peacemaking policy had reached a serious impasse. The second demand especially created a direct contradiction with their vision of a peace settlement. At this moment Ieyasu may have considered replacing these futile diplomatic efforts with force, given his own remarks to Sō Yoshitoshi in previous years. Tsushima, whose leaders probably thought that Ieyasu would not accept such a humiliating demand, attempted to persuade the Koreans to withdraw it, but their efforts were in vain. When Tsushima reluctantly brought the request to Ieyasu, its prediction proved correct. Furious, Ieyasu asserted that he would wage another war against Korea rather than surrender to this humiliating request.85

84 Min 202-3.

85 Sonjong taewang sillok, vol. 48,176; Takahashi Kimiaki, “Keichō 12-nen no kaitō ken sakkanshi
However, the *Sonjo taewang sillok* claims that the Korean court actually received a letter bearing Ieyasu’s name in January 1607 (Keichō 6/12) and as a result was determined to dispatch a peace mission to Japan in the following year. It states further that Korean officials received the manuscript of Ieyasu’s letter through Tsushima in September 1606 (Keichō 11/8).86

Finding the tone unacceptably insolent and noting the lack of reference to their other demand, the Koreans requested revisions.87 In addition to requesting the elimination of the insolent language they found so insulting, Korean officials also requested that Ieyasu use the title King of Japan (*Nihon Kokuō*) and the Chinese era name, *Wangli*, though they told the Tsushima retainers that they would not regard the title and the era name as indispensable conditions.88 These requests indicated that Korea based the restored relationship with Japan upon the precedent of their diplomatic intercourse with the Ashikaga bakufu. Since the establishment of official relations in 1404, Korea had regarded the status relations between the two countries as being on an equal footing. Yet the Korean Court seemed simultaneously to know that Japanese rulers from the Ashikaga shoguns up to Hideyoshi had never used either the title or the era name in their

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86 *Sonjong taewang sillok*, vol. 48, 176-7.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid.
communications with Korea kings. This may be why Korea did not regard Japanese agreement to the request as indispensable.

Tsushima was once again reluctant to transmit to the bakufu the Korean request that the manuscript be revised, yet its retainers brought a revised Japanese state letter to Pusan in November (Keichō 11/11).89 Finding the title and the era name in the letter, King Sonjo (r. 1567-1608) was immediately suspicious about its authenticity because of the unexpectedly prompt Japanese compliance with the Korean demand. However, the Korean Court, whose face had been saved by Japan’s taking the first step and submitting a letter asking for peace, was finally determined to restore peace with Japan with the dispatch of an embassy.90

The popular interpretation is that the Japanese state letter was counterfeited by Tsushima, of which the Tokugawa bakufu, including Ieyasu, had no knowledge. Kondō Morishige (Seisai), who was the archival director of the bakufu (oshomotsu bugyō) and edited Gaiban tsūsho (A comprehensive work on foreign countries) in the early nineteenth century, suggested the following two reasons to suspect that Tsushima had counterfeited the state letter from Ieyasu. First, the manuscript of the letter was never found in the shogunal archival and book depository (Momijiyama Bunko) inside Edo Castle. Second, Tsushima forged the Korean state letter which was originally written as

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid., 177-8. For example, Elisonas and Toby follow this interpretation. See Elisonas, 295. Toby, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, 31.
King Sonjo’s reply to the Japanese letter in 1607 by erasing and replacing Chinese characters in order to conceal its counterfeiting the year before.\(^\text{91}\)

Nevertheless, both the Japanese and Korean documents indicate that there are problems with the popular theory. Takahashi Kimiaki suggests another theory, in place of the popular forgery theory. He contends that Ieyasu submitted a letter and that Tsushima forged and added the title of king and the Chinese era name after the Koreans had rejected the original manuscript.\(^\text{92}\) Sonjo taewang sillok (The veritable record of King Sonjo), after referring to Ieyasu’s rage over the Korean demands, continues that Ieyasu eventually withdrew his mention of a resort to arms and decided to submit a letter to the Korean king. Ieyasu was persuaded to submit the letter by Honda Masazumi, Masanobu’s son and one of Ieyasu’s most trusted henchmen, as well as by his father.\(^\text{93}\) Besides this Korean source, there are two Japanese sources indicating that Ieyasu sent a diplomatic note, whether or not he considered it a state letter. A Korean diplomatic note, addressed from the Minister of Rites to the senior councilors of the bakufu, stated that Ieyasu first addressed a letter to the Korean king.\(^\text{94}\) Also, in Tsūkō ichiran, a collection of diplomatic documents and sources edited in the early nineteenth century, the Korean ambassador referred to Ieyasu’s letter in a conversation with Honda Masanobu. In these Japanese


\(^{92}\) Takahashi, 117.

\(^{93}\) Sonjong taewang sillok, vol. 48, 181.

\(^{94}\) Chōsen tsūkō taiki, 74.
sources, there is no hint that the Korean references to Ieyasu’s first submission of a state letter (or a diplomatic note lacking the criteria of state letter, intentionally or not) either raised questions among bakufu officials or caused difficulties between the two governments. 95

Takahashi and other scholars, including Kamiya Nobuyuki and Min Tok-ki, conjecture that the bakufu tacitly allowed Tsushima to use the title and the era name; Takahashi further conjectures that the bakufu considered that the title referred not to Hidetada but to Ieyasu who was effectively in power as “Ōgosho (retired shogun)” after his resignation of the title of shogun. 96 However, their arguments not only lack any supporting evidence but are also quite unlikely. Konchiin (Ishin) Süden’s statement when the bakufu received a Korean embassy in 1617 indicates that from the beginning the bakufu had no intention of using the title: the Zen monk mentioned that not using the title had been a fixed practice since Ieyasu’s time. 97 Tushima’s use of the title in contradiction to the bakufu’s stance suggested the bakufu’s inability to control Korea policy perfectly, which the bakufu itself found in the 1630s.

The claim or perception of superiority of one party over another may be spelled out in their diplomatic relations when the second party complies with the first one, either


96 Takahashi, 118; Kamiya Nobuyuki, Taikun gaikō to Higashi Ajia (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1997), 85; Min, 211.

willingly or against its will. Otherwise, the first party would have to give up articulating its ideal vision of a hierarchical relationship or else take forceful measures, mostly likely a resort to arms. The attitudes and relationships of successive Korean dynasties with successive Chinese dynasties exemplify the former case; Yuan China’s large expeditions to Japan which adamantly refused to be subordinated to the Mongolian suzerainty in the late thirteenth century exemplifies the latter case. In the case of Tokugawa peacemaking policy, Korea had no intention of complying with the Japanese vision of a “victor’s peace” and its vision of restored intercourse with Japan was based on the practice of equal relations which it had had with the Ashikaga bakufu. Although traditionally having a contemptuous perception of Japan as an inferior barbarian, the Koreans concealed this because of the principle of parity between tributaries within the Chinese tributary system.98 Under these circumstances, however, the Tokugawa peacemaking policy might lead to a resort to arms. Ieyasu’s eventual compromise with the Korean demand indicated that he had renounced military measures and had put a priority on peacemaking.

How should his compromise be explained? The overseas campaign, designed to conquer Korea and China in the 1590s was an unquestionable failure because the Japanese could not achieve anything. The result of the abortive overseas campaign did not, however, cause the Japanese to lose their perception of their own gallantry completely since they were victorious in most of the battles.99 Asao Naohiro argues that

98 See Kang, chap. 2.
99 Elisonas, 290. Also, for example, in some daimyo houses, their ancestors’ glory in the Korea
Hideyoshi applied “bui no ronri,” which means military strength as a determinant of survival for warriors in the warring state period. Hideyoshi called Japan “country of strong martial might (kyūsen kibishiki kuni)” and contrasted it with China which he called a “country of long sleeves (chōshūkoku) or of “virgins (shōjo).” “Long sleeves” implied militarily powerless court nobles, priests, and monks and projected Hideyoshi’s perception of Japan’s military superiority over China, and so, of course, did “virgin.” This belief was not peculiar to Hideyoshi but was shared by his contemporaries. The aforementioned Yoshino Jingoemon, for example, wrote that the Japanese gallant spirit was supreme among the three countries (sangoku) – China, Korea, and Japan. Some historians maintain that post-Toyotomi diplomacy was pacifistic; others, including Asao, state that the Tokugawa bakufu followed the militant diplomacy (bui gaikō) of the Toyotomi regime.

There are examples showing the validity of the latter position. As mentioned above, Tsushima’s repeated use of military bluffs against Korea was based on Ieyasu’s remarks that another military action would follow a failure of diplomatic negotiations. We also saw the Tokugawa threat to Ming China in the letter which three daimyo of

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100 Asao, 60.
101 Ibid.
102 Yoshino Jingoemon, 201.
103 Asao, 83.
Kyushu sent to the Fujian authority in 1600. The Tokugawa militancy was in fact more than just verbal. Satsuma’s conquest of the Ryukyu Kingdom in 1609 and Arima Harunobu and Murayama Tōan’s expeditions to Taiwan in 1609 and 1616, carried out under the authorization of the bakufu, formed a part of the Tokugawa foreign policy from its inception.

However, militancy remained a verbal threat in the Korea policy probably due to the lessons from Hideyoshi’s abortive war of conquest. The peace-making issue was an occasion for the bakufu to demonstrate its political and diplomatic capability and qualifications as a central government. As Ieyasu himself stated, the use of military measures might be unavoidable if diplomatic negotiations failed, the Korean demand that he submit a state letter as a premise for the dispatch of an embassy to Japan meant that Ieyasu’s policy of pursuing a “victor’s peace” was thrown into a quandary. But Ieaysu gave up the idea of resorting to force against Korea. Asao does not see this as counterevidence for his argument, calling this decision not to use military means the “freezing of martial might (bui no tōketsu)” as a result of a deepened Japanese understanding of the outside world that came through Hideyoshi’s war. This argument can be taken to mean that after Hideyoshi’s overseas campaign, the Japanese had come to understand that their martial superiority would not be unconditionally demonstrated overseas. The bakufu had to be cautious in taking military action overseas because a

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failure would hurt and even undermine their authority and legitimacy domestically. This is probably one of the reasons no bakufu troops participated even in the small-scale military operations against the Ryukyus and Taiwan. The bakufu might also have been aware of the need to consider the potential domestic effect of overseas military campaigns. Fujiwara Seika, a Neo-Confucianist, for example, noted how Hideyoshi’s military adventure had devastated his country and people, stating that the Japanese populace would welcome Chinese and Korean forces if they invaded Japan on the pretext of liberating them from oppressive rule. Ieyasu, who was one of the executive members of the Toyotomi regime, knew that overseas military actions could exhaust the country domestically and cause his regime difficulty in ruling Japan. For the Tokugawa, the Korea policy was not an end in itself but a means to the ultimate end of stabilizing and maintaining their own regime. The renunciation of military force against Korea came as a result of all these consideration.

**Normalization with Korea**

On February 8, 1607 (Sonjo 40/1/12), the Korean Court dispatched an embassy on the pretext of delivering King Sonjo’s reply to the 1606 Japanese state letter and recovering the remaining war captives. The Korean Court originally intended to deliver the letter to Ieyasu as a reply to his state letter. The bakufu, however, had a totally different idea from the beginning; as noted earlier, in 1605 Honda Masanobu and Saishō

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Jōtai had informed the Korean emissaries, who visited Japan in 1605, of Ieyasu’s wish that his son, the second shogun Hidetada (r. 1605-1623), should receive the embassy.\textsuperscript{106} The embassy, unexpectedly facing this Japanese request after reaching Japan proper, had some argument with bakufu officials but finally decided to yield to the Japanese request.\textsuperscript{107} As a result, they were rerouted to Edo to meet the shogun and deliver the king’s letter before meeting Ieyasu in Sunpu (present-day Shizuoka-shi). The embassy entered the shogunal capital Edo on June 18, 1607 (Keichō 12/leap 4/24), was granted an audience with Hidetada, and delivered the state letter at the Great Hall (Ōhiroma) of Edo Castle on June 29 (Keichō 12/5/6).\textsuperscript{108} Although Tsushima had already tampered with the state letter before it reached the shogun’s hand in order to prevent the discovery of the previous malpractice, neither the embassy nor the bakufu was aware of the fact.\textsuperscript{109}

The Japanese state letter, as a reply to the Korean letter, revealed that the previous surrender to the Korean demand did not mean complete renunciation of the original peacemaking guideline. On July 4 (Keichō 12/5/11), the bakufu delivered a shogun’s letter to the Korean embassy, whose member were lodging at Honsenji Temple in Asakusa.\textsuperscript{110} The state letter was written as if Korea were prostrate and begging Japan for

\textsuperscript{106} Tsūkō ichiran, vol. 3, 207.

\textsuperscript{107} O Yun’gyom, Tongsasang illok, in Kaikō sōsai vol.2, 83.

\textsuperscript{108} Taitokuin-den gojikki, vol. 5 435.

\textsuperscript{109} Tsūkō ichiran, vol. 3, 207.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid, 436.
peace, stating, “[Your country] requests restoration of its previous association [with Japan]. Why would my country decline it?” Honda Masanobu’s reply to a letter from the Korean Minister of Rites, which the embassy brought, was also phrased as if the restoration of peace were a result of Japan’s benevolent response to Korea’s entreaty.

The bakufu seemed to want to claim more specifically that Korea had surrendered and was subordinated to Tokugawa shogun-ruled Japan. In other words, it expected the shogun (or the Tokugawa) to embody Japanese superiority. Ieyasu mentioned that the proposal of peace had come from the “public authority” in 1599. The “public authority” of the time meant the Toyotomi government as noted above. After the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, Ieyasu began to realize a “victor’s peace” and render it as the achievement of his regime. The year before he established the bakufu, he mentioned said, “I will grant peace (to Korea).” In his post-Sekigahara view, Korea’s surrender and subordination to Japan were to be directed toward him and his regime. When his son, Hidetada, headed the bakufu as the shogun, he was supposed to represent Japan’s superior status over Korea. A diplomatic note drafted by Hayashi Razan (Dōshun), a Neo-Confucianist employed by Ieyasu, and delivered to Ming China in 1611 revealed that the Tokugawa intended to represent Japan’s superiority. The note, addressed in the

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111 *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 3, 200; *Chōsen tsūkō tairiki*, 98-103.

112 *Chōsen tsūkō tairiki*, 104.

113 Ibid., 65

114 *Hō chōrō Yanagawa shimatsu*, 24.
name of Honda Masazumi to the military governor of Fujian Province and filled with Confucian rhetoric, referred to Ieyasu’s achievement of reunification and peace in Japan and the succession of Tokugawa rule through three generations. Korea, as well as other Chinese subordinates such as the Ryukyus and Vietnam (Annan), it continued, had paid tribute to Japan, which was evidence that the virtuous influence of the Tokugawa ranged far abroad.\textsuperscript{115}

Neither the title of king nor the Chinese era name, Wangli, was in the shogunal letter. From this, we might infer what the original draft of the 1606 letter was like before it was forged by Tsushima. The refusal to use them was in fact the stance which the Ashikaga bakufu had previously taken in its diplomatic relations with the Yi dynasty, and reflected the Ashikaga perception of Korea. During the Muromachi period, Japan, as well as Korea, had been subordinated to Ming China through its participation in the tributary system.\textsuperscript{116} In the Sinocentric international order, a diplomatic relationship between the rulers of two vassal states was supposed to be on equal footing under Chinese suzerainty. The Korean king hence treated the Ashikaga shogun as a peer and called him “Your Highness King of Japan,” putting aside the contempt of his country toward its eastern barbarian neighbor, and used a Ming era name in his letter.\textsuperscript{117} The Ashikaga shogunal letters to Ming China faithfully followed the style of a letter from an inferior to superior

\textsuperscript{115} Gaiban tsūhso, 58; Tsūkō ichiran, vol. 3, 204.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
in the tributary system, using the title, “King of Japan (Nihon Kokuō),” bestowed by the Ming emperor and Ming era names. However, in letters to Korea, the Ashikaga shogun refused to use these markers and simply styled himself “So and So of Minamoto of Japan (Nihonkoku Minamoto no nanigashi)” and dated his letter using the sexagenary cycle. This was because the Ashikaga bakufu inherited the traditional contemptuous perception of Korea. Sejo taewang sillok (The veritable record of King Sejo) tells the following story which also illustrates the Ashikaga view of Korea as an inferior. When a Korean embassy visited Japan in 1442, a dispute over seating order erupted between the two governments. The chief executive of the bakufu, Hatakeyama Mochikuni, acting as a shogunal proxy, visited the lodging of the embassy, Shōkokuji Temple, to deliver a shogunal letter. The Korean ambassador complained of Mochikuni’s south-facing seat, for his occupation of the seat meant not only the shogunal deputy’s superior status over the Korean royal deputy but also the shogun’s superior status over the Korean king. The Japanese then responded, “Korea has paid tribute to our country. Why would you not do so?” This indicates that the predecessor of the Tokugawa also saw the shogun as one who was supposed to represent Japan’s status vis-à-vis Korea.

118 Ibid.


The absence of the title and the era name (Wangli) in Hidetada’s letter was also the Tokugawa bakufu’s claim, though indirect, of Japanese superiority over Korea. Before the shogunal letter was drafted, Keitetsu Genso, a Zen monk in charge of Tsushima’s communication with Korea, passed Tsushima’s request to the bakufu, to use the Chinese era name to date the letter. Since Tsushima had been under Korean suspicion over the 1606 credential, it probably needed to let the bakufu do this in order to keep the previous forgery secret from the Koreans. Saishō Jōtai, a draftsman of the letter, however, declined the request and insisted on using the Japanese era name, Keichō, perhaps because of his belief that the presence of the emperor (Tennō), as a counterpart of the Chinese emperor, demonstrated Japan’s equality with China. Hidetada favored Jōtai’s position, stating, “Inasmuch as our country is not subordinated to Ming China, we must not use its era name.” These stances of Japan’s independence of and equality with China were rationales for Japan’s superiority over Korea, which was a Chinese tributary. That is to say, the use of a Japanese era name vis-à-vis Korea, which used its suzerain’s era name, could function as a marker not only of Japan’s independence from the Chinese world order but also of its superior status over Korea, at least in the realm of Japanese perception.

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121 Taikei Chōsen tsūhsinshi, vol. 1, 152.
123 Ibid.
Moreover, another similarity of the Tokugawa shogunal letter to the Ashikaga shogunal letter revealed that restored diplomatic relations with Korea contradicted the Japanese claim of shogun-represented Japanese superiority. Despite the Japanese contemptuous perception, the two Chinese vassals – the Ashikaga shogun and the Korean king – associated with each other on an equal footing. Although the shogun never used the title of king in his letter to the Korean king, they exchanged the same honorific, “Highness (j. denka; k. jonha).”¹²⁴ King Sonjo styled Hidetada “Your Highness King of Japan (k. Ilbon Gukwang Jonha)” in accordance with the precedent. Like his Ashikaga predecessors, Hidetada also styled Sonjo “King of Korea (Chōsen kokuō),” using exactly the same honorific.¹²⁵ Sharing the same honorific indicated parity between the two rulers, which further meant parity between Japan and Korea.

For the Tokugawa shogun which wanted to treat Korea as an inferior, the style of Hideyoshi’s letter to Korea, rather than the earlier Ashikaga letters, were a more appropriate means to express Japan’s superiority represented by him. When Hideyoshi received an embassy from Korea in May 1590 (Tenshō 18/4), the letter from the king offered congratulations on his unification of Japan and styled him “Your Highness King of Japan.”¹²⁶ Hideyoshi perceived this embassy as a sign of Korean’s subordination. He

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¹²⁴ See Zenrin kokuhōki.


then styled the king “Your Excellency King of Korea (Chōsen kokuō kakka)” in his letter and dated it using the Japanese era name of that time, “Tenshō.” The honorific system of the East Asian diplomatic community had a hierarchy with “Majesty (c. bixia; j. heika; k. p’yeha)” as the highest form of address, followed by “Highness (c. dianxia; j. denka; k. jŏnha)”, and “Excellency (c. gexia; j. kakka; k. gakha).” Hideyoshi’s application of the inferior honorific to the Korean king made his diplomatic attitude consistent with his perception of Korea as Toyotomi-ruled Japan’s subordinate.

Why did the Tokugawa bakufu follow not the Toyotomi precedent but the Ashikaga precedent? Its following of the Ashikaga precedent was probably a conscious action. The early Tokugawa diplomatic administration depended upon the Zen monks of the Five Mountains (Gozan) in Kyoto, such as Saishō Jōtai, as the Ashikaga had done. Diplomatic knowledge was transmitted within the inner circle of Zen monasteries. As a matter of fact, the shogunal letter was drafted by Jōtai and another Zen monk, Enkōji (Gakkō) Genkitsu, who had served as the lector of the oldest school in Japan, Ashikaga Gakkō(Ashikaga School). It would have been impossible for the Ashikaga bakufu to spell out its claim to shogun-represented Japanese superiority over Korea in any more explicit way. It would otherwise have faced not only antagonism with Korea but also discord with the Chinese world order. Since the Ashikaga bakufu depended on Chinese suzerainty as a source of international authority and legitimacy, such a situation would have been


128 Zenrin kokuhōki, 301.
Meanwhile, the presence of China did not prevent Tokugawa Japan from claiming its own superior status over Korea, as it had no intention of returning to the Chinese tributary system (see Chapter 3). However, lacking a clear victory in the war of the 1590s and measures to convince or force Korea to comply with their own vision, the bakufu inevitably had to compromise with Korea for the purpose of rehabilitating and maintaining diplomatic relations. Over the issue of the proper era name for dating a shogunal letter mentioned above, despite his favoring Jōtai’s opinion, Hidetada finally decided to choose the more neutral sexagenary cycle (ryūshū kanshi), instead of the Japanese era name, in order to avoid problems in the restored relationship with Korea.

When shogunal letters continued to be a matter of friction between the two countries, the bakufu took pains to deal with the discrepancy between the Japanese perception of the status relationship with Korea and the reality demanded by diplomatic protocol. In the summer of 1617, the Korean court dispatched a second embassy to Japan for the purpose of congratulating the bakufu on the defeat of the Toyotomi in the Osaka campaign in 1615. This, however, was merely the official justification for the dispatch. Ieyasu had already expressed his desire for another Korean embassy before he launched the campaign in the winter of 1614, though his intent is still unknown. After resisting the Japanese request, which it found unreasonable, for nearly two years, the Korean court

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130 Taikei Ch2sen tūshinshi, vol. 1, 57.

131 Miyake, 134.
eventually agreed to send the embassy, though Ieyasu died one year earlier. A Korean source indicated that behind Korea’s eventual compliance with the Japanese request, there was probably Tsushima’s artifice. 

Kwanghegun ilgi (The veritable record of King Kwanghegun) states that the court decided to dispatch an embassy after it had received Hidetada’s letter, which scholars have considered to have been Tsushima’s fabrication. Miyake Hidetoshi also conjectures that the Manchu menace in the north of the Korean Peninsula probably propelled Korea to appease Japan which would pose another external threat. 

On the September 25, 1617 (Genna 3/8/26), Hidetada granted an audience to the embassy at Fushimi Castle because he was staying in Kyoto at that time. This reception ceremony near the capital, rather than in Edo, might have been the bakufu’s political calculation so that it could demonstrate its authority vis-à-vis the imperial court and the tozama (“outside”) daimyo of Western Japan. In the audience, Hidetada was presented with a state letter addressed from King Kwanghaegun (r. 1608-1623).

A few days after the audience, a dispute arose over a shogunal letter to the Korean king. On September 28, 1617 (Genna 3/8/29), Tsushima officials visited Daitokuji Temple and showed the Korean embassy the manuscript of a shogunal letter. The drafter

132 Kwanghegun ilgi, vol. 1, 48-54.
133 Ibid., 56.
134 Miyake, 138.
135 Taikei Chōsen tsūshinshiki, vol. 2, 78.
was another Zen monk, Konchiin Süden, who had taken over diplomatic administration after the deaths of Jōtai in 1607 and Genkitsu in 1609. The Koreans, however, objected to the absence of the title of king and the Chinese era name on the manuscript along with some other violations of conventional diplomatic practice.¹³⁶

Neither Tsushima nor the bakufu would have anticipated this Korean response to the draft. Korean officials said in 1606 to Tsushima retainers that neither the title nor the era name was an indispensable condition for accepting a Japanese letter.¹³⁷ Furthermore, the previous embassy of 1607 had not complained about the shogunal letter despite its lack of the title of king and the Ming era name. Since Korean sources, Haetao jogukugi (Accounts of eastern countries) and Kosa ch’waryo, had also referred to this Japanese diplomatic practice since the Muromachi period, it seemed to be common knowledge within Korean officialdom. The embassy, however, persisted in their request and showed no sign of compromise. This was probably because they wanted to avoid the tragedies their predecessors had met. The members of the previous embassy were punished after their return for carrying back the Japanese letters which Hidetada and the bakufu executives addressed to Sonjong and his minister. The accusation was certainly reasonable because of the members’ failure to find the insolent terms of the Japanese diplomatic notes; the lack of the title of king and of the Chinese era name in the shogunal


letter was counted as a separate charge. The Korean court perhaps took this unprecedented attitude because it intended to maintain the premise that intercourse between the two countries was restored with Ieyasu’s begging for peace in his 1606 letter, a communiqué which used both the title and the era name.

The Japanese, on the other hand, never stopped deeming Korea an inferior. On September 26, 1617 (Genna 3/8/27), Shimakawa Takumi, a Tsushima retainer, visited Šūden and passed the Korean request to him. Tsushima was probably desperate for the bakufu’s acceptance of the request, not only because it wanted to keep the previous forgery secret but also to avoid trouble which might threaten the resumed Korean trade. Šūden declined Shimakawa’s request, telling him, “Korea is a barbaric country (jūkoku).” He continued, “No Japanese monarch (Nihon no ō) has exchanged state letters with a Korean monarch (Kōrai no ō).” This statement shows that the Zen monk understood the Japanese diplomatic tradition. As found in such Japanese classical works as Kojiki, Nihon shoki, and in their later annals, the Japanese had consistently regarded Korea as an inferior or a tributary state from antiquity. In the diplomatic institutions of the ancient ritsuryō (criminal and administrative laws) state (ritsuryō kokka), for example, Korea was

138 Ibid., vol. 48, 198.
139 Ikoku niki, 68.
140 Ibid., 69.
141 See Kojiki and Nihon shoki.
placed in the category of barbaric countries (*bankoku*). 142 And, in Japan, ō had traditionally suggested the Japanese emperor, Tennō, and ancient imperial rulers had taken the stance of not exchanging diplomatic notes with the monarchs of Korea, which the Japanese had regarded as their tributary. He further implied that according to the tradition, the shogun could henceforth communicate with the Korean king only when he did not style himself ō. Süden might have simultaneously tried to avoid making the shogun’s use of ō infringe on the supremacy of his superior, the emperor.

Other bakufu policymakers saw Süden’s response to the Korean request as reasonable, given their perception of Korea. On September 27 (Genna 3/8/28), bakufu executive officials Honda Masazumi, Doi Toshikatsu, Andō Shigenobu, and Itakura Katsushige gathered before Hidetada at Fushimi Castle to discuss Süden’s draft of the shogunal letter. 143 Hayashi Razan was also present and supported Süden. The Neo-Confucianist expressed his contempt, similar to that of the Zen monk, for Korea in a Confucian tone, stating, “Korea has been a western barbarian (*seijū*) since ancient times. They are to pay tribute to Japan, and we are to treat them benevolently. This is the way to gain the affection of distant people and the support of vassals. Regardless of Korea’s reverence for the letter (c. *wang*; j. ō), Japan indisputably will not use it.” 144 Süden and

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143 *Ikoku Nikki*, 70-71; *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 3, 245.

144 Hayashi Razan, *Hayashi Razan bunshū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Perikansha, 1979), 125; Etsuko Hae-jin Kang, 158.
Razan’s perceptions of Korea as “jūkoku” or “seijū” manifested their knowledge of the traditional East Asian idea of the four barbarians (j. shii; c. siwei), originally conceived by the Chinese and premised upon their own centrality and supremacy. The meeting raised no objections to Süden and Razan’s views and decided to refuse the Korean request. Although the Korean embassy continued to express disapproval of the manuscript for more than one week, the bakufu never compromised.

The visit of the Korean embassy in 1624 was for the purpose of congratulating Tokugawa Iemitsu (r. 1622-1651), Hidetada’s eldest son, on his succession to the shogunal title the year before. This visit was not voluntary: it is said that Tsushima, receiving a bakufu order to summon an embassy, again forged a shogunal letter in order to convince Korea to comply with the Japanese request. The third shogun claimed the legitimacy of his succession to the title by calling himself “inborn shogun (umarenagara no shōgun),” the bakufu did not yet seem to feel assured of the stability of its own regime and still felt it necessary to exploit the visit of a Korean embassy as a source of authority and stability.

Andō Shigenage, a traditional Tokugawa vassal (fudai) and daimyo of Takasaki (present-day Takasaki-city, Gunma prefecture), confessed to an interpreter of the Korean embassy, “The visit of your embassy is expected to be a demonstration of the

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145 Ibid.
146 Ikoku niki, 71; Tsūkō ichiran, vol. 3, 245-6.
shogunal power vis-à-vis the daimyo who were still disloyal to the shogun and might raise a rebellion if there were a rupture of the peace with Korea.\textsuperscript{148}

In 1624, before preparing a shogunal letter, Konchiin Süden, reappointed as a draftsman, prepared guidelines for receiving the embassy. The second and third of his four guidelines reaffirmed the bakufu’s perception of Korea’s inferior status, noting that an embassy, which the bakufu would consider as voluntarily dispatched, was to be treated as a tributary mission of a subordinate state.\textsuperscript{149} Süden probably understood that the presence of the foreign embassy could function as a political ornament, as the bakufu expected, only when it was presented to the domestic public as a tributary mission. The Japanese public in fact shared the same contemptuous perception as the bakufu policymakers; in 1617, an English delegation noted that the public regarded the Korean embassy as a tributary when they happened to see the foreign envoy in Kyoto.\textsuperscript{150}

The two letters drafted by Süden, however, did not satisfy the Japanese claim of superiority over Korea. The 1617 letter followed the style of his previous letter. It employed the honorific, “Highness,” which the Korean king also employed to style the shogun, and projected parity between the two rulers.\textsuperscript{151} The 1624 letter, differed from the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{148} Ibid.; Hwang Ho, \textit{Tongsarok}, in \textit{Kaiko sosi}, vol. 3, (Keijō: Chōsen Komonjo Kankōkai, 1914), 35.
\item \textsuperscript{149} Rekicho raihei, (MS copy collection Kokuritsu Kobunshokan Naikaku Bunko).
\item \textsuperscript{151} \textit{Tsūkō ichira}, vol. 3, 251.
\end{itemize}
two previous shogunal letters with respect to the shogunal diplomatic title. The original
draft was similar to the previous letters; it used neither the title of king nor a Chinese era
name. After repeated Korean complaints about the absence of the title, the final draft used
the title “Nihon Kokushu (Lord of Japan)” preceding the last and first names of the
shogun, “Minamoto no Iemitsu.”152 The use of the title “Nihon kokushu” was by no
means new; the bakufu had already used it in some shogunal letters to other foreign
countries.153 As Süden stated in the first article of his guidelines, the bakufu expected that
the title would prevent further dispute with the Koreans.154 It is quite unlikely, on the
other hand, that the bakufu expected the title to claim Japan’s superiority represented by
the shogun to Korea outspokenly. Süden’s third guideline revealed that the bakufu
wanted to keep its view of Korea as a tributary invisible to Koreans. After stating that a
Korean embassy should be treated as a tributary mission, Süden continued that the
shogunal letter, however, should be written as a letter to a peer in order to avoid
trouble.155 As in 1607 and 1617, the shogun and the Korean king called each other
“Highness.”156

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152 Ikoku Nikki, 77; Miyake, 151.
153 Gaiban tsūsho, 78.
154 Rekichō raihei.
155 Ikoku Nikki, 74-6; Taikei Chōsen tsūshinshi, vol. 1, 198.
156 Ikoku Nikki, 77.
The Yanagawa Affair and the Kan’ei Diplomatic Reform

Since the resumption of Japanese-Korean relations, there had been a hidden secret of which neither the Tokugawa bakufu nor the Yi dynasty was aware. Although the bakufu had persistently refused to use the title “king” and Chinese era names, the Koreans had not found any problem with the Japanese letters of 1617 and 1724. This was not, needless to say, because the bakufu surrendered to the Korean request; it was because Tsushima had secretly forged the shogunal letters before delivering them to the Koreans. For this domain, whose economy depended on peace between Japan and Korea, any dispute threatening the amity between the two countries, much less a rupture of the relationship, had to be avoided. In 1617, Tsushima added the character, “ō,” after “Nihonkoku” in the shogunal letter and changed it to “Nihon Kokuō Minamoto no Hidetada (Lord of Japan Minamoto Hidetada).” Also, in 1624, it erased the first stroke of the character, “shu” (of “kokushu”) and changed “Nihon Kokushu” to “Nihon Kokuō.” Thus, since its forgery of Ieyasu’s letter in 1606, Tsushima had been enmeshed in repeated manipulations of the diplomatic communications between the bakufu and the Yi dynasty.

A household disturbance (o-ie sōdō) in Tsushima, however, exposed the secret. In 1633, the chief retainer of the domain, Yanagawa Shigeoki, made accusations to the

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157 Gaiban tsūsho, 88; Tsūkō ichiran, vol. 3, 254.

158 Tsūkō ichiran, vol. 3, 255.
bakufu against his lord and brother in law Sō Yoshinari.  

Yoshinari was accused of a series of misdeeds relating to Korea: Tsushima had forged two shogunal letters; Yoshinari had dispatched his retainers to Korea twice, in 1621 and 1929 without the sanction of the bakufu, and had given them the title “shogunal mission (goshomarushi).” The dispatch of the envoy in 1629 was certainly based upon a bakufu order to inspect conditions in the Korean Peninsula, which had reportedly been subjected to a Manchu invasion; however, the bakufu had never granted Tsushima permission to use the title “shogunal mission.” The disturbance seemed to be rooted in discord between Yoshinari and Shigeoki which had started in the early 1620s. The Yanagawa family had played a pivotal role in communications with Korea since Shigeoki’s grandfather, Shigenobu, served the House of Sō in the late sixteenth century. After the Tokugawa seized power, the Yanagawa established close ties with the new regime, and Shigeoki himself was treated like a shogunal retainer because he had spent his early years as Ieyasu’s page. Shigeoki probably fostered a desire to become a shogunal retainer in name as well as in deed. One year before his surprise disclosure of the domain’s secret,

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159 Shigeoki was married to Shigenari’s younger sister.


161 Ibid., 51; *Hō Chōrō Yanagawa shimatsu*, 65-9.

162 Ibid.

163 Ibid., 50.
he petitioned the bakufu for its permission to return his stipend to Yoshinari. This petition was tantamount to stating that he wished to detach himself from the lordship of the Sō. A Japanese historian, Tashiro Kazui, notes that Shigeoki’s desire might have been motivated by his confidence that he was indispensable to the bakufu because of his accumulated experience and knowledge of Korean affairs, and his belief that the bakufu would sooner or later monopolize all overseas contact, including Tsushima’s privilege of trade with Korea. It is not certain why he thought that exposing the domanial secret would affect Japanese-Korean relations. His disclosure of the domanial secret seems strange and even suicidal; he could have easily presumed that he, as a top-ranking figure in the domain’s relations with Korea, would not be free from possible punishment by the bakufu. Shigeoki, confident of the importance of his knowledge and experience to the bakufu and having close ties with bakufu executives, might have also been confident that he would be able to survive no matter what might happen to Tsushima and to Japanese-Korean relations.

The magnitude of the exposed secret was revealed in the shogun’s direct involvement in resolving the scandal; the exposure of Tsushima’s malpractice meant that the discord between the daimyo and his retainer could no longer remain simply a domanial problem. The scandal could not be confined even between Tsushima and the bakufu; at the end of 1634 rumor of the scandal reached the ear of the Dutch envoy

164 Ibid.
165 Ibid.
during their delegation’s stay in Kyoto. 166 After Shigeoki revealed the domain’s secret, the bakufu interrogated those implicated in the misconduct and suspended voyages to Korea by Tsushima retainers. 167 After more than a year of investigation and preliminary interrogations, the bakufu finally put an end to the scandal. On April 27, 1635 (Kan’ei 12/3/11), the bakufu summoned Sō Yoshishige and Yanagawa Shigeoki to Edo Castle, and Iemitsu himself presided over their examination in the Grand Hall before the daimyo who were in Edo and the shogunal bannermen (hatamoto) with annual stipends of more than one thousand- koku. 168

The day after the confronting the two parties, the bakufu handed down a verdict favorable to the daimyo. Shigeoki was exiled and ended his life in Tsugaru in the northern extremity of Honshu. Some members of the Yanagawa party, such as Shimakawa Takumi and their sons, were sentenced to death. 169 Historians have given the following explanation for the verdict. Ara no Yasunori observes that the judgement was quite reasonable, given the bakufu’s concern over the security and stability of the regime. He mentions that by the time the Yanagawa Affair occurred, the bakufu had found a way to consolidate the bakuhan system by securing daimyo’s control of their daimain through fixing a hierarchical relationship between a lord and his vassals rather than taking such

166 Toby, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, 145.
167 Hō Chōrō Chōsen monogatari, 70.
168 Ibid., 74.
169 Ibid.
draconian measures as attainders (kaieki).\textsuperscript{170} Adding to Arano’s discussion, Tashiro argues that the scandal did not end Tsushima’s importance to the bakufu, noting that Tsushima’s centuries of experience in communicating with Korea was still necessary in the diplomatic intercourse, even after the Yanagawa family’s loss of its position.\textsuperscript{171}

A crucial aspect of the Yanagawa Affair was that the scandal exposed the bakufu’s lack of sufficient ability to execute properly and sufficiently its diplomatic prerogatives as a central government. In retrospect, Ieyasu, starting the peace talks with Korea, suggested that diplomatic failure would have to be answered by a resort to arms.\textsuperscript{172} Even after nearly three decades had passed since Ieyasu rehabilitated Japanese-Korean relations by compromising with Koreans, certain individuals inside and outside the bakufu still saw military threats as a possible choice to resolve a problem rising in the diplomatic relations. After exposing Tsushima’s malpractice, Yanagawa Shigeoki proposed that the bakufu launch a military chastisement against Korea on the pretext of its “insolent attitude” toward Japan.\textsuperscript{173} Some bakufu policymakers such as Hayashi Razan also advocated such firm action.\textsuperscript{174} Tōshō Daigongen norito (Prayer to the Avatar of the Shining East), said to have been dedicated by the influential shogunal nurse Kasuga no Tsubone to the Nikkō Grand Shrine, states that the shogun himself considered launching

\textsuperscript{170} Arano, 196.

\textsuperscript{171} Tashiro, Kakikaerareta kokusho, 84.

\textsuperscript{172} Chōsen tsukō taiki, 65.

\textsuperscript{173} Kyong Son, Kyong ch’ilsong haesarok, in Kaiko soroku, vol. 2, 54.

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 54-55.
a military campaign if the litigation between Sō Yoshinari and Yanagawa Shigeoki caused a rupture in communication with Korea.\textsuperscript{175} A few days before the Yanagawa Affair was settled at Edo Castle, Hosokawa Tadatoshi, a tozama daimyo of Kumamoto, wrote to his father Hosokawa Tadaoki (Sansai), saying, “If the public authority punishes both Sō and Yanagawa, it would cause a rupture in the relationship with Korea. Should this truly happen, the bakufu would take up arms to chastise the country.”\textsuperscript{176}

The bakufu found a way to save its own authority in maintaining rather than terminating diplomatic ties with Korea. One day after the verdict, the bakufu ordered Sō Yoshinari to inform the Korean court of the circumstances of the scandal and to summon a Korean embassy within two years in order to reconfirm the amity between the two countries.\textsuperscript{177} The bakufu perhaps sought to make up for the diplomatic failure exposed to public views by offering an image of Korea, as so concerned for lasting amity with Japan, that it would voluntarily dispatch an embassy to Japan. \textit{Tōshō Daigongen norito}, noted above, states that military chastisement was not put into practice as Korea sent an embassy, seeking to maintain peace with Japan.\textsuperscript{178} In addition, it might have intended to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[176] \textit{Dai Nihon kinsei shiryō: Hosokawa-ke shiryū}, vol. 12, no. 796, (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daiaiku Shuppankai, 1935), 65; Yamamoto Hirofumi, \textit{Sakoku to kaikin no jidai}, 215. This notion that military action would follow diplomatic problems or failure did not seem to be constrained by the class distinctions of Tokugawa Japan. When the 1617 embassy visited Kyoto, there was a public belief that the bakufu would have waged war unless Korea complied with the shogunal request for the dispatch of an embassy to Japan. See \textit{Manzai Jugō nikki}, in \textit{Zoku gunsho ruij hoi}, 1:55.
\item[177] \textit{Tsūkō ichira}, vol. 3, 300.
\item[178] \textit{Tōshō Daigongen norito}, 53
\end{footnotes}
examine the qualifications of Tsushima, without the Yanagawa, to manage diplomatic affairs.\textsuperscript{179}

The bakufu, however, had no intention of maintaining the diplomatic system manipulated by Tsushima. After deciding to summon an embassy, the bakufu began to reform its Korea diplomacy. First, the bakufu installed a new system to tighten its control over Tsushima. While the shogunal verdict was certainly favorable to Sō Yoshinari, the bakufu did not consider him perfectly innocent. Kihaku Genpō and Sō Toshinobu, both of whom were close to Yoshinari and went to Seoul as a shogunal mission (goshomarushi) in 1629, were also sentenced to exile. Tashiro Kazui states that it might conceivably have been because the bakufu applied the judicial convention of the warrior class, “\textit{kenka ryōseibai} (both sides in a dispute are punished).”\textsuperscript{180} While allowing Tsushima to continue to enjoy its traditional privilege of monopolizing the Korea trade and its role in Korean affairs, the bakufu stationed Zen monks from the Five Mountains in Kyoto (\textit{Kyōto Gozan}) in rotation at Iteian Temple in Tsushima (\textit{Iteian rinbansei}) to observing the domain’s diplomatic administration.\textsuperscript{181}

Second, the bakufu sought to modify its diplomatic protocol with Korea. On July 1, 1635 (Kan’ei 5/17), two senior councilors (\textit{rōjū}), Doi Toshikatsu and Sakai Tadayo

\textsuperscript{179} Tashiro, \textit{Kakikaereta kokusho}, 92.

\textsuperscript{180} Hō Chōrô Chōsen monogatari, 72; Tashiro, \textit{Kakikaereta kokusho}, 92. Genpō served as Yoshinari’s childhood mentor and was a pivotal figure in the domain’s diplomatic administration, and Sō Toshinobu was Yoshinari’s cousin.

\textsuperscript{181} Tsūkō ichira, vol. 3, 300.
decided to use a Japanese era name, instead of the sexagenary cycle, in a shogunal letter to Korea. About three months later, the bakufu decide to use the shogun’s new diplomatic title, “Taikun (Great Prince or Sovereign Lord).” *Kan’ei jūsan heishi Chōsen shinshi kiroku* (Record of the Korean Embassy of the Year of Hei-shi of the Kan’ei er) gives an account of the decision making process regarding the new title. On September 27, 1635 (Kan’ei 12/8/16), a meeting was convened at Edo Castle, and policymakers discussed a new diplomatic title to replace the previous titles “Nihon Kokuō” or “Nihon Kokushu.” Questions remain. Who suggested the title? What source did it stem from? Hayashi Gahō claimed that his father and his uncle, namely Razan’s junior sibling, Hitomi (Hayashi) Eiki, proposed it. Another Japanese source, *Hisaku shinpen* (New version of secret schemes), claims that it was Gyokuhō Kōrin, a Zen monk of Tōfukuji Temple in Kyoto and the first appointee of the rotating observer in Tsushima. There have also conflicting observations among recent scholars. Nakamura Hidetaka believed that Razan was the inventor of the title; Ronald Toby questions Nakamura on the grounds that the bakufu Confucianist probably lacked sufficient competency in the Chinese language, which had enjoyed the status of official language in East Asian international

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182 *Kan’ei jūsan heishi Chōsen shinshi kiroku.*

183 *Kan’ei Jusan heishi Chōsen shinshi kiroku*, (MS copy, collection of Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo).

184 *Hayashi Rzan bunshū*, vol. 1, 140.

185 *Tsūkō ichira*, vol. 3, 301.
relations. It is also unknown whether the new title was the original invention of the bakufu or a borrowing from some source. Though Arai Hakuseki pointed out in the early eighteenth century that the term (c. Dajun; j. Taikun; k. taegun) can be found in the Zhouli (The Rites of Zhou), there is no evidence that bakufu policymakers consulted the Chinese classics. In the meeting, Ii Naotaka, a fudai daimyo of Hikone (present-day Hikone-city, Shiga prefecture), stated, “The title of king ought not to be used to refer to the shogun.” This statement was based upon Iemitsu’s wishes. He continued, “‘Shogun’ is, however, no better than a lower-middle ranking in China; [an appropriate usage] would neither employ the title of king nor place the shogun lower than the king.” He then asked the Hayashi brothers for their comments, and they responded, “Why not call the shogun this [Taikun]?” The meeting ended with the attendants’ approval of this title, which was unprecedented not only in Japanese history but also within the East Asian diplomatic tradition.

The modification of the diplomatic protocols was motivated not only by the bakufu’s intention to prevent another dispute over the shogunal diplomatic title but also by its desire to embody the ideal of the shogun’s representation of Japanese superiority over Korea. The draft of an invitation of an embassy to the Korean court also revealed the

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186 Nakamura Hidetaka, vol. 3, 301; Toby, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, 108.
188 Kan’ei jūsan heishi Chōsen shinshi kiroku.
189 Ibid.
bakufu’s desire to place Korea at a lower position in the Tokugawa foreign relations. The draft described the embassy’s visit to Japan as “raichō (a visit to a foreign country of a superior status)” and as one of “onrei (gratitude).” Raichō means a mission of a subordinate or a tributary visiting its suzerain state. Onrei means expression of gratitude, and the bakufu’s use of this term shows its perception that Korea was indebted to Japan. Tōshō Daigongen engi, a prayer Iemitsu dedicated to the spirit of his grandfather Ieyasu, boasted of the Korean embassy, noting, “It has been a long time since Lord Iemitsu acceded to the shogunal title. Since then he took pity and favor on and genially fostered his subjects, and even foreigners adore him.” Doi and Sakai stated in a meeting at Edo Castle on July 1, “Korea is a vassal state of Ming China. Our Japan is not. [Japan] has established its imperial court (shishin or shishii) since the dawn (kaibyaku) of the nation and has lived under successive emperors. Our era name therefore ought to be used in diplomatic notes from now on.” Second shogun Hidetada had made a similar statement in 1607. The use of their own era name, like the title Taikun, was designed to indicate Japan’s superior status over Korea, which as a Chinese tributary, did not have its own era name. Hidetada had given up using the era name in 1607 to protect the restored diplomatic relations from trouble. A similar risk still remained more than two decades later, but the third shogun was determined to use the Japanese era name.

Hayashi Razan, Hayashiu Razan bunshū, 1:144.
Tōshō Daigongen engi, 54.
Kan’ei jūsan heishi Chōsen shinshi kiroku.
And the bakufu envisaged the shogun’s representation of Japan’s superior status to Korea with the new diplomatic title. As mentioned above, Ii Naotaka stated that a shogunal title should not be lower than that of king, which in fact meant that the bakufu intended to spell out the shogun’s superior status in the modified diplomatic protocol by letting the Korean king style him Taikun. On January 10, 1637 (Kan’ei 13/12/14), one day after Iemitsu granted an audience to the Korean embassy, Naotaka proceeded to the shogun and stated that the Korean king unprecedentedly “revered (aogi tatematsuru)” the shogun as Taikun. As tatematsuru is a honorific expression used by an inferior to a superior, the bakufu understood that the title had an implication of the shogun’s superior status over the Korean king.

The use of the Japanese era name and the new diplomatic title probably had another purpose to resolve a problem which Tsushima’s malpractice caused the shogun’s relationship with the Japanese emperor. While keeping the imperial court aside from politics, the Tokugawa rulers’ possession of the shogunal title manifested their subject status to the emperor, and the bakufu relied on the emperor as a source of higher legitimacy. The shogun’s popular name, “taiju (c. dashu)” originally appears in *Wu Hanshu* (History of Later Han) as another name of the first Emperor of the Later Han dynasty, Guangwu’s general, Fu Yi in the early first century AD. Also, the bakufu’s other name, “ryūei”, was originally the name for General Zhou Yafu’s military camp in the

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reign of Emperor Wen of the Early Han Dynasty. Watanabe Akira does not count imperial authority as another source of legitimacy. He argues that since the demonstration of military power seen in the victory at Sekigahara was the only source of Tokugawa legitimacy, the bakufu hence needed Neo-Confucianism to reinforce its claim to legitimacy with ideology. Honchō tsugan (The comprehensive mirror of Japan), however, shows the invalidity of his argument. These annals began to be written by Hayashi Ranzan and Gahō under Iemitsu’s order in 1640, stating that shogunal power was mandated by the imperial court, and the mandate obliged the bakufu to be loyal to the imperial court.

However, the use of the title, King of Japan (Nihon kokuō), in the shogunal letters altered by Tsushima, caused the shogun’s infringement on the imperial authority because the title of King (ō) traditionally suggested the emperor in Japan as mentioned above. In order to rectify this problem, the bakufu needed the new diplomatic title which did not contradict the master-vassal relations between the emperor and the shogun. The bakufu also felt the necessity to reemphasize the shogun’s loyalty to the emperor by using of a Japanese era name after the Yanagawa Scandal. The Japanese use of era name was one of

195 Watanabe Akira, Higashi Ajia no Ōken to shisō (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1997), 64.
196 Hayashi Razan and Gaho, Honcho tsugan (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1965), 24. See also Furaya Katsumi, Bakumatsu kokka seiritsu katei no kenkyū (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1978), 142-3; Imatani, 69 Following the argument that “taisei iniron (theory of the mandate of power)” was born during the decline of the Tokugawa regime in the late eighteenth century, this may be regarded as its source or prototype. see Fujita Satoru, Bakumatsu no Tennō (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1994).
the examples of the Japanese adoption of Chinese institutions. The Chinese idea was that the Chinese emperor, as the Son of Heaven, was the only one who possessed a prerogative of setting an era name. For his subjects and tributaries, their use of the Chinese era name meant the demonstration of their loyalty to the emperor. The Japanese had adopted not only the practice but also the idea since 645.

The bakufu claimed, furthermore, that the Tokugawa was genealogically tied to the Minamoto Clan. The ancestry of the Minamoto is said to trace back to Emperor Seiwa (r. 858-876), and this connected the Tokugawa to the imperial lineage. This genealogical connection had the further implication that the Tokugawa shared the sacred blood of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, from whom the imperial family was believed to descend and who was the source of Japanese divinity and superiority.

This implied that genealogical connection with the divine imperial lineage would destine the shogun to represent Japan’s superior status over Korea. Tōshō Daigongen engi states, as mentioned in detail in Chapter 3, that the divinity from which the imperial lineage was believed derived and the unbroken succession of imperial rulers (bansei ikkei) were considered the rationales for Japanese superiority. As an imperial descendant, imperial safeguard, and mandated executor of diplomatic prerogatives, the shogun would

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accordingly be obliged to dignify and maintain the national prestige of Japan as a divine land (shinkoku).\footnote{198}

However, the shogun, as an imperial subject, would have to represent Japan’s international status without violating the supremacy of the emperor. The use of the title, “King of Japan (Nihon kokuō),” in the shogunal letters forged by Tsushima in fact meant that the bakufu infringed on the imperial authority. According to conventional usage in the East Asian world, the character of king, “ō (c. wang),” used as the second character of “kokuō (c. guowang)” was strictly distinct, hierarchically, from “kō (c. huang)” used as the first character of emperor “kōtei (c. huangdì)” or “Tennō” and was considered to mean hierarchically inferior. Meanwhile, Japan had conventionally adopted a peculiar usage for “ō”, and “kokuō” was also supposed to mean “Tennō.” Kinchū narabini kuge shohatto, which the bakufu enacted to regulate the imperial court in 1615, shows the bakufu’s compliance with this traditional Japanese interpretation of the two Chinese characters; in the regulations for the imperial court drafted by Süden in 1615, Article One refers to the emperor as “Tenshi (Son of Heaven),” and Article Ten refers to him as “Kokuō.”\footnote{199} As Iemitsu himself wished, the title of king, which could refer to the emperor,

\footnote{198} \textit{Tōshō Daigongen engi}, 23, 142.  

\footnote{199} \textit{Taiheiki}, in \textit{Kōten Nihon bungaku zenshū}, vol. 19 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1965), 84. For instance, in \textit{Taiheiki}, a late-fourteenth century martial work (gunkimono), there is a sentence referring to Tennō as “ō”. In retrospect, Süden stated in 1617 that “Nihon no ō” would not communicate with a Korean monarch in 1617. As for this refusal of the Korean request that the shogun use the title, “king,” Ito Tasaburō argued that Süden made this statement without considering the presence of Tennō. However, given the “shohatto”, along with the fact, which he seemed to know given this statement, that Tennō had never exchanged credentials directly with Korean monarchs in ancient times, it is more likely that the Zen monk was aware of the implications of the title of king in Japan.
therefore, had to be avoided. The bakufu possibly also knew that Ashikaga Yoshimitsu’s acceptance of the title of king from the Ming emperor, despite his domestic status as an imperial vassal, was criticized as a national humiliation and as infidelity to the emperor. For the bakufu, Taikun was the diplomatic title used to claim shogun-ruled Japan’s superiority without friction with imperial authority.

The bakufu made one more change, which might indicate that the bakufu regarded the diplomatic scandal as a serious offence against the hierarchical distinction between the emperor and the shogun. On July 2, 1635 (Kan’ei 5/18), bakufu executives like Doi and Sakai decided not to call the shogunal capital Edo “Tōto (Eastern capital)” and replaced it with “Tōbu (Eastern Musashi).” The bakufu probably tried to express reverence for the emperor by restricting the Chinese character, “to (capital),” to referring to Kyoto, in which the emperor was residing.

After the diplomatic reform, the discrepancy between the Japanese contemptuous perception of Korea and the reality demanded by equal diplomatic relations remained in the modified Tokugawa diplomatic protocols. A Korean embassy proceeded to Edo Castle and delivered a state letter from King Injo (r. 1623-1649) to Iemitsu and on


200 Kan’ei jūsan heishi Chōsen shinshi kiroku.

201 Zenrin kokuhōki 77-9.

202 Ibid.
January 9, 1637 (Kan’ei 13/12/13). The letter styled Iemitsu “Your Highness Great Prince of Japan (k. Ilbonguk Taegun jōnha; j. Nihonkoku Taikun denka),” as the Japanese expected. Korean source, Injo cho sillok (The veritable record of the court of Injo), explains that Korea justified the unwilling surrender to the Japanese request with the phrase, “no dispute with barbarians (dispute with barbaric Japan violates civilized Korean moral law).” Miyake Hidetoshi and Ronald Toby conjecture that the truth was probably that Korea, once again suffering a Manchu invasion, wanted to avoid a dispute with Japan. The Japanese letter, in reply, was dated with the Japanese era name, Kan’ei. However, Iemitsu called himself not “Taikun” but merely “Nihonkoku Minamoto no Iemitsu” and addressed the Korean king with the same honorific, “Highness.” No matter what implications the new shogunal diplomatic title had, the sharing of the same honorific showed that the Tokugawa shogun and the Korean king still associated with each other formally as peers.

The bakufu also kept the implications of the use of the era name and the new diplomatic title secret from the Koreans. Although it had agreed to use the title Taikun in its state letter, Korea did not anticipate that Japan would use its own era name. The shogunal letter therefore became a cause of brief dispute between the Korean embassy and bakufu officials again. The report which the Korean ambassador submitted to the court after returning home notes that when the Koreans raised questions over the absence

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203 Injo cho sillok, 234.

204 Miyake, 265; Toby, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, p. 155.
of the new shogunal title in the Japanese letter, Doi Katsutoshi answered that the shogun’s avoidance of the title of honor was rather his expression of respect and amity for the neighboring country.\cite{205} Doi obviously lied to the Koreans; the fact was, as we know, that the title had no connotation of respect to Korea but was deemed to imply Japanese superiority which the shogun represented. The reason for not using the title was probably domestic: the bakufu considered that the shogun’s use of the title, which had never existed in the traditional ranking system and was instituted without imperial investiture, was inconsistent with his subject status vis-à-vis the emperor. Doi lied also about the use of the era name. When the Koreans asked him to eliminate the Japanese era name from the shogunal letter, he explained to the Koreans that the use of the Japanese era names had been a fixed practice, mentioning that the Yanagawa party had treacherously forged the era name, *Kan’ei*, which dated the shogunal letter of 1624.\cite{206} In truth, it was not the Japanese era name but the sexagenary cycle that the bakufu used in the 1624 letter. Miyake Hidetoshi states that realizing the futility of further negotiations, the Koreans stopped arguing and accepted the shogunal letter.\cite{207} Probably they did not want to damage the negotiations when their country was suffering the Manachu invasion.

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\item \textsuperscript{205} Pibyon tungnok, (Keijō; Chōsen Sōtokufu, 1936), 48.
\item \textsuperscript{206} Miyake, 264-5.
\item \textsuperscript{207} Ibid., 264-265.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
The Tokugawa bakufu thereafter received eight more Korean embassies, which continued until 1811, observing the diplomatic protocols modified after the Yanagawa Affair generally, with only minor changes in details each time. Tokugawa Iemitsu received one more embassy during his reign, when his heir Ietsuna was born in 1642. After the fourth shogun’s succession to the shogunal office, a Korean embassy visited Japan for the succession of each of the next seven shoguns, until the eleventh shogun Ienari. The only exception was the seventh shogun Ietsugu (r. 1713-1716) who died young, before receiving a congratulatory mission. The overall maintenance of the diplomatic protocol until diplomatic ties were virtually broken off after 1811 meant that the discrepancy between the contemptuous Japanese perception of Korea and the actual state of the diplomatic parity continued. As far as it found political usefulness in the diplomatic relations, that is, as far as the presence of the Korean embassies conveyed a perception of Korea’s subordination to Tokugawa-ruled Japan, the bakufu chose not to take any risk by modifying the protocol.208

Major changes of the diplomatic protocols exceptionally came in 1711, but the two protocols were not totally different from this precedent or free from the discrepancy between the Japanese contemptuous perception of Korea and the actual state of the

208 Previous studies have demonstrated that the Japanese populace saw the Korean embassies as tribute to the shogun as for example in theater performances, where Korea were used as material, which projected the traditional Japanese contempt against the neighboring country. See, for example, Ikeuchi Satoshi, “Tōjin goroshi” no sekai: kinsei minshu no Chosen ninshiki (Kyoto-shi Rinsen Shobō, 1999). Ikeuchi’s study also provides us with evidence that the bakufu would not have dared to resolve the discrepancy. According to this study, the bakufu, faced with a Tsushima interpreter’s murder of a member of the Korean embassy in 1764, put a priority on saving diplomatic relations from the tension which the incident caused.
diplomatic relations with Korea. In the Korean embassy to the sixth shogun Ienobu in 1711, his Neo-Confucian advisor Arai Hakuseki reexamined and reformed the shogunal diplomatic protocols. The most controversial was to replace “Taikun” with the title his predecessors had detested, namely “Nihon Kokuō (King of Japan).” Hakuseki was also the inheritor of the traditional contemptuous perceptions of Korea and understood that the restoration of peace after Hideyoshi’s invasion was due to Ieyasu’s effort which Korea should appreciate.209 His adoption of the title, which would imply the shogun’s parity with the Korean king and thereby contradict his perception of Korea, was based on the following notions. First, he discovered that the title, Taikun, had not given even an equal status to the shogun with the Korean king. The title had rather lowered Japan’s status vis-à-vis Korea, as it was to be bestowed on the eldest son of the king in that country.210 Second, he believed that the shogun deserved the title of king because he exercised power as a de facto ruler of Japan. Third, he knew that the shogun had indeed been on equal footing with the Korean king since the early Ashikaga period and might have had a pragmatic belief that breaking the convention fixed since the early fifteenth century would cause a conflicted result with his desire to maintain amity with Korea.211 As a result of this compromise with parity between the shogun and the Korean king, the discrepancy continued


210 See Kyōngguk taejōn (Keijō: Chōsen Sōtoku fu Chūsūin, 1934).

211 Ibid., 667; Miyazaki, Arai Hakuseki no kenkyū, 49.
Although Hakuseki himself later noted, “It is what I am most proud of,” the change of the shogunal title actually brought him into dispute with contemporary intellectuals, including his long-time friend, Amenomori Hōshū. Hakuseki had no intention of depriving the emperor of his supremacy and even showed some signs of his royalist sentiment. For example, he described his effort to found the House of Prince Kan’in (Kan’in no Miyaa-ke) as “return to an imperial favor (kōon) in his autobiographical work, Ori taku shiba no ki. He also believed that the shogun’s use of the title of king would not contradict the hierarchical distinction between ō and kō which he thought should belong to the emperor. On the other hand, upholding the traditional Japanese understanding of the synonymity between the two characters, his critics regarded the reform as a serious offence against Confucian notion of hierarchical distinction between a superior and an inferior.212 After only a single implementation, the

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212 For Hakuseki’s reform of the diplomatic protocol, see Arai Haksueki zenshū; Miyazaki Michio’s series of works e.g., Arai Hakuseki no kenkyū (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkyū, 1958). Kate Wildman-Nakai translates “denka” following “Nihon Kokuō (King of Japan)” as “Majesty.” This translation is not accurate. As I mentioned above, the English word equivalent to “denka” is nothing but “Highness.” See her Shogunal Politics: Arai Hakuseki and the Premises of Tokugawa Rule (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1988). Hakuseki’s adoption of the title King of Japan brought accusations from other scholars; Amenomori Hōshū, who had studied under Kinoshita Jun’an together with Hakuseki, critically argued, according to Japanese tradition and Confucian logic, that the shogun’s use of the title which the divine emperor, namely Tennō, desired to be styled would violate the hierarchical distinction between the emperor and the shogun. Hakuseki made a counterargument that the shogun’s use of king would not contradict the emperor’s superior status over him in light of the hierarchical distinction of the meanings of the two Chinese characters “kō” and “ō”. This is not convincing because of the Japanese understanding of the synonymity between “kō” and “ō” as Nakai Chikuzan, a scholar at Kaitokudō academy in Osaka, pointed out. See Miyazaki, Arai Hakuseki no kenkyū, 76-101. Hakuseki’s royalism has been an issue of debate as seen, for example, in contrasting interpretations between Nakai and Miyazaki, yet there seems some signs of his royalist sentiment. He described his effort to found the House of Prince Kan’in (Kan’in no Miyake) as “return to an imperial favor”, in his autobiographical work Ori taku shiba no ki. He also called Tennō “shin tenshi (true Son of Heaven)” vis-à-vis the Chinese emperor in his conversation with the Korean ambassador.
bakufu returned to the previous protocol when the eighth shogun Yoshimune (r. 1716-1745) ascended to the shogunal office.

The reception of the last Korean embassy in 1811 took place not in Edo but in Tsushima, without the attendance of the eleventh shogun Ienari (r. 1787-1837). Matsudaira Sadanobu was a senior councilor in the late eighteenth century, the daimyo of Shirakawa (present-day Fukushima prefecture), a Tokugawa relative (Yoshimune’s grandson). He had to operate the bakufu under serious fiscal stringency. Concerned with the national prestige of Japan, he did not want to expose to the Koreans the dismal state of the Japanese economy caused by repeated famines earlier. On the other hand, appreciating the political value of the reception, he was afraid that suspending the diplomatic ceremony would dim the domestic prestige of the bakufu. Therefore, he proposed the relocation and downsizing of the reception of a Korean embassy by curtailing expenses, which according to Arai Hakuseki were at one million ryō.213

Behind Sadanobu’s idea, there was the wisdom of Nakai Chikuzan (Sekizen) of the Kaitokudō Academy, Osaka. Through his work, Sōbō kigen (Grass sprout’s words), Chikuzan suggested that downsizing the expensive reception for the foreign embassy would help the bakufu in both its fiscal recovery and maintain Japan’s national prestige. Referring to the Japanese perception of Korean subordination and the fact of the Korean restriction of Japanese access to their territories beyond Pusan, he warned that to allow

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the Koreans to come up to the shogunal capital would be detrimental to national prestige.\textsuperscript{214} In \textit{Uge no hitogoto} (Words under a roof), Sadanobu noted that he was impressed by Chikuzan’s suggestions.\textsuperscript{215}

It was not until twenty-four years after the eleventh shogun’s succession in 1787 that the bakufu finally held a reception in its revised form in Tsushima. Though still alive, Sadanobu was no longer the senior councilor. The combination of other crucial domestic issues and the difficulty of the negotiations with Korea over the conventional protocol meant that it took the bakufu considerable time to organize the reception.\textsuperscript{216} Despite the different ceremony site and the absence of the shogun, the diplomatic protocols still projected parity between the shogun and the Korean king, contradicting the Japanese perception of Japanese-Korean status relations.

No further Korean embassies appeared after 1811 until the Meiji government, overthrowing the Tokugawa regime, established new diplomatic relations in 1876. Diplomatic relations ceased, but not because the bakufu lost interest. After 1811, the bakufu continued to wish to receive a Korea congratulatory mission on the shogunal succession until just before its fall in 1867. Neither the bakufu nor the Yi dynasty, both on the decline, however, could afford to maintain this costly diplomatic intercourse after

\textsuperscript{214} Nakai Sekizen, \textit{Sōbō kigen}, in \textit{Nihon shisō tōsō shiryō}, vol. 6 (Tokyo; Keimeisha), 503-545.

\textsuperscript{215} Matsudaira Sadanobu, 53.

\textsuperscript{216} Tabohashi Kiyoshi, \textit{Kindai Nissen kankei no kenyū}, vol. 2 (Keijō: Chōsen Sōtokufu Chūsūin, 1940; repr., Tokyo: Bunka Shiryō Chōsakai, 1963), 458-567. Besides the reception site and the absence of the shogun, there were no other significant modifications in the protocol. The languages, such as titles and honorifics, remained intact.
1811. Peace between Tokugawa Japan and Chosŏn Korea had thus been maintained for more than two hundred years until the end of the Tokugawa era, and tension between the two countries remained latent.
CHAPTER 3

CHINA IN TOKUGAWA FOREIGN RELATIONS:
THE TOKUGAWA BAKUFU’S PERCEPTION OF AND ATTITUDES TOWARD CHINA
AND ITS TRIBUTARY SYSTEM

Throughout the Tokugawa era, there were no government-to-government relations between Japan and China. It was not until the Meiji government and the Qing dynasty signed a treaty in 1871 that an official relationship was established between the two countries. The absence of diplomatic relations does not, however, mean that there was no communication between the two. There were both direct and indirect routes of contact between the two countries. Japanese, with a few exceptions such as Tsushima retainers who went to Korea, were not allowed to go overseas from the mid-1630s until the late 1850s under the bakufu policy often called “sakoku” or “kaikin.” Chinese merchants, on the other hand, were permitted to visit Nagasaki, a trade port located in northern Kyushu. For the Japanese, this was the only way to contact China directly. There was also indirect contact with China. Satsuma-han, a large domain located in southern Kyushu, maintained an indirect trade access to China via its tributary state the
Kingdom of Ryukyu, which had been under virtual Japanese dominance since Satsuma’s conquest in 1609. Tokugawa diplomatic relations with Korea also gave the Japanese a chance to contact China through irregular embassies from neighboring countries.

Nor did the absence of diplomatic relations mean that the bakufu had no interest in associating with China, at least in its early years. Tokugawa Ieyasu undertook a rapprochement with Ming China. This began shortly after the war in Korea, which Toyotomi Hideyoshi had launched in the early 1590s, ended with his death and the subsequent withdrawal of expeditionary forces from the Korean Peninsula in 1598. The result was that Ieyasu, failing to overcome China’s hostility and distrust of its aggressive neighbor Japan, could not accomplish the rehabilitation of official ties with China. By the early 1620s, his successors lost interest in developing official relations with China and never again attempted to approach China until the very final moments of the Tokugawa era. As a result, the trade maintained by the unilateral visits of Chinese merchants to Japan and the indirect contacts via Korea and the Ryukyus became the only connection between the neighbors throughout the rest of the period.

Hierarchical positioning was a crucial and almost unavoidable matter not only for Japan but also for any other countries which wanted to associate with the self-proclaimed Middle Kingdom, before the Western diplomatic principle of equality between sovereign nations was introduced to East Asia in the nineteenth century.¹ For successive Chinese dynasties, setting up

¹ I do not mean at all that there were no equal relations among Asian countries prior to the Western impact in
hierarchical Sinocentric international relations based upon a tributary system, called the Chinese world order, was related to the legitimacy of their own regimes. It was not that Japan, as China’s neighbor, had had nothing to do with or been indifferent to hierarchical international relations when seeking relationships with China or the constituents of the Chinese world order. It had sporadically paid tribute to Chinese dynasties in ancient and medieval times but had usually not been a regular vassal state of China. It had obviously been one of the countries most reluctant to participate in the Sinocentric world order. Japan did not identify itself as a vassal state of China during most of its history, no matter how China saw it. In this traditional setting of international relations of East Asia, it was quite natural that the Tokugawa bakufu also had concerns about Japan’s international status when seeking to restore diplomatic and commercial relations with China.

Previous studies have made conflicting arguments over the Tokugawa vision of status relations with China. Their arguments can be separated into three categories. First, it is argued that Ieyasu and his regime sought to normalize relations with Ming China by accepting its superior status. Nakamura Hidetaka, for example, argued that the Tokugawa regime sought to be

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3 Toby, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, 139.
reintegrated into the Sinocentric international order. Examining a letter which Ieyasu’s trusted henchman, Honda Masazumi, sent to Ming China in 1611, Fujii Jōji states that though it contains no clear appeal for Chinese recognition of the vassalage of Tokugawa Japan, the letter implied the bakufu’s recognition of Chinese superiority. Second, on the contrary, it is argued that the bakufu had no intention of placing Japan at a lower status vis-à-vis China. Arano Yasunori and Nakamura Tadashi draw a conclusion opposite to Fujii’s from the same source. Arano makes no specific reference to a Tokugawa vision of Japan’s status with China. Nakamura on the other hand states that the bakufu envisaged parity with China. Kamiya Nobuyuki also maintains that Ieyasu was seeking equality with Ming China, bearing the title, “King of Japan,” bestowed by the Ming emperor. Third, Ronald P. Toby states, “The Tokugawa bakufu had had ambivalent feelings about participating in the Ming world order from the very beginning of the [seventeenth]

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4 Nakamura Hidetaka, “Taikun gaikō no kokusai ninshiki: ka-i chitsujo no naka no Nihon,” Kokusai seiji 51: 10, 14. Nakamura did not, however, suggest any source for his argument in this article.

5 Fujii Jōji, “Junanaseiki no Nihon: buke no kokka no keisei,” in Iwnami köza Nihon tsūshi, vol. 12 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1994), 40-41. Kamiya Nobuyuki also maintains that Ieyasu was seeking equality with China, bearing the title, “King of Japan (Nihon kokuō),” bestowed by the Ming emperor. However, he does not clearly argue that it meant that Ieyasu wished to become a Chinese vassal, for Kamiya also argues that the Japanese considered the vermilion seal as equivalent to the tally.


century.” He argues that the bakufu was certainly attracted by the trade benefits and legitimacy which Chinese recognition and bestowal of the title of king would bring and that though it once considered being reintegrated into the tributary system, the bakufu eventually chose not to do so because of its concern that tributary relations with China might mar the legitimacy of its own rule.

One purpose of this chapter is to resolve the question at hand. I will take the position of disagreeing with the first and third positions which argue that the Tokugawa bakufu considered making Japan a Chinese tributary. The major problem is that they comprehend the request for resumption of the tally trade (kangō bōeki) unconditionally on the analogy of the Ashikaga precedent and miss the change in Japanese understanding of the tally, kangō (c. kanhe) which Ming China issued as a trading visa to its tributaries. I agree with Toby’s analysis that the 1611 letter, as mentioned below, did not take the form of “biao (j. hyō),” which the monarch of a country submitted to the Chinese emperor to express his country’s will to become a Chinese tributary. His interpretation of the Tokugawa request for the tally trade on the analogy of the

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9 Toby, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, 87; idem., “Kinsei ni okeru Nihon-gata ka-i chitsujo to Higashi Ajia no kokusai kankei”: 45, 59-60. Marius B. Jansen has also noted, “The bakufu, after considering the possibility of formal relations, concluded that the cost – acceptance of a tributary role in China’s East Asian order – was incompatible with its dignity and with Japanese sovereignty.” See Marius B. Jansen, China in the Tokugawa World (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 1-2.

10 Toby, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, 59.

Ashikaga precedent, however, leads to an argument of ambivalence in the early Tokugawa attitudes toward the Chinese tributary system. Supporting the second position, I will argue that the Tokugawa bakufu consistently intended from its outset not to be an inferior member of the Sinocentric world order. My position however differs from previous arguments in two respects. First, I do not find any concrete evidence that the bakufu sought to obtain the specific status of an equal with China. In this respect, the Tokugawa view and attitudes toward China were, I will maintain, ambiguous, though they were at least premised on the bakufu’s unwillingness to pay tribute to China. Second, apart from the problems mentioned above, Kamiya’s interpretation is speculative, not supported by any evidence that Ieyasu was seeking the title of king, along with the restoration of the tally trade. He would also need to prove that the Japanese understanding of “King of Japan,” which had originally implied a vassal status to the Chinese emperor, had changed.

My position that the Tokugawa bakufu had no intention of surrendering Japan to Chinese suzerainty naturally and logically disagrees with these arguments, coming out of the first and third positions noted above, that attitudes toward the Chinese tributary system had also changed by the 1620s or the 1630s. Nakamura Hidetaka saw “Taikun gaikō taisei (Taikun diplomacy or Great Prince diplomacy),” which was formed by the end of the 1630s, as a declaration of independence of the Chinese world order.12 Fujii and Toby argue that the change

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occurred earlier. Fujii states that the bakufu raised Japan’s status vis-à-vis China from that of an inferior to that of an equal by the early 1620s, arguing that the term, “tsūshin (c. tongxin),” used in the letter of Honda Mazazumi to Fujian Province designates the bakufu’s will to obtain parity with China.\(^\text{13}\) Favoring Nakamura’s view of “Taikun diplomacy,” Toby maintains that the bakufu’s rejection of the Chinese envoy in 1621 meant its rejection of subordination to China.\(^\text{14}\) On the other hand, my position opposing these historians will draw the conclusion that the cases which they have seen as signs of change should be rather understood as the consistency of the bakufu’s policy of not participating in the Chinese tributary system.

Few studies have explored Tokugawa attitudes and policies toward China, especially in terms of the status relations between the two countries after the 1630s. In his analysis of the Tokugawa diplomatic protocols especially after the Manchu conquest of China in 1644, Toby, a rare case, argues that the bakufu came to situate China at the lowest level of its hierarchical international order which historians, including Toby, have called “Nihon-gata ka-i chitsujo (Tokugawa world order or Japan-centered world order).”\(^\text{15}\) He also regards the trade certificate,

\(^{13}\) Fujii, 46. The term did not necessarily bear an exclusive meaning of parity; the relationship with the Ryukyus, which was by no means equal, was also referred to by the term.

\(^{14}\) Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan*, 227.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 155-156.
shinpai (Nagasaki tsūshō shōhyō), which the bakufu introduced to regulate the China trade at Nagasaki in 1715, as a Japanese proclamation of superiority over China.\(^{16}\)

I also disagree that the treatment of Chinese merchants represented China’s status in the hierarchical Tokugawa international relation. The use of the Japanese era name in the trade certificate and its resemblance to the Chinese-issued tally for example announced nothing more than the Japanese rejection of becoming an inferior constituent of the Sinocentric world order or of recognition of China’s superiority. Despite this explicit stance, ambiguity remained in the Japanese views and attitudes over a status relationship with China even after it came under the control of the “barbaric” northern ethnic group, the Manchu Qing. Tokugawa attitudes toward the Chinese tributary system remained consistent, and the Japanese ideological perception of Qing China even showed some elements of Japanese superiority. Nevertheless, the Tokugawa attitudes remained ambiguous and were not necessarily compatible with the intellectual perception which engendered a sense of Japanese superiority because of the Manchu conquest of China. The bakufu did not suggest any concrete vision of a status relationship between Japan and Qing China, other than rejecting integration into the tributary system. Over status relations with Qing China, as its Ryukyu and trade policies indicated, the bakufu chose rather to avoid any antagonism or friction and did not hesitate even to make compromises with the dynasty of conquest on the East Asian mainland.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 156-159.
The Tokugawa Rapprochement Policy Toward China

Tokugawa Ieyasu’s China policy began almost in parallel with or shortly after his Korea policy was introduced. The purposes of Tokugawa China policy were similar to the peacemaking policy toward Korea discussed in Chapter 2. Confronted by Chinese and Korean hatred caused by Hideyoshi’s war of aggression, Ieyasu needed to eliminate any potential external threat to the security of Japan. The normalization of relations with China, as well as with Korea, would demonstrate the political capability and qualifications of the Tokugawa to succeed the Toyotomi. With great interest in overseas trade, Ieyasu would not have neglected China, which was the largest regional producer of silk that enjoyed a significant presence in the Japanese market.\(^\text{17}\)

In 1598, a group of shipwrecked Chinese was cast ashore on the Gotō Islands of Kyushu. They were rescued in November (?) 1598 (Keio 3/10/u) by Satsuma, the domain of the House of Shimazu located in southern Kyushu. Satsuma administrators sent them to Fushimi where the daimyo of the domain, Shimazu Yoshihiro, was staying. Yoshihiro thereafter sent the shipwrecked Chinese to Jin Zexue, the general of Fuzhou, along with some gifts.\(^\text{18}\) Although there is no evidence that Tokugawa Ieyasu instructed Yoshihiro to return the shipwrecked Chinese, he could well have done so, as he was then presiding over foreign affairs, as well as

\(^{17}\text{See Chapter 2.}\)

\(^{18}\text{Kyūki zatsuroku kōhen, vol. 3, no. 867.}\)
domestic affairs, as the caretaker of the Toyotomi regime under the mandate of the deceased hegemon, Hideyoshi. Upon receiving the repatriated nationals and gifts in April (?) 1599 (Keichō 4/3/u), the Chinese general dispatched a ship with two hundred fifty crew members in gratitude to Satsuma.¹⁹

However, an unexpected incident involving the Chinese ship occurred. On its way to Japan, the ship was assaulted by a pirate crew of one hundred and fifty Chinese and Japanese. Of the crew, forty were killed, and the rest were cast ashore on the Island of Luzon, Philippines. Shimazu Yoshihiro sent a letter informing his son Tadatsune (later renamed Iehisa) of the incident. This letter, dated October 19, 1599 (Keichō 4/9/1), also noted that two of the survivors of the incident visited Satsuma on a ship from the Philippine island. The survivors requested the return of their ship, which had been found in Amakusa, Kyushu, and the surrender of the ringleader of the pirates. The survivors continued that if their demands were fulfilled, they would report to the Chinese authorities regarding the severity of the Japanese regulations against piracy, and that trade with China would be resumed.²⁰

Ieyasu seemed to see the arrival of the Chinese survivors as a great chance to restore peace and normalize relations with China. Although it is unknown exactly when the conditions proposed by those survivors were transmitted to Ieyasu, it was probably before late August 1599.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.
Shimazu Yoshihiro wrote to Tadatsune in early September 1599 (Keichō 4/mid 7). In this letter, Yoshihisa mentioned that Ieyasu, informed of the conditions suggested by the survivors, revealed his desire to improve relationships with Ming China.21 Two other letters which Tadatsune received indicated that Ieyasu soon began to take action in compliance with the conditions. One letter from Yoshihiro, dated August 29 (Keichō 4/7/9), noted that Yoshihiro had received an order from Ieyasu through Terasawa Masanari, a daimyo of Karatsu in Kyushu, to crack down on those who had committed piracy against the Chinese ship.22 The other from Terasawa, dated September 5 (Keichō 2/7/16), informed Tadatsune of Ieyasu’s decision to transfer a Chinese war captive, Ge Guoke, from Karatsu to Satsuma.23 Ge was a Chinese general who had been surrendered to the Japanese as a hostage when the Japanese and Chinese generals signed a truce in Korea in November 1598 (Keichō 3/10/u) and since then had been under detention in Karatsu. This transfer proposed to repatriate him to China.

Along with the repatriation of the war captive, Ieyasu decided to send a letter to China. Saishō Jōtai drafted this letter, dated March 12, 1600 (Keichō 5/1/27), (hereafter the 1600 letter), and it took the form not of being addressed not from the three daimyo Terazawa Masanari,
Shimazu Yoshihiro, and Shimazu Tadatsune – to the general of the Fujian Province, Mao Guoqi.\(^{24}\)

The importance of this letter is that it gives a picture of Ieyasu’s vision of peace and a restored relationship with China. Ieyasu hoped to restore Japan’s relationship with China by reinstituting the tally trade which had existed between the two countries from the early fifteenth century until the mid-sixteenth century. The letter stated that after making peace with Korea, Japan was to associate with China, bearing a golden seal and a tally in accordance with precedent.\(^{25}\) The 1600 letter is the very first time the Japanese expressed their wish for the restoration of the tally, and the same request was repeated in the two subsequent letters which the Tokugawa bakufu sent to Ming China in 1611.

Some historians have seen the request as evidence that Ieyasu intended for Japan to be subjected to Ming China as had the Ashikaga.\(^{26}\) This interpretation would be valid if the tally trade were understood as it had been in the Muromachi period. In that period, the tally system fixed a grantor and grantees: the grantor was Ming China, and the grantees were its vassal states such as Thailand and Japan. The purpose was to put overseas trade under Chinese control within

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\(^{24}\) Ibid., no. 1017, 1025.

\(^{25}\) Ibid.

\(^{26}\) For example, see Nakamura Hidetaka, “Taikun gaikō no kokusai ninshiki: ka-i chitsujo no naka no Nihon,” Fuji, “Junanaseiki no Nihon: buke no kokka no keisei,” and Toby, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan.
the framework of the tributary system and was intended to distinguish traders from pirates, particularly, Japanese pirates called *Wakō*.\(^{27}\) To be granted the tally meant to be recognized as a Chinese vassal; the Ashikaga bakufu first received tally from the third emperor of the Ming, Yongle (r. 1403-1424), in 1404, two years after the Ming dynasty had bestowed upon the abdicated third shogun of the bakufu, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (r. 1368-1394), the title of king and the golden seal.\(^{28}\) Since then, Japan had been a participant in the Chinese tributary system and received one hundred sets of tally upon the accession of each new Ming emperor, until the last tally was reduced to ashes, when the House of Ōuchi, a powerful warrior house in western Japan, fell in 1551.\(^{29}\)

The assumption that Ieyasu understood tally in this historical context, nevertheless, not only lacks proof but also overlooks the fact that the Japanese understanding of tally was not necessarily the same as it had been. Two Japanese historians, Tanaka Takeo and Kamiya Nobuyuki, have demonstrated that the Japanese understanding of tally had changed since the mid-sixteenth century, and that “*kangō*” had become a type of official trade which was no longer inseparable from having tributary relations with China in the Japanese understanding.\(^{30}\)

\(^{27}\) Sakuma Shigeo, *Nichi-Min kankeishi no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1992), 352-354. Before Japan, Siam, Champa, Cambodia had also been granted the tally by Ming China.

\(^{28}\) Ibid.

\(^{29}\) Ibid.

Desiring to establish the tally trade with Ming China, Toyotomi Hideyoshi also refused to recognize China’s superior status which the tally originally implied. Before Hideyoshi dispatched a large army to the Korean Peninsula for the purpose of conquering the East Asian mainland, a letter which two of his vassals, Hosokawa Fujitaka and Ishida Mitsunari, addressed to Shimazu Yoshihisa, on March 7, 1589 (Tenshō 17/1/21), indicated that their lord desired to restore the tally trade with Ming China.31 The unifier of warring Japan never expected that his country would be reintegrated into the tributary system, however. He believed rather that the tally would be reinstated if China first submitted it and that he then accepted it.32 His wishful anticipation that the tally trade would be restored in the way he desired seems to have lasted for a few more years, and the crossing of Japanese troops to the continent meant the renunciation of his earlier optimism. Realizing that his grand design of constructing a large empire of conquest in East Asia had been frustrated, he again desired the restoration of the tally trade. This was not, however, because he intended to surrender and be subject to Ming China again. In 1593, during the stalemate in the war in Korea, he suggested to his enemies seven conditions for peace, one of which was the recovery of the tally trade.33 The day after the peace conditions were suggested to

31 Kyūki zatsuroki kōhen, vol. 2, no. 571.

32 Ibid. In the earlier part of this letter, Hosokawa and Ishida state, “Since not only Japan but also the ocean recovered calm [as a result of issuing the decree prohibiting piracy in 1588], China desirably dispatched a ship with a gift.” According to Fujiki Hisashi, the Chinese ship was by no means officially dispatched by the Ming Court but was probably a pirate vessel. See Fujiki, 232-3.

the Ming representatives on July 25, 1593 (Bunroku 2/6/27), the Japanese negotiators stated that the bestowal of vassalage by the Ming emperor was undesirable.\textsuperscript{34} For the Japanese unifier, the tally was one of those conditions necessary to proclaim that the war concluded with a Japanese victory as he simultaneously demanded China’s surrender of an imperial princess to the Japanese emperor and Korea’s concession of its four southern provinces.\textsuperscript{35}

One might argue that it would be premature to draw from those two scholars’ studies and Hideyoshi’s example the conclusion that the Japanese understanding of the tally had changed. Kobata Atsushi, for example, demonstrated that in the late sixteenth century, some daimyo still perceived trade with China within the context of tributary relations.\textsuperscript{36} The 1600 letter indicated, however, that Ieyasu was not the inheritor of the traditional understanding of the tally. In the letter, the conventional order of the tally and the initiation of official relations was reversed. According to the Ashikaga precedent, the tally was supposed to be granted by the Ming emperor after diplomatic relations, namely tributary relations, were established. In the letter, the official relations were considered to come after the restoration of the tally.

\textsuperscript{34} Sanyō Shinbunsha ed., \textit{Nene to Kinoshiat-ke monjo} (Okakama: Sanyō Shinbunsha, 1982), 43.

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Zenrin kokuhōki, Zoku zenrin kokuhoki.}, 376-379. One document attached the seven conditions. One of the three articles in the document shows that Hideyoshi reasoned that China’s failure to express gratitude for his achievement in the ocean brought about his punitive expedition.

\textsuperscript{36} Kobata Atsushi, \textit{Chūsei Nisshi tsuko boekishi no kenkyu} (Tokyo: Tōhō Shoin, 1941), 23. Kobata demonstrated that some warring daimyo had sent trade ships to Ming China in the name of a tributary mission. This indicates that while some were changing their understanding of the tally, other still saw trade with China in the context of the tributary relations.
According to diplomatic practices since antiquity in the East Asian world, when one country wants to establish diplomatic relations with another country, the former usually submits a state letter to the latter. And it should be written in principle to be addressed from a monarch to his counterpart, as the phrase, “none other than monarchs take charge of diplomacy (c. renying wu waijiao; j. jinshin ni gaikō nashi),” indicates. From the viewpoint of the Middle Kingdom, a foreign letter should have proclaimed its monarch’s homage to the Chinese emperor, in compliance with fixed diplomatic etiquette. For Chinese dynasties, to establish the Middle Kingdom ideology through diplomacy was a matter of their legitimacy of power and rule. Two letters from Ashikaga Yoshimitsu to the Ming emperor had been declined before 1401 because their styles failed to satisfy the Chinese, and the 1600 letter failed in this respect as well. The style of the letter also indicated that Ieyasu had no intention of reintegrating his country into the Chinese tributary system. In Japan, since the time that diplomatic prerogatives were taken over from the imperial court by warriors in the early fifteenth centuries, state letters had been written in the name not of the emperor but of such successive warrior rulers as the Ashikaga shoguns and Hideyoshi. Although warrior diplomacy thus contained an essential contradiction with this principle because of the warrior rulers’ domestic status relations with the Japanese emperor,

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37 For example see Xu zizhi tongjian changbian, (Taipei: Shijie Shuju, 1961).


39 Tsuji Zennosuke, 301; Tanaga Takeo, Chiisei taigai kankeishi (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1975), 59.
neither China nor Korea saw this as disturbing their domestic relations with Japan as long as the emperor was kept invisible in the diplomatic arena. If he had wanted to reintegrate Japan into the Chinese tributary system, Ieyasu would simply have submitted a letter fulfilling the conditions as a state letter called “biao” to the Ming emperor as his subject, “qing (j. shin).” During the time before Ieyasu established his own regime in 1603, a more proper way would have been for his child lord, Toyotomi Hideyori (Hideyoshi’s son) to submit a state letter to the Chinese emperor. However, as mentioned above, the letter was not addressed by either Ieyasu or Hideyori but by the three daimyo to the general of Fujian Province, though the letter indicated in a euphemistic way that it was issued at the request of Ieyasu who was presiding over state affairs on behalf of Hideyori.40

It is unlikely that the Japanese were ignorant of China’s favored diplomatic protocols. They would not have failed to fulfill the necessary conditions of the Chinese requirements if they had intended to pay tribute. As mentioned above, the 1600 letter was drafted by Saishō Jōtai, who also wrote other diplomatic notes, such as the letter to Korea in 1607. Since the early Muromachi period, monks of the Five Mountains, five major Zen Buddhist Monasteries in Kyoto, had been in charge of the administration of diplomacy for the warrior regimes, and their knowledge and experience had accumulated and had been transmitted over several centuries. They were steeped in traditional Japanese diplomatic notions and practices. Jōtai was a Zen

40 Ibid., no. 1017, 1025.
monk of one of the Five Mountains, Shōkokuji Temple, who had been in charge of diplomatic administration since the time of Hideyoshi. He had inherited the ancient diplomatic notion of Sino-Japanese equality based on parity between the Chinese and Japanese emperors. As noted in Chapter 2, he therefore insisted on using a Japanese era name, instead of a Chinese era name, in the shogunal letter to the Korean king in 1607.41 Thus, even though the warrior rulers themselves may have been ignorant of diplomacy, their regimes, depending on the wisdom of Zen monks, could have handled foreign affairs properly in light of Japanese foreign perceptions and the Japanese vision of status relations in diplomacy.

Furthermore, the arrogant and threatening phrases in the letter may be an eloquent sign of the Japanese stance against the tributary system. In the letter, there was no word of apology for invasion of China’s tributary, Korea. Despite their great interest in recovering lost ties with China, Ieyasu considered a “victor’s peace” with Korea, based on the truce arranged between Chinese and Japanese generals in November 1598, to be a stepping stone to the recovery of relationships with Ming China, as the letter stated that the expected visit of a Korean peace mission to Japan was a premise of the restoration of relationships with China.42 The letter did not hide the growing Japanese irritation with the delay of the Korean peace mission. As we have seen in Chapter 2, a little more than two months after this letter, a reference to the possibility that Korea might suffer

42 Ibid., no. 1025.
another military assault unless it made peace with Japan appeared in a letter from Tsushima to Korea. The 1600 letter, reminding China of its indebtedness to Japan, noted reproachfully, “Regarding the peace between our country and Korea, it is reasonable that a breach of promise and agreement would necessarily result in the execution of the hostages. However, the Privy Minister [Naidaijin, namely Ieyasu] is reluctant to execute [the four Chinese hostages, including Ge Quoke] without strong evidence of their guilt. If there is no realization of peace because no Korean minister visits Japan, this will be wholly due to Korea.”43 Then, it unilaterally imposed a two-year deadline for achieving peace with China and Korea and the restoration of the tally by stating, “If the arrival of a Korean mission and the restoration of the tally were not accomplished by 1602, Japanese generals will cross the sea [to Korea] again, and in addition, will sail battleships on the shore of Zhejiang and Fujian Provinces and destroy the towns and villages of those areas.”44

It would not be surprising that the 1600 letter broke little ground toward realizing the Japanese vision of the restoration of relationships with China. The letter left Bōnosu, Satsuma for Fuzhou aboard the ship of a Satsuma merchant, Torihara Sōan, in September (?) 1600 (Keichō 5/8/u). Torihara, along with some Chinese hostages, including Ge Guoqi, was taken to

43 Ibid.

Beijing, the capital of Ming China. The response of the Chinese emperor Wangli (r. 1573-1619) to the Japanese mission was surprising. While making no response to the letter, he promised to dispatch two commercial vessels annually to Satsuma, though the Chinese authorities never relaxed their cautious attitude toward Japan. Since it is unlikely that he was pleased by the insolent Japanese letter, he might have been happy about the return of his subjects, or he might also have found a chance to reduce tensions with Japan without disgracing his country. The Chinese vessels, dispatched to Japan in accordance with the decision of the emperor did not, however, reach Japan. They were attacked in 1601 by the pirates of Itamiya Sukeshirō, a merchant of Sakai, on the shore of Iōjima, located in the north of Yakushima. Informed of the incident, Ieyasu seemed determined not to lose the thread of contact with China. He arrested and executed the perpetrators. The Chinese record notes that the Japanese thereafter repatriated Chinese war captives at least twice after the incident. In June or July, 1602, (Keichō 7/5/u), Katō Kiyomasa, one of the Japanese generals most notorious among Chinese and Koreans during the war, returned eighty-seven prisoners of war. Two months later, another unidentified Japanese

45 Kamiya Nobuyuki, "Ryūkyu Ainu to kaisei kokka," Iwanami kōza Nihon tsūshi, vol. 11 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1993), 192. There is no evidence to prove, but it can be conjectured, that it was decided to charge a merchant with this duty in order to reduce the formality of the Japanese action. Torihara’s arrival in China can be also found in Ming shilu: Shengzong shilu, the entry for the first day of the seventh month of 1600.

46 Ibid., 197.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid., 154.
returned fifty-three prisoners of war. Officially-sanctioned Chinese vessels, nevertheless, never appeared in Japan again.49

Undertaking no further direct approach until 1611, Ieyasu attempted to pursue a policy of rapprochement toward Ming China via its tributary states – Korea and the Ryukyus. This temporary suspension of the direct approach might have been because there were issues of greater magnitude for his newborn regime such as the consolidation of domestic rule and the peacemaking with Korea as a stepping stone of the China policy. When the first Korean embassy visited Japan in the early summer of 1607, he might have optimistically and carelessly regarded the normalization with the Chinese tributary as a good chance to break through the stagnant China policy. Ieyasu thought of asking the Korean king to mediate with China by sending him a letter. Saishō Jōtai, however, warned against that idea and remonstrated with him, saying that such action would imply that Japan had become subordinated to China as its strength declined after Hideyoshi’s death.50 His remonstration also probably came out of Jōtai’s belief in Sino-Japanese parity based on the equal status between the Japanese and Chinese emperors.51 Ieyasu deferred to him with no fuss and never wrote to the Korean king.52 In the same year, his son,

49 Min shilu. The entry of the twenty-second day of the fifth month of 1602.

50 Tsūkō ichiran, vol. 3, 2.

51 Kyōn Sōn, 55.

52 Tsūkō ichiran, vol. 3, 2.
Tokugawa Hidetada also remarked that Japan was not a Chinese tributary state, and this was a reason to support Jōtai’s refusal to use a Chinese era name in his state letter to the Korean king. This remark should be understood to mean that the second shogun followed or shared the view of his father who still held the reins of foreign policy as ōgosho.53

Two years later, Satsuma launched an expedition and conquered another Chinese tributary state, the Kingdom of Ryukyu, with about three thousand soldiers. This military operation was carried out under the authorization of the bakufu. Umeki Tetsuto mentions that for the bakufu, the Ryukyu policy had no more meaning than as a part of China policy.54 In addition, the subjugation and incorporation of the Ryukyus into the bakuhan system must have been a necessary political gesture for the Tokugawa to overcome the authority of the Toyotomi regime, which regarded the archipelago kingdom as being within its sphere of influence.55 Since the conquest of 1609, the kingdom had endured dual subordination to both China and Japan, until it was finally incorporated into Japan in the 1870s.

53 Kyōn Sōn, 55.


The Letters of 1611

The unexpected arrival of Zhou Xingru seemed to please Japanese leaders and probably encouraged the bakufū to pursue peaceful measures. In 1610, the bakufū was considering military measures to break through the stagnation of the China policy, as mentioned below. Some time in that year, Zhou Xingru had reached the Gōto Islands, Kyushu, and on January 25, 1611 (Keichō 15/12/12), he was granted an audience with Ieyasu at Sunpu Castle. It is still not known who Zhou was; he is said to have been either a merchant of Nanjing or an official of Fujian Province.56 He requested Ieyasu to exert greater control over pirates, mentioning that he would bring back a tally in the next year if his petition were heard.

On January 29 (Keichō 15/12/16), the bakufū prepared two letters (hereafter the 1611 letters) to Ming China and entrusted Zhou Xingru to deliver them to the military governor of Fujian Province, Chen Zichen.57 The 1600 letter had been drafted by the Zen monk, Saishō Jōtai, while these two letters were drafted by Ieyasu’s Neo-Confucian advisor, Hayashi Razan. Jōtai died in 1607, and Konchiin Sūden, also a Zen monk of the Rinzai Sect and of Nanzenji Temple in Kyoto, had taken over his position in 1609 but merely modified and wrote out a fair copy of Razan’s draft because of the Neo-Confucianist’s poor hand writing.58 This was indeed the only time Razan drafted diplomatic letters before the House of Hayashi came to dominate diplomatic

56 Li Xianzhang, Nagasaki Tōjin no kenkyū (Sasebo-shi: Shinwa Ginkō, 1991), 131.
administration after Süden’s death in 1633.59 Hori Isao conjectured that Razan had ingratiated himself with the bakufu and thus was given the chance to draft the letters.60

The 1611 letters had some characteristics in common with the 1600 letter. First, these two letters were neither state letters nor “biao.” The vermilion seals (shuin) found on the tails of the letters connoted that they were written according to the will of Ieyasu. One of them, hereafter called the 1611 Hasegawa letter, stated this even more explicitly.61 However, in common with the 1600 letter, neither of them was addressed from Ieyasu. Each of them was addressed by Honda Masazumi and by Hasegawa Fujihiro, Nagasaki Magistrate (Nagasaki bugyō).62 The expected recipient was not the Emperor Wangli but again the military governor of Fujian Province.63 They also showed no indication that Ieyasu intended to pay homage to the Chinese emperor as his vassal. Second, the letters made no reference to an apology for the Japanese invasion of Korea. In the Honda letter, there was a term, “ikan (regret),” which referred not to the

59 Ibid. Süden mentioned that Enkōji Genkitsu and he did not know that Razan was appointed to be the drafter of the letters. Tsūko ichiran, vol. 5, 308.

60 Hori, Hayashi Razan (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1964), 140-141.

61 Hayashi Razan bunshū, vol. 1, 131-132.

62 Hayashi Razan bunshū, 1: 130-132. These letters are also compiled in Tsūko ichiran, vol. 5, 342-343. Toby says that this was the first time Tokugawa Japan had announced its independence of the Chinese world order; as we saw in the 1600 letter, 1611 was not the first time.

63 Diplomatic letters were supposed to be exchanged between equals according to the East Asian diplomatic custom. It might be possible to say that the bakufu at least observed the custom at this point if they had regarded Mao Guoqi and Chen as equals to the three daimyo, and to Honda and Hasegawa.
war per se but to the frustrated peace settlement between Japan and Ming China in 1596 during the war in Korea.\textsuperscript{64}

Third, both letters repeated the request for the restoration of the tally but indicated that the Japanese had no intention of conducting a restored tally trade in the traditional way. It should be remembered here that some historians have seen this as evidence of Ieyasu’s desire to be reintegrated into the Chinese tributary system. According to Ashikaga precedent, the tally came after Ashikaga Yoshimitsu paid homage to the Ming emperor. That is, the tally followed the establishment of tributary relations. On the other hand, as with the 1600 letter, the Honda letter showed that the Tokugawa bakufu reversed the conventional order of the tally and the initiation of official relations, as it stated that after receiving the tally, the bakufu would dispatch an official ship (\textit{taishisen}).\textsuperscript{65} It further continues, “If other ships arrived without our ‘\textit{insho},’ they will not be the ships which we dispatched.”\textsuperscript{66} “\textit{Insho}” suggested a trade credential with the vermilion seal, “\textit{shuinjō},” which Ieyasu and his successors issued to both Japanese and foreign traders for their voyages abroad and for their visits to Japan.\textsuperscript{67} During the Muromachi period, Japanese ships setting out for Ming China were required to bear the tally. The Chinese-issued tally was, at the

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Hayashi Razan bunshū}, vol. 1, 130.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{67} As for Ieyasu and his successors’ issuing of vermilion seals, see \textit{Tsūkō ichiran}.
time, the sole authority enabling the Japanese to trade with China. As Ming China issued and
granted the tally to its tributary states every time a new emperor ascended to the imperial throne,
it embodied the authority of the Chinese emperor as the Son of Heaven (Tianzi). For the
Tokugawa bakufu, the tally was no longer the only source of authority for regulation of the
China trade. The Tokugawa rulers intended to deny the traditional authority of the tally and
instead initiated a vermilion seal, along with the tally, as another authority for regulation of the
trade. Furthermore, in the Sino-Japanese trade, while the tally was considered to be issued to the
Japanese unilaterally as it had been previously, a vermilion seal was intended for Chinese traders
who wanted to come to Japan, as well as for the Japanese going to China. Ieyasu had actually
granted vermilion seals to several Chinese visiting Japan, including Zhou Xingru.68 In the
Tokugawa vision of trade relations with Ming China, the vermilion seal might have had a wider
range of application than the Chinese-issued tally and may have even given the impression that
the bakufu intended to treat the tally as an adjunct to the reinstitution of Tokugawa foreign trade.

The letters furthermore expressed the Tokugawa vision of international relations, which
also appeared to challenge and deny Chinese superiority and supremacy. After referring to
Ieyasu’s wish to reinstitute the tally trade, the Hasegawa letter continued by observing that the
rehabilitation of the relationship between the two countries would “unite the delighted hearts of

68 Li Xianzhang, 123-130.
two universes (niten no kanshin o musubu).69 The context of the letter indicates that the term “two universes” suggests two universes which centered on China and Japan. The Honda letter showed what the Tokugawa Japan-centered universe was like. Referring to Ieyasu’s unification and pacification of Japan, it stated that the reign of the Tokugawa had extended over three generations, which probably included Ieyasu’s grandson, Iemitsu, who became the third shogun in 1623.70 As Ronald Toby notes, Hayashi Razan, the drafter of the letter, perhaps inserted this passage in order to assert the legitimacy of the Tokugawa rule in Chinese rhetorical terms.71 It then continued by asserting that Korea paid tribute, Ryukyu paid homage, and others such as Vietnam and Siam extended letters and tributes as the virtuous sway of the Tokugawa had reached over them.72 The Tokugawa bakufu seemed to dream of forming hierarchical international relations based on Japanese superiority and centrality, as it called the visits of foreign envoys “onrei (gratitude and obedience)” to Tokugawa-shogun ruled Japan, and as it envisaged that peace with Korea was achieved in the form of Korean subordination to Tokugawa Japan.73 The Tokugawa worldview corresponded little to reality, however. Except for the

69 Hyashi Razan bunshū, vol. 1, 132.

70 Ibid., vol. 1, 130.

71 Toby, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, 60.

72 Hyashi Razan bunshū, vol. 1, 132.

Ryukyus, the countries and regions to which the Honda letter referred were by no means either Japanese subordinates or tributaries in actual diplomatic and commercial relations. Regardless of the truth of these claims, it is easy to imagine that the Japanese proclamation of another universe was intolerable to China which was, it believed, supposed to be the only center of the only heaven under the rule of the Son of Heaven, the bearer of the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming*), namely the Chinese emperor.

The Japanese seemed to be aware that such remarks would make rapprochement difficult to achieve but continued to be outspoken about their ideal international order. There are actually two versions of the Honda letter, compiled in *Hayashi Razan bunshū* (Collection of Hayashi Razan) and Konchiin Süden’s *Ikoku nikki* (Foreign diary), between which there are differences. The passage referring to Korea’s tribute, the Ryukyus’ subordination, and so on in the Honda letter is not found in the version compiled in *Ikoku nikki*. From the fact that the fair copies of the letters were made by Konchiin Süden, Fujii Jōji conjectures that Süden modified Razan’s draft and that the draft found in *Ikoku nikki* was the one sent to Ming China. Supposing this conjecture is correct, it was probably because the Zen monk knew the diplomatic protocols acceptable to China. He in fact had consulted *Zenrin kokuhōki* (Record of national treasure of foreign relations), a collection of ancient and medieval diplomatic documents edited and

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75 Fujii, 38-40.
annotated by the Zen monk Zuike Shūhō in the late fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{76} The manuscript in \textit{Ikoku nikki}, however, still sounded sufficiently insolent to upset China. This manuscript still refused to recognize Chinese superiority by maintaining the idea of another Japan-centered universe as it stated that the moral sway of Tokugawa Japan had reached Korea and other countries.\textsuperscript{77}

\textbf{Political and Ideological Sources of the Tokugawa Perception of China and Attitudes toward Its Tributary System}

Why was the reintegration of Japan into the Chinese tributary system not an option for the Tokugawa regime from its inception? Chapter 2 discussed the reasons the Tokugawa needed a “victor’s peace” in the peacemaking policy toward Korea at a time when the Tokugawa were striving to establish domestic hegemony after Hideyoshi’s death. It is possible to apply that argument to the China policy. As with the Korea policy, rehabilitating the relationship with China was an occasion for the Tokugawa to demonstrate their ability to handle foreign affairs as a new unification regime replacing the Toyotomi. That they defined peace with China as inseparable from peace with Korea is shown in the 1600 letter; the Tokugawa needed to normalize relations with Ming China without surrendering to China’s claim of suzerainty. In fact, as one of the executive members of the Toyotomi regime, Ieyasu seemed to know the late hegemon’s stance toward China and even to share a similar vision of peace with China. The


\textsuperscript{77} Idem., \textit{Ikoku nikki}, 15.
seven peace conditions of 1593 revealed that Hideyoshi had intention of behaving as victor.\textsuperscript{78}

The state letter of 1596 from the Emperor Wangli, treating him as his vassal, hence enraged him and drove him into continuing the fighting in Korea. During the war, Ieyasu did not seem to question Hideyoshi’s pursuit of “victor’s peace,” as he actually perceived the previous Chinese envoy, visiting the wartime headquarters in Nagoya, Kyushu, in 1594, as a sign of China’s begging for Japanese forgiveness (\textit{wabi}).\textsuperscript{79} Even after Hideyoshi’s death in 1598, for Ieyasu, subordination to China, which Hideyoshi had rejected, would not have been a proper choice, given his desire to establish his legitimacy in taking over from the Toyotomi regime. Demonstrating legitimacy by refusing to become a Chinese tributary was also necessary for the Tokugawa as a warrior regime. When Japanese military superiority was a shared perception among the warriors of the time, and while the failure of the war of conquest in Korea did not bring the complete discouragement of this unsubstantiated conceit, to behave as a Chinese tributary might have been harmful or even destructive for a military regime which was supposed to represent Japanese military might externally and whose legitimacy of domestic rule depended on demonstrating and maintaining the military prowess of the Tokugawa as a new hegemon.

\textsuperscript{78} Zenrin kokuhōki, Shinpen zoku zenrin kokuhōki, 376.

\textsuperscript{79} Kitajima Manji, \textit{Toyotomi Hideyoshi no Chōsen shinryaku}, 62-65. The distorted information of the peace negotiations reported by such Japanese negotiators as Konishi Yukinaga seemed to give Hideyoshi and others an understanding that the envoy was Ming China’s expression of apology, though Hideyoshi did not seem to believe China’s sincerity fully.
The Tokugawa regime might also have learned how to deal with the Chinese tributary system from the experience of the Ashikaga bakufu. In the civil war of the fourteenth century known as the Northern and Southern Courts Period (Nanbokuchō jidai), Chinese suzerainty seemed to become an alternative source of authority when imperial authority had been diminished by the split of the imperial court, which lasted from the fall of the Emperor’ Go-Daigo’s Kenmu regime until the reunion of the two imperial courts in 1392. The decision of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu to become a Chinese vassal was probably intended to reinforce his own regime by relying on the authority of a foreign throne, in addition to any commercial interest. However he encountered the criticism of his contemporaries, even those who were close to him. When Yoshimitsu received a Chinese envoy in 1402 as a reply to his letter of the previous year, Nijō Mitsumoto, a court noble, noted in his diary regarding the Chinese letter in which China’s superiority was clearly spelt out, “The style of the letter was unthinkable. This is a grave matter for the country [=Japan].” Sanpōin Mansai, Yoshimitsu’s adopted son, also noted in his diary that among some, such as Shiba Yoshimasa, a prominent daimyo of the time, there was a critical

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80 Satō Shin’ichi, “Ashikaga seikenron,” 48. Before Yoshimitsu, Prince Kaneyoshi, who had stood against the Ashikaga in northern Kyushu, sent a “biao” to the first Ming emperor and became his vassal as King of Japan in 1371 according to Ming shilu. Although Kameyoshi seemed to send a letter to Ming, the fact that he became a Chinese vassal cannot be found in Japanese records. See Tsuji Zennosuke, Zōei Kaigai tsūkō shiwa (Tokyo: Naigai Shoseki Kabushiki Kaisha, 1930), 302-303; Mori Katsumi and Numada Jirō eds., Taigai kankeishi (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1978), 75-76.

view of Yoshimitsu’s reception of the Chinese embassy as “excessive.” Yōshū continued
to be criticized by later generations. In Zenrin kokuhoiki, which Konchiin Süden consulted,
Zuikei Shūhō, a late-fifteenth century diplomat and Zen monk of Shōkokuji Temple, criticized
Yoshimitsu for his use of the title of king and a Chinese era name and for styling himself a
“subject” of the Chinese emperor. He saw it as a national humiliation and as showing infidelity
to Japan’s own emperor. Arai Hakuseki, the sixth shogun Ienobu’s Confucian advisor in the
early eighteenth century, commented that such criticisms were “sensible.”

The criticism which the Ashikaga attitudes toward the tributary system evoked actually
came from the traditional notion of Sino-Japanese equality. We can find the Japanese paying
tribute to Chinese dynasties in antiquity in Chinese documents; the tribute of Himiko, Queen of
Yamatai, to the Wei dynasty (220-265) in the early third century is well known. Some imperial
rulers such as “Five Kings of Japan (Wa no goō)” had also paid tribute to Chinese dynasties in
antiquity. However, by the beginning of the seventh century the Japanese were no longer trying

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to earn a relationship with China by becoming its tributary.\textsuperscript{85} Prince Shōtoku (\textit{Shōtoku taishō}), the regent of the Empress Suiko (r. 593-628), sent an envoy, led by Ono no Imoko, to the Sui dynasty (589-618) in 607. The Japanese state letter addressed to the second emperor of the dynasty, Yangdi (r. 604-618), stated, “The Son of Heaven of the country of the sunrise (\textit{hiizuru tokoro no tenshi}) addresses the Son of Heaven of the country of the sunset (\textit{hibossuru tokoro no tenshi}).”\textsuperscript{86} This reveals that Shōtoku ventured to claim equality in the relationship of the two countries by making the Japanese emperor a peer of his Chinese counterpart. The notion of Sino-Japanese equality was also specified in the eighth century political codes as they defined Tang China (618-907) as an equal neighboring country (\textit{ringoku}), in contrast with Korea, a barbarian tributary (\textit{bankoku}).\textsuperscript{87} Diplomatic relations with China had been absent after an embassy to Tang China (\textit{kentōshi}) was cancelled in 894. Although Ashikaga Yoshimitsu restored official relations by paying tribute to Ming China in the early fifteenth century, Japan’s participation in the tributary system did not alter the traditional notion that Japan would not be subject to China. Yoshimitsu’s attitude toward Ming China was therefore considered unprecedented and continued to be criticized for centuries. Jōtai’s view of the status relations between the two countries and the

\textsuperscript{85} Taigai kankeishi, 1-21. See also Zenrin Kokuhōki, Shinpen zoku zenrin kokuhōki, 18-27.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 33; Nishijima Sadao, \textit{Nihon rekishi no kokusai kankyū} (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1985), 89. The letter is compiled in Zenrin kokuhōki. See Zenrin kokuhōki, Shinpen zoku zenrin kokuhōki, 34.

remarks of Tokugawa Hidetada in 1607 that Japan was not a subordinate of Ming China indicated that the Tokugawa policymakers had inherited the traditional notion.

Japanese attitudes toward the Chinese tributary system reflected their traditional ideology and beliefs. This can be found first in the fact that their religious and ideological self-perception of a divine land (shinkoku) made the Japanese refuse to recognize Chinese superiority. In 1411, Yoshimitsu’s son, Yoshimochi, the fourth shogun of the Ashikaga bakufu (r. 1394-1423), repealed his father’s China policy and refused to behave as a Chinese vassal. He reasoned that Yoshimitsu’s behavior violated the covenant given by the Japanese deities and that his death in 1408 had been caused by their curse. Resuming tributary relations with Ming China in 1432, Yoshimochi’s younger brother Yoshinori, the sixth shogun (r. 1429-1441), did not believe that emulating the style of his father’s state letter to the Ming emperor would be proper. Summoned for advice on the proper style of a state letter to China by the shogun, Manzai Jugō responded, “Since [Japan is] a divine land, to comply with the protocol of China is impossible.” Zuikei Shūhō, criticizing Yoshimitsu, also seemed an inheritor of the divine land ideology. He began *Zenrin kokuhōki* by quoting a famous passage, “Great Japan is a divine land (Ōyamato wa kami no kuni nari),” from Kitabatake Chikafusa’s *Jinnō shōtōki*. Toyotomi Hideyoshi deified

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88 Tsuji, 312; Sakuma, 359-360. See also *Zenrin kokuhōki, Shinpen zoku zenrin kokuhōki*, 138-144.

89 *Zenrin kokuhōki, Shinpen zoku zenrin kokuhōki*, 140.


himself by fabricating a legend that he was the child of the sun, in which the Japanese had religious faith, and exploited the claim of Japan’s divinity as justification for overseas conquest.92

In Keichō kenbunroku (Records of the Keichō period), perhaps published in the first decade of the seventeenth century, the author, Miura Jōshin, counted divinity as one of the grounds of Japanese superiority over others. The author, said to have been Fujiwara Seika’s disciple, claimed that the peace, which the Tokugawa achieved and was admired even by foreign countries, and Japan’s divinity gave it a superior status over China and India in the world, which the Japanese had described as consisting of those three countries.93 Engelberg Kaempfer, a German serving as physician for years at the Dutch factory in Nagasaki in the late seventeenth century, also noted that the Japanese claimed to be the descendants of deities.94

The Tokugawa bakufu appeared to be under the sway of this traditional ethos, as its decree on banning Christianity in 1613 began with the proclamation, “Our Japan is a divine land.”95 Tōshō Daigongen engi explains this notion in detail: “It is said that there were once three golden rings floating above the vast blue ocean. After the world was created, Yin and Yang were

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94 Engelbert Kaempfer, Kaempfer’s Japan: Tokugawa Culture Observed (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), 51.
95 Konchiin Süden, Ikoku nikki, 33-34.
divided, and the three golden rings turned into three shining sanctities and appeared. Hence our country is a divine land.96

The Japanese belief in the “unbroken” imperial lineage was also counted as a rationale for Japanese superiority over others, including China. Tōshō Daigongen engi claims that the divine origin of Japan and the unbroken line of imperial rulers, whose ancestry was believed to trace back to Amaterasu, places the country in the center of the world, which the Japanese had described as having three constituents – Japan, China, and India. “Time passed until the deities counted tens of thousands of generations,” it continues, “and until the imperial lineage counted a thousand generations, and no dynastic change has ever occurred, and so imperial descendants have been. Is there any land as well ruled as this in this world? It is hence clear that Japan is the root and India (Indo) and China (Shina) are branches and leaves.”97 Yamaga Sokō, a prominent scholar in the late seventeenth century, stated, “Our country (honchō) is descended from Amaterasu, and its imperial lineage has remained unchanged from the times of the deities until today.” As a Confucian, he valued this as the evidence of Japanese moral superiority.98 His contemporary and another notable Confucian of the Yamasaki Ansai School (Kimon), Asami

96 Tōshō Daigongen engi, 3.
97 Ibid.
Keisai, shared Sokō’s view. Later Confucian and non-Confucian scholars also inherited this claim.

**The Tokugawa Vision of Status Relations with Ming China**

What vision of status relations with China did the Tokugawa bakufu have when it abandoned the option of becoming a tributary? Some historians have argued that equal relations were what the bakufu sought. Nakamura Tadashi states that the 1611 Honda letter designates the bakufu’s will to obtain parity with China. Fujimura Michio has argued that if the letter had been accepted by Ming China, an equal association could have been established between the two countries. This argument is nonetheless problematic: Fujii needs to explain what specific aspects of the letter showed the Tokugawa’s intention of parity with Ming China. Indeed his argument is no better than speculation as it fails to present evidence that the Tokugawa sought an equal relationship with Ming China.

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101 Nakamura Tadashi, 343-344.

Kamiya Nobuyuki presents an interesting interpretation of the Tokugawa vision of status relations with Ming China. Like the tally, the reception of a “kin’in (gold seal)” and the title, “Nihon kokuō (King of Japan),” bestowed by the Chinese emperor would symbolize subordination to China. Examining the 1600 and 1611 letters, Kamiya notes that the Japanese intended to dispatch an envoy bearing the gold seal to China, along with a tally granted in advance, and saw normalization in that way as following “zenki (precedent).” He interprets “zenki” as referring to the visit of the Chinese envoy in 1596 and the golden seal which was brought, along with the state letter from the Emperor Wangli to Hideyoshi. In the Muromachi period, the investiture of the gold seal, as well as the title of king, meant the Ming emperor’s recognition of the Ashikaga shogun as his vassal. Seeking a “victor’s peace,” Hideyoshi on the other hand had no intention of becoming a foreign vassal and hence became furious and rejected the peace settlement. Kamiya refuses to regard the Tokugawa request for a tally and the reference to a gold seal as evidence of Ieyasu’s intention of joining the queue of Chinese vassals. He instead interprets the reference to the golden seal as revealing Ieyasu’s desire for Chinese recognition of him as King of Japan, in which the shogun and the Japanese emperor were incorporated, and concludes that Ieyasu, as King of Japan, was aiming to associate with the Chinese emperor as a peer.

103 Kamiya, “Taikun gaikō to kinsei no kokusei,” 89-102.

104 Ibid., 92.
This interpretation is not, however, wholly convincing for the following reasons. First, as mentioned above, although the vermilion seal contained the meaning of the denial of the exclusive authority which the tally had enjoyed in previous centuries in Sino-Japanese trade, it simultaneously referred to no specific Tokugawa view of status relations with China. Second, Kamiya fails to cite any direct evidence that Ieyasu wanted that particular title from the Chinese emperor. No reference to the title can be found in any documents, though he probably drew that conclusion from the reference to the golden seal in the 1600 letter. In addition, he would need to prove that the Japanese, or at least Ieyasu’s, understanding of “King of Japan,” which had traditionally implied inferiority to the Chinese emperor, had changed as well as the understanding of the tally. According to the attitudes which the bakufu adopted toward the title in its Korea policy as discussed in Chapter 2, it is unlikely that the Tokugawa were interested in this issue.

Existing primary sources suggest that the Tokugawa bakufu had no intention of being reintegrated into the Chinese tributary system. Japanese letters to Ming China contained no reference to or indication of subordination to Ming China. The Japanese refused to comply with the form of “biao”; they denied the traditional authority the tally had enjoyed for centuries and the entire Chinese Weltenschauung. So far from seeking subordination, their letters threatened China with another military assault unless China acceded to the Japanese vision of normalization. The traditional Japanese diplomatic and ideological perceptions of China, which the Tokugawa
policymakers inherited, suggested the possibility that Tokugawa Japan would seek at least equality or perhaps more. The letters did not, however, show anything but a rejection of reintegration into the tributary system. At best, the Tokugawa attitude toward Ming China was ambiguous, with respect to status relations.

This ambiguity toward status relations may partially have reflected the limitations of Japanese diplomatic ability. Rejecting becoming a Chinese tributary, the Japanese would be left with the following options – obtaining either a superior or an equal status vis-à-vis China, leaving status relations behind intentionally, or giving up on restoring the relationship itself. Nevertheless, establishing both a negotiation route and a relationship with Ming China had traditionally required foreign countries to comply with a certain set of manners, such as behaving as a subject and paying tribute to China. To try to establish a relationship with China as a superior or a peer, aside from giving up on the process, would have, therefore, required the Japanese to take forcible measures to compel China to surrender to the Japanese vision of Sino-Japanese relations. Otherwise, they would have had to accede to diplomatic relations acceptable to China. While consistent in not subordinating themselves to China, the Japanese seemed to be historically aware that they would need to give way to the Chinese to a certain degree. For example, as mentioned above, eighth-century Japan defined China as a peer but simultaneously understood the necessity of compromising in order to maintain diplomatic relations with Tang China. In 733, the Japanese state letter, written in Chinese, styled the Japanese emperor “Sumeramikoto,”
instead of styling him Tennō and Kōdai (Kôtei). “Sumeramikoto” was the Japanese vernacular for the emperor but it had never been employed in diplomacy before. The Japanese probably used it intentionally, by spelling it with six Chinese characters (zhu, ming, le, mei, yu, de), in order to conceal the contradiction between the Chinese and Japanese diplomatic perceptions. The Chinese seemed to misunderstand it as the surname and given name of the Japanese “king,” as the Japanese perhaps expected. The Tokugawa bakufu also compromised in a different way. While enumerating the words and phrases which would upset China in the 1600 and 1611 letters, the bakufu, which did not take forcible measures against even the much smaller state of Korea, chose to tame the self-claimed Middle Kingdom to some extent by calling Ming China “Chūka (Zhonghua)” and “Tenchō (Tianchao).”

The ambiguity perhaps may also have grown out of the complexity of the Japanese perception of China. As noted above, at least since the early seventh century, parity had been the diplomatic and political stance which successive imperial and warrior rulers had deemed acceptable. Even Japanese superiority based on religious and intellectual rationales had been claimed and discussed among political and intellectual elites. The Japanese had, on the other hand, continued to revere China and had drawn extensively from its civilization since antiquity.

105 Furuse Natsuko, Kentōshi no mita Chūgoku, Rekishi bunka raiburari 154 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbukan, 2003), 119-121.

106 Nishijima, 177-178.

Even claims and discourses on Japanese superiority had depended on Chinese rhetoric, consciously or unconsciously. The Japanese knew that China was far larger than their own country. The cultural dependency, the sentiment of reverence, and the awareness of relative smallness could possibly engender an inferiority complex. Nevertheless, Uete Michiari has mentioned that the Japanese had distinguished China as a state from China as a civilization; the notions of equality and superiority indicated that cultural dependency did not determine the Japanese perception of status relations with China. Notions of equality and superiority might have been reactions to such an inferiority complex and may have produced a resulting desire for emulation or a sense of rivalry. This would have been a natural human response of self-esteem and respect. Tokutomi Sohō (ichirō), a noted journalist in the Meiji, Taishō and Shōwa periods, wrote that the Japanese, fascinated, adoring, envying, and yearning after the Chinese civilization, had tried to preserve their independence and individuality by fostering a sense of rivalry, which generated the ideology of Japan as a divine land. The Japanese claim to be “Dai Nihon (Great

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108 For example, see Arai Hakuseki zenshū, vol. 4, 724, vol. 5, 603-604, 649-650.


Japan)” and the center of the universe was, he mentioned, due to the indomitable spirit which grew out of the Japanese awareness that their own country was small and poor. Sohō said that without this spirit, Japan would otherwise have become China’s subordinate.\(^\text{113}\)

The following episode indicates that the sense of inferiority displeased the Japanese rather than persuading them to recognize China’s superiority. One day, Ieyasu questioned Hayashi Razan about the education system of China. When Razan replied that the Chinese education and school system was superior to that of Japan, Ieyasu looked displeased and terminated their talks.\(^\text{114}\) Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles’ speech in Batavia in 1815 may also indicate the Japanese sense of rivalry with the Chinese. Based on the report W. Ainslie dispatched to Nagasaki for the purpose of resuming trade with Japan four years earlier, Raffles mentioned that the Japanese detested being compared to the Chinese.\(^\text{115}\) The Japanese also refused to accept the disparity in size as a rationale for China’s superiority (Japan’s inferiority).\(^\text{116}\) Although the assumption of equality or superiority might thus have grown out of an inferiority complex and such sentiments as emulation and a sense of rivalry, the undeniable facts of Japan’s


\(^{114}\) Hori, *Hayashi Razan*, 164-165.


cultural importations and its territorial size, along with the lack of measures to overcome the Chinese claim of superiority might simultaneously have prevented the bakufu from establishing an acceptable concrete status relationship with Ming China.

Tokugawa China Policy after 1611

The 1611 letters proved to be a last attempt at a direct approach to Ming China, but Ming China did not reply to either of them. *Ming shilu* (The veritable record of the Ming dynasty) states that the 1600 letter reached Fuzhou and was transmitted to the Ming imperial court in Beijing.\(^{117}\) Meanwhile, as no reference to the 1611 letters is found, it is likely either that Zhou Xingru did not deliver the letters to the Fuzhou authority, or that local Chinese officials received them but did not transmit them to Beijing. After the two Chinese ships which the Emperor Wangli had dispatched suffered an attack by Japanese pirates in 1601, the Ming authorities maintained vigilant observation of Japan. Informed of Satsuma’s conquest of the Ryukyus in 1609, the Ming authorities tightened their maritime prohibitions. The military governor of Fujian Province, Chen Zichen, was in fact one of the firmest advocates of stricter precautions against Japanese piracy.\(^{118}\) To send a letter to such a person without fulfilling the

\(^{117}\) *Ming shilu*, Entry for the first day of the seventh month, 1600.

\(^{118}\) Ibid., For example, the military governor Chen proposed to the imperial court that maritime defenses and prohibition be reinforced on the sixteenth day of the eleventh month, 1610.
necessary conditions for communicating with the self-proclaimed Middle Kingdom and to anticipate a reply was a fatuous expectation.

Because its direct approach had been frustrated, the Tokugawa bakufu came to concentrate on indirect approaches via China’s tributaries – Korea and the Ryukyus. Some accounts of Tsushima’s request for “borrowing a route to Ming China” are found in Korean documents, which, however, present no details of what instructions the bakufu passed to the domain. No such account can be discovered in bakufu documents either. It should also be remembered that Tsushima secretly and wrongly continued to manipulate the Tokugawa Korea policy for several decades until the Yanagawa Affair exposed its malpractice in the early 1630s. Kondō Morishige (Seisai), the editor of Gaiban tsūsho, noted that this would make it difficult to credit those documents. All we know is that the Japanese still expected the Chinese tributary state to mediate in negotiations with its suzerain, as Ieyasu had in 1607. The bakufu however seemed to be more conscious of possible influence from these diplomatic actions on Japan’s and its own dignity and prestige after Saishō Jōtai’s remonstration with Ieyasu. The founder of the bakufu had once thought of contacting the Korean king by writing to him directly; his successors never intended to ask the Yi dynasty to mediate with China directly and instead used the Tsushima channel. As Korea rejected Tsushima’s request, this attempt also failed. The Koreans

119 O Sukkwŏn comp., Kosa Ch’waryo, 120; Tsuji, 473.

120 Kondō, Gaiban tsūsho, 21-22.
may have been afraid that helping Japan would incur the displeasure of Ming China. They also
would not have wanted to invite the Japanese to their territories because the transit of the
Ashikaga tributary missions to China via the Korean Peninsula gave the Japanese the opportunity
to acquire knowledge of Korea and had helped them to invade in the 1590s. Korea did not,
therefore, allow the Japanese to go beyond the southern port city, Pusan, except for the 1629
Tsushima mission which went up to Seoul.

Meanwhile, Satsuma documents give more details of the indirect approach via the
Ryukyus. In 1606, in a letter to the Ryukyu king, Shō Nei (r. 1589-1612), Shimazu Iehisa stated
that Shogun Hidetada expected the China trade to be restored in the Ryukyus.121 When Shimazu
Iehisa brought Shō Nei as a captive of the conquest of 1609 to Edo in late September 1610
(Keichō 15/9), Tokugawa Hidetada guaranteed the rule of the House of Shō over the Ryukyus in
order to use the Ryukyus’ status as a Chinese tributary to facilitate the Tokugawa China
policy.122 On December 2, 1611 (Keichō 16/10/28), Iehisa suggested to Shō Nei three options for
Sino-Japanese relations which the bakufu desired and instructed him to mediate negotiations
with Ming China on trade. First, China and Japan would trade on a peripheral island. Second,

122 Tokugawa jikki, in Shintei zōho kokushi taikei, vol. 38, 530; Butoku hennen shūsei, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Meicho
Shuppan, 1976), 134.
both countries would dispatch commercial vessels annually to the Ryukyus for trade. Third, both
countries would communicate by exchanging envoys.\(^{123}\)

In *Nanhei kikō* (The travelogue of southern envoys), the author Ijichi Sueyasu states
that in 1612, Shimazu Yoshihiro, receiving the order of Ieyasu, also instructed Shō Nei to
approve the three options mentioned above for restoring trade.\(^{124}\) Bunshi Genshō (Nanpo
Bunshi), a Zen monk in charge of drafting diplomatic notes for Satsuma, was to draft a letter to
be addressed to China. Satsuma let a Ryukyu tributary mission deliver the letter, dated the spring
of 1613; this letter suggested the three options to Ming China. First, Ming China would allow
Japanese commercial ships to trade in its border region. Second, Chinese commercial ships
would come to the Ryukyus to trade with the Japanese. Third, China and Japan would trade with
an exchange of envoys.\(^{125}\) The border trade referred to in the letter may suggest trade in the
coastal region of Taiwan, located on the opposite shore of Fujian Province. Expeditions by
Arima Harunobu in 1609, and Murayama Tōan, Nagasaki Deputy (*Nagasaki daikan*), in 1616
conducted trade with the sanction of the bakufu based on the latter’s interest in Taiwan as a


\(^{124}\) Ijichi Sueyasu, *Nanhei kikō* (1970), 26. Although Shō Nei dispatched a tributary envoy to China within the
year, it could not accomplish its mission. The Ryukyuans were merely allowed to pay tribute every ten years.

\(^{125}\) *Nanpo bunshū*, vol. 2, 508; Konchiin Süden, *Ikoku niki*, 40.
potential trade spot. The third option, in these two letters, is not clear but should be understood as repeating the same request as that in the 1600 and 1611 letters.

After suggesting these three options, both Iehisa and Yoshihiro continued, asserting that Chinese rejection of the options would result in China’s being subjected to Japanese military action. Satsuma followed instructions from the bakufu, as Yoshihiro said to Shō Nei that Ieyasu intended to dispatch troops in case China’s rejected all of them. On April 3, 1610 (Keichō 15/leap 2/10), Honda Masazumi passed to Shimazu Iehisa an instruction, stating that Satsuma was exempted from participation in the construction of Nagoya Castle, which had been started in 1609. Masazumi continued that Satsuma would instead prepare to dispatch troops to China in case the effort to restore the tally trade failed. In August or September 1610 (Keichō 15/7/u), Iehisa met with Itakura Katsushige, Kyoto Deputy (Kyōto shoshidai), in Fushimi on his way to Edo, with Shō Nei captured in the conquest of 1609. Itakura told Iehisa that an expedition to China would seem to other daimyo a good reason to exempt Satsuma from the construction. Complaints about the series of large scale construction projects to which the bakufu obliged

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127 Nanhei kikō, 26.


129 Ibid., no. 703, 716.
daimyo to contribute had reached the ears of the bakufu. The bakufu probably considered that such an excuse was therefore necessary to ease the discontent among the daimyo. At the same time, still uncertain of China’s reaction to the conquest of its tributary, the bakufu wanted to make Satsuma concentrate on the China-Ryukyu issue. However, Itakura did not entirely deny the use of military measures as a possible choice, telling Iehisa that “bahan (piracy)” would be proper. “Bahan” originally came from the Chinese name for Japanese pirates, “bafan”, after the name of the Japanese deity of war, Hachimanshin, who was depicted on their flags.

This indirect approach did not, however, bear the fruit which had been anticipated. Although the 1613 letter was entrusted to the Ryukyu tributary mission in October, 1614 (Keichō 19/9), Ming China refused to accept the mission itself. Having been informed of Satsuma’s conquest of the tributary kingdom in 1609, China was suspicious of the Ryukyus’ relationship with Japan. The Fujian authority feared that the eastern coastal area of Taiwan, such as present-day Danshui, might be subject to Japanese piracy and strengthened the maritime prohibitions and coastal defense of the mainland. Konchiin Süden later wondered if the

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131 *Kyūki zatsuroku: kōhen*, vol. 4, no. 1280.
132 Ibid., no. 672.
133 Ibid., no. 1281.
134 *Ming shilu*, the entry of the 1612.
135 Ibid., the entry of the fourteenth day of the seventh month of 1616.
Ryukyus had truly transmitted the Japanese request to China.\(^{136}\) In late April or early May, 1616 (Genna 2/3), Shimazu Iehisa again ordered Shō Nei to mediate in negotiations with China.\(^{137}\) Iehisa received a report from Shō Nei three months later that the Japanese request had been declined, though it has been an issue of debate among historians whether the Ryukyus truly transmitted the Japanese request to Ming China or not.\(^{138}\) Along with this repeated indirect approach, in the same year, Murayama Tōan launched an expedition to Taiwan, under the sanction of the bakufu, for the purpose of opening a trade site on the island. In April (?) 1617 (Genna 3/3), the bakufu returned Dong Bochi, captured in an expedition, to Fuzhou.\(^{139}\) This Japanese use of force, in tandem with the peaceful diplomatic measures via the Ryukyus, did not contribute to success of the Tokugawa China policy. After these attempts resulted in failure, the indirect approach also ceased.

It has been argued that after the death of Ieyasu in 1616, his successors lost their enthusiasm for restoring the relationship with Ming China. After the Ryukyu-route approach failed either because of Chinese rejection or because of Ryukyu sabotage, the bakufu never


\(^{137}\) *Kyūki zatsuroku kōhen*, vol. 4, no. 1239.

\(^{138}\) Ibid., no. 1356; Tomiyama Kazuyuki, “Kinsei shoki ni okeru Ryukyu Okoku no tai-Satsuma gaiko: Shō Nei, Shō Hō seiken ikōki o megatte,” *Ryūkyū Daigaku Kyōiku Gakubu kō* 54-1, 2 (March 1999): 53-66. As Komiyama mentions, it seems doubtful that the Ryukyus fulfilled Satsuma’s instruction, as for example, Shō Nei leaked Murayama’s expedition to Ming China. In *Ming shilu*, the entry of the fourteenth day of the seventh month states that the King of the Ryukyu stated that Japanese pirates may attack Jilongshan (present-day Jilong, Taiwan) with more than 500 battleships, warning that if it were seized by the Japanese, other regions in Taiwan and the Fujian coast would be endangered.

reiterated its request for a restoration of diplomatic relations and the tally trade, nor did Japanese troops cross the sea to assault China. The success of the trade system of vermilion seals (shuinsen bōeki) and the visits of Portuguese and Chinese ships to Japanese ports, violating the Ming maritime prohibitions in the latter case, might have fulfilled Japanese demands for foreign goods, especially Chinese silk. The bakufu might not therefore have wanted to waste any more energy on the difficult issue of the status relationship with China.  

The bakufu’s attitudes toward the Chinese envoy in 1621 revealed its declining interest not only in diplomatic relations but also in official commercial ties with the Ming dynasty. In April or May 1621 (Genna 7/3/u), more than fifty Chinese, led by the merchant Dan Fengxiang, came to Nagasaki, carrying the two letters dated 1619, from the military governor of Zhejiang Province. One of them was addressed to the shogun, and the other was addressed to the Nagasaki Magistrate. It was the first time Ming China had sent letters to Japan since the end of the war in Korea. The Chinese letters contained neither any suggestion of peace nor any reference to the restoration of the tally but instead demanded that the Japanese control Japanese piracy. The fact that bakufu officials spent more than three weeks deciding on a response to the letter and more than three months on deciding how to treat the Chinese visitors, who had been detained in

140 Toby, State and Diplomacy in early Modern Japan, 63-64.
142 Ibid.
Kyoto, might indicate that they had not totally lost interest in rehabilitating ties with China.\textsuperscript{143} However, the Chinese letter had a problem from the Japanese point of view: The letter styled the Tokugawa shogun – Hidetada at the time – “\textit{shōgun-sama (c. Jiangjunyang)}.” \textit{Jiangjun (shōgun)}, namely shogun, had never been a diplomatic title in East Asian international relations.\textsuperscript{144} Successive Japanese warrior rulers, including the Tokugawa shoguns, had never employed the title in diplomacy. Because of this odd feature of the letter, Konchiin Süden even suspected that the letter might be a fake.\textsuperscript{145} As Ii Naotaka noted when he conferred with other bakufu officials to decide on a shogunal diplomatic title after the Yanagawa Affair in 1635, the title could imply Japan’s inferior status to China as it meant military commander and was employed as a title for a subject in both China and Japan.\textsuperscript{146} The final decision was not to accept the letter, and the bakufu ordered the envoy to leave Japanese territory. The explanation given to the envoy was that the letter was discourteous to the Japanese and that communication between China and Japan had been to be made through Korea.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 38-39; \textit{Tsūkō ichiran}, vol. 5, 556-561.

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 39.

\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Ikoku Nikki}, 38.

\textsuperscript{146} See Chapter 2.

\textsuperscript{147} During the Muromachi period, some Ashikaga tributary missions to Ming China had passed through the Korean Peninsula; after the virtual termination of Sino-Japanese tributary relations in the mid-sixteenth century, there had been no such fixed rule.
The response of the bakufu to another Chinese letter also showed its declining interest in the restoration of relations with China. In 1624, the bakufu received a letter addressed from the Fujian authorities to the Nagasaki Magistrate. The letter again asked the bakufu to control piracy, though it is not clear whether Japanese piracy was as active at the time as the Chinese asserted.\(^{148}\) It should be remembered that for Ming China, the tally trade with Ashikaga Japan had been a measure for coping with Japanese piracy, as well as a way to manifest its power as the Middle Kingdom. This would have been, accordingly, another chance for the bakufu to attempt the restoration of either diplomatic or commercial relations; a letter addressed from Hasegawa Gonroku, who was Fujihiro’s nephew and had taken over the office of Nagasaki Magistrate in 1614, contained no words indicating Japanese interest in reconciling China. It merely rebuffed the Chinese demand by asserting that Japanese maritime control was functioning efficiently and was sufficiently strict.\(^{149}\)

Some historians have seen the 1620s and the 1630s as a turning point in Japanese attitudes toward the Chinese world order. Ronald Toby, arguing that the Tokugawa bakufu once considered participating in the Chinese tributary system and also that the Tokugawa attitude toward China was ambivalent, states that the bakufu’s rejection of the Chinese envoy in 1621

\(^{148}\) Tsūkō Ichiran, vol. 5, 563.

\(^{149}\) Ibid., 563-4.
was a declaration of its rejection of participating in the Chinese tributary system. Nakamura Hidetaka, stating that the bakufu had previously intended to be reintegrated into the Sinocentric international community, has understood the “Taikun diplomacy (Taikun gaikō taisei),” which refers to the diplomatic and foreign trade relations formed by the end of the 1630s and which was named after the shogunal diplomatic title, Taikun, as the Japanese declaration of independence of the tributary system.

In this chapter, my position is that those events merely revealed the continuity of Tokugawa attitudes toward Ming China. If the bakufu had accepted the letter of 1621, it could imply that Japan recognized Chinese superiority. The rejection of the Chinese envoy and of the letters of the 1620s certainly showed the bakufu’s declaration of rejecting becoming a Chinese tributary. However, it simultaneously showed that the bakufu was behaving as it had in previous decades. That is to say, the bakufu maintained the stance of not humbling itself as China’s inferior partner. The formation of the Taikun diplomacy by the end of the 1630s was also no more than a reconfirmation of the bakufu’s unchanging attitude toward the Chinese tributary system. Along with the new shogunal diplomatic title Taikun, the bakufu decided to use a Japanese era name in its diplomatic letters. This decision was based on the claim that Japan was

150 Ibid.

151 Nakamura Hidetaka, “Taikun gaikō no kokusai ninshiki”: 16.
not a Chinese tributary, which had been indeed the bakufu’s consistent stance toward China since the beginning of the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{152}

\textbf{The Tokugawa Response to the Manchu Conquest of China and Attitudes toward the Qing Dynasty}

History repeats itself. China was again fated to go through a dynastic change in the mid-seventeenth century. In 1644, the “Mandate of Heaven” slipped out of the hands of the House of Zhu to the House of Aisin Gioro after more than two hundred seventy years of the Ming rule over China. The Ming dynasty, failing to suppress a peasant uprising led by Li Zichen, ended with the suicide by hanging of the last emperor. The new rulers were neither the rebels who had toppled the Ming nor Han Chinese, but the Manchus, a minority ethnic group originally dwelling in present-day northeastern China (Manchuria) and far eastern Russia. The alien conquerors, naming their dynasty Great Qing (\textit{Da Qing}) in 1636, crossed the Great Wall, crushed the peasant uprising, and transferred their capital from Shenyang in southern Manchuria to Beijing. The Chinese mainland thereafter continued to be ruled by the Manchus until the last emperor, Puyi (r. 1908-1912), abdicated in 1912 because of the republican revolution.

When the news of the Manchu conquest of China was brought to Japan through Chinese merchants arriving in Nagasaki early in October 1644 (Kan’ei 21/9), indifference was

\textsuperscript{152} See Chapter 2.
not the response of the Tokugawa bakufu to the event on the East Asian mainland.\footnote{Enoki Kazui ed., \textit{Kai Hentai}, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Tōhō Shoten, 1981), 3-8.} The Tokugawa had in fact kept their eyes on the movements of the Manchus even before Ieyasu initiated the bakufu in 1603. The Japanese had already discovered during the Korea campaign of Toyotomi Hideyoshi in the 1590s that the Manchu tribes were fighting for unification in the land called \textit{Orankai} (Tartary) during the Korea campaign of Toyotomi Hideyoshi.\footnote{For example, see Katō Kiyomasa monjōshū, \textit{Kumamoto-ken shiryō: chūsei-hen}, vol. 5, 1969, no. 15.} Ieyasu perceived the growing Manchu power in northeastern Asia as a potential obstacle to his China and Korea policies. The limited Japanese knowledge of geography furthermore generated the misunderstanding that \textit{Orankai} was connected by land with Ezochi (present-day Hokkaido) and caused Ieyasu to fear that the Manchus would pose a threat to Japanese national security from the North.\footnote{Kamiya, \textit{Taikun gaikō to Higashi Ajia}, 114-115. Also See Walker, 38.} When Korea suffered a major Manchu invasion in 1627, the bakufu proposed through Tsushima to offer relief, which the Korean government declined.\footnote{\textit{Tokugawa jikki}, vol. 2, in \textit{Shintei zōho Kokushi taikei}, vol. 39, 451.} The Japanese apprehension and even their hostile view of the Manchus may have been embedded not only in their common memories of the invasion of the Tatars some centuries earlier but also in their ideological view of the Manchus. In 1019, a Jurchen tribe dwelling in the Maritime Province, whom the Japanese called \textit{Toi}, assaulted Tsushima, Iki Island, and the northern Kyushu coast across the Sea of Japan.
The Mongol empire, the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), made abortive attempts to conquer Japan in 1274 and in 1281, and the Mongol menace continued to cause the Japanese concern over national security until the late fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{157} In addition, the Japanese, who had adopted the Chinese distinction of civilized and barbarian in viewing the self and others, perceived the Tatars as inferior barbarians.\textsuperscript{158}

As previous studies have already discussed, turmoil in the East Asian mainland seemed to affect the Japanese perception of China. Hayashi Gahō, Razan’s son and the Rector of the University (daigaku-no-kaami) did not recognize the emergence of the Manchu dynasty as an ordinary dynastic change of the sort China had undergone for the previous thousand years. Under the order of the bakufu, Gahō began in 1674 to compile information and documents regarding the events on the continent and gave the work the title, \textit{Ka-i hentai} (Metamorphosis from Civilized to Barbarian.) Its preface reveals that he understood the Manchu conquest as China’s transformation from “civilized (ka)” to “uncivilized (i).”\textsuperscript{159} The fact that the vast neighboring country which had claimed its superiority to all others was conquered by the small ethnic group


\textsuperscript{158} For example, see \textit{Kai hentai}, vol., p. 3. The perception of the Manchus as barbarians seemed to remain among the Japanese throughout the Tokugawa period. See, Nōtomi Sukejirō, \textit{Shanhai zakki, Bakumatsu Meiji Chūgoku kenbunroku shūsei}, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 1997), 11. Nōtomi visited Shanhai when the Tokugawa bakufu dispatched an envoy, consisting of the bakufu retainers and others from various domains in 1862.

\textsuperscript{159} \textit{Kai hentai}, vol. 1, p. 1.
seemed to give strength to the Japanese claim of superiority. Yamaga Sokō, for example, discussed Japanese superiority by contrasting his own country, whose martial might he claimed had prevented foreign conquest, with China’s repeated humiliations from barbarian conquests including the Manchu conquest.160

Given the policies of the bakufu and the Manchus toward each other, Japan’s involvement in the continental convulsion and a direct confrontation with the Manchus was a possibility. Prior to the events of 1644, when Korea suffered another major invasion by the Manchus and finally surrendered to their overlordship in 1636, the Manchus ordered the Yi dynasty to summon a Japanese mission to pay homage and tribute to them, instead of allowing the Koreans to continue the trade with Japan. Probably acquainted with the Japanese attitude toward the Chinese tributary system, Korea sabotaged the order by instead promising to provide information on Japan.161 It was fortunate for Japan that the Manchus did not persist, and finally lost interest in subjugating Japan. Meanwhile, the Tokugawa bakufu showed no interest in establishing either diplomatic or commercial relations with the Manchu dynasty, until the early 1860s. Nor did the bakufu even consider becoming a Chinese vassal. At the inception of the new regime in China, the bakufu did not even allow visits of the traders from Manchu-occupied


territories for several years after being informed of the Manchu conquest, while maintaining commercial relations with other Chinese coming from areas occupied by Ming loyalists.\footnote{Nagasaki Oranda Shokan no nikki, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1957), 96, 101-102.}

Some Japanese policymakers even wanted the Manchus, who had been perceived as a latent menace to Japan, to be removed from China and thought of taking actions to facilitate this outcome. In January 1646 (Shōhō 2/12), a Chinese merchant named Lin Gao delivered two letters to the Nagasaki Magistrate, Yamazaki Gonpachirō. Those letters were from Cui Zhi, who served under a known Ming royalist, Zhang Zhilong, asking for Japanese military help to restore the Ming dynasty.\footnote{Ka-i hentai, vol. 1, p. 11-14. Regarding the Ming loyalists’ request for Japanese military aid, the most detailed study is Ishihara Michihiro’s work. See Ishihara Michihiro, Nihon kisshi no kenky (Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1945).} It would be easy to suppose that the Chinese request for military aid and words as flattering as those in the Chinese letters appealed to notions of Japanese superiority, especially their belief in their own martial superiority.\footnote{For example, Cui Zhi’s letter called Japan a “great power” and praised Japanese gallantry.} Receiving a second request in October, 1646 (Shōhō 3/9), the shogun Iemitsu’s uncle, Tokugawa Yorinobu of Kishū, for example, considered an expedition to be a great opportunity to rescue China from its barbarian occupation. He even dreamed of demonstrating Japanese military prowess overseas and of obtaining overseas territories on the continent.\footnote{Tsūkō ichiran, vol. 5, p. 399.}
Anti-Manchu resistance continued until the early 1680s, and envoys “begging” for relief, which the Japanese called “Nihon kisshi,” came repeatedly to Japan until the mid-1660s; the bakufu never offered a favorable response to anti-Manchu (anti-Qing) forces.\textsuperscript{166} Historians have offered different explanations for this. Tsuji Zennosuke and Ronald Toby have maintained that the shogun, Iemitsu, was interested in a rescue expedition.\textsuperscript{167} Toby argues that the bakufu was discouraged from dispatching troops to the continent when anti-Manchu resistance forces, led by Zhang Chenggong, Zhilong’s son and also known as Coxinga (Guoxingye), had lost their continental foothold, Fuzhou, in November 1646.\textsuperscript{168} Komiya Kiyoshi and Yamamoto Hirofumi contend that there was no convincing evidence that the top-ranking leaders of the bakufu, including the shogun, were involved in the expedition plan. Yamamoto states that the bakufu had already decided not to be involved in the turmoil on the continent before the fall of Fuzhou.\textsuperscript{169}

As the Manchus secured ever-larger territories on the continent, the bakufu seemed to accept the reality that the Qing were the new ruling dynasty of China and to assume more pragmatic attitudes. The Manchu conquest of China aroused Japanese concern over the status of the Ryukyus, and over their own security as well. The archipelago to the south had paid tribute to

\textsuperscript{166} See Ishihara. See also Ka-i hentai and Tsûkô ichiran, vol. 5.

\textsuperscript{167} Toby, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, 124; Tsuji, 640-648.

\textsuperscript{168} Toby, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, 128-129.

\textsuperscript{169} Komiya Kiyoshi, “‘Minmatsu Shinsho Nihon kisshi’ ni taisuru Iemitsu seiken no taiô: Seiho 3-nen 1-gatsu 12-nichi-zuke Itakura Shigemune shojo no kentô o chûshin to shite,” Kyûshû shigaku 97 (1990):1-19; Yamamoto Hirofumi, Sakoku to kaikin no jidai, 191-195.
the Ming dynasty since the late fourteenth century, that is, since before the Ryukyu chain was unified under the Royal House of Shō in 1429. The Japanese – the bakufu and Satsuma – were concerned about what attitudes the Manchu conquerors would take toward the Ryukyus. For the bakufu, the subordination of the Ryukyus to the barbarian dynasty, Qing, was undesirable; it was afraid that the Ryukyus would be affiliated with the Manchus and become a menace to Japan.170 As the central government, the bakufu was also concerned that the subjugation of the Ryukyus by the Qing would also damage Japanese national prestige which it was supposed to represent and sustain.171 For Satsuma, surrendering the Ryukyus, which had been granted by the bakufu as a reward for the military conquest of 1609, to the Manchus could cause the loss of a revenue source and of the honor of the House of Shimazu as a warrior house vis-à-vis other warrior houses.172 However, communications exchanged between the bakufu and Satsuma in the late 1640s and mid-1650s reveals that neither had been able to take decisive and effective measures against a possible Manchu menace to the Ryukyus. When they learned, by late 1649, of the intention of the Qing to set up tributary relations with the Ryukyus, the bakufu did not employ its prerogative in foreign affairs; instead it entrusted to Satsuma the final decision on the Ryukyu-Qing issue on October 26, 1650 (Keian 2/10/2).173 Nor was Satsuma quite sure what to do.

172 Yamamoto, 200.
173 Rekischō raihei, vol. 21, no. 1228.
October 15, 1651 (Keian 3/9/20), it instructed the Ryukyus to dispatch tributary missions both to the Qing and to one of the Ming royals, keeping an equal distance from both.\footnote{Kyūki zatsuroku tsuiroku, vol. 1, no. 396.}

Whether the Ryukyuan would accept Manchu customs such as the queue was another concern. On August 13, 1655 (Meireki 1/7/12), Satsuma pointed out that the Ryukyus’ surrender to barbarian customs would bring disgrace upon Japanese national prestige and force the bakufu and Satsuma to take action against the Manchus.\footnote{Rekischō raihei, vol. 21, no. 1228, 1231} On September 21 (Meireki 1/8/22), the bakufu, however, decided to tolerate the Ryukyus’ inevitable acceptance of Manchu customs, ignoring Satsuma’s apprehension.\footnote{Ibid., vol. 21, no. 1233.} It was again fortunate for the Japanese that their fear after all resulted in needless apprehensions, as the Qing did not compel their subordinates, including the Ryukyus, to comply with their customs. The Japanese never thought of renouncing the subordinate kingdom; Satsuma continued to station its retainers on the islands of the Ryukyu Chain, to require the Ryukyus to surrender a prince to its domainal capital, Kagoshima, as a hostage, and to oblige them to pay annual tribute.\footnote{Kamiya, Bakuhansei kokka no Ryūkyū shihai, 196.} Ryukyu missions continued to pay tribute to Edo and counted fourteen until the end of the Tokugawa era.\footnote{Miyagi Eishō, Ryūkyū shisha no Edo nobori (Tokyo: Daiichi Shobō, 1982), 11-20. Shō Nei’s tribute to Edo in 1610 is not usually counted.} On the other hand, they had no
intention of coming into conflict with the Qing over the Ryukyus and chose to compromise. The bakufu seemed to recognize the Qing as the new Chinese dynasty by late 1655. On November 3, 1655 (Meireki 1/10/6), the bakufu acceded to the Ryukyu subordination to the Qing, telling Satsuma that the Ryukyu throne, to which the Ming imperial throne had lent authority and legitimacy, could not be preserved without the bestowal of the title of king from the Qing.179 Satsuma also came to hide any signs of Japan and the Japanese from the eyes of the Qing during each of the visits of its missions; in 1719 it prohibited its retainers from contacting the Qing missions that were visiting the Ryukyus.180

Although it did not intend to establish any official relations again until the very last years of the era, the bakufu continued to allow Chinese merchants to visit Nagasaki in Kyushu. It was the only trade port open to them since the bakufu had moved the Dutch factory from the other trade port in Kyushu, Hirado, in 1640, where it remained confined until the 1850s. The bakufu made the Chinese who came to Nagasaki stay in the settlement called Tōjin yashiki to prevent them from smuggling. The segregated settlement was based on the example of dejima (deshima), which was a artificial island constructed to segregate the Portuguese and then the

179 Rekichō raihei.

180 When the Qing envoy visited the Ryukyus to bestow the title of king upon Shō Tei in 1683, the Satsuma retainers met with Qing officials. But the retainers called themselves “Tokarajin”, the dwellers of the Tokara Chain, composed of the northern part of the Seinan Islands, hiding the fact that they were Japanese. Kamiya Nobuyuki notes that this concealment policy was established in the early eighteenth century. See Kamiya, Bakuhansei kokka no Ryūkyū shihai, 200, 228-236, 260.
Dutch.\textsuperscript{181} Since the bakufu in 1635 prohibited Japanese from going abroad with only a few exceptions, the unilateral visits of Chinese merchants to Nagasaki maintained direct contact between the two countries.

A comparative analysis by Ronald Toby of the Tokugawa diplomatic protocols and the trade credential (j. shinpai) which the bakufu introduced in 1715 indicates that the bakufu placed China at the lowest status within its international order and succeeded in establishing Japan’s superior status over China.\textsuperscript{182} While Korea and the Ryukyus were categorized as diplomatic partners, the Dutch and the Chinese were given lower statuses as mere trade partners. The Dutch East India Company maintained trade relations with Tokugawa Japan after the temporary termination of their relationship from the late 1620s until the early 1630s. However, the bakufu actually regarded the Dutch as more than simply merchants. A minor military conflict between the Dutch and the Japanese traders, led by Hamada Yahyōe, dispatched by Nagasaki Deputy Suetsugu Heizō in Anping, Taiwan, in May 1628 (Kan’ei 5/4) terminated the commercial relationship between the two countries. The rupture ended when the Dutch officials of Batavia surrendered the governor of Taiwan, Peter Noits, as a prisoner to Japan in 1632.\textsuperscript{183} The trade with

\textsuperscript{181} The bakufu originally constructed \textit{dejima} to segregate the Portuguese in 1636. After ousting them from Japan, it made the Dutch factory in Hirado move to the segregated island. Before constructing \textit{tojin yashiki}, the bakufu allowed the Chinese to stay together with the Japanese in Nagasaki. Because of the increase of smuggling, it constructed the settlement and segregated the Chinese in 1689.

\textsuperscript{182} Toby, \textit{State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan}, 156-159.

\textsuperscript{183} For the Hamada Yahyōe Incident and its aftermath, see Tsūkō ichiran, vol. 6, 306-315; Katō, 83-92.
the Dutch was then restored. The representatives of the Dutch East India Company, led by the
Oranda kapitan (Dutch merchants), had been allowed to visit Edo and honored with an audience
with the shogun, in the third month of every year since 1633, as the only Europeans who retained
the favor of the Tokugawa bakufu.\textsuperscript{184} The Japanese stance was that Dutch-Japanese relations had
been rehabilitated as a result of the Dutch apology for their misconduct in Taiwan and their
subjugation to Japan. As a result, the bakufu came to regard the Dutch as hereditary shogunal
vassals (fu\textit{dai no gohikan}) and adopted a quasi-official stance in their presence. It described
their service in terms of “\textit{chūsetsu} (fidelity)” and “\textit{hōkō} (duty).”\textsuperscript{185}

On the other hand, the Chinese merchants coming to Nagasaki were treated with less
formality than the Dutch and were not so honored. Kaempfer noticed that the Japanese treatment
of the Chinese was different from that of the Dutch, noting that Japanese officials and interpreters
treated the Chinese discourteously.\textsuperscript{186} The Nagasaki Magistrate Office (\textit{Nagasaki bugyōsho}) was
the highest ranking Japanese office with which they were allowed to communicate.\textsuperscript{187} The

\textsuperscript{184} The arrival of the envoy of the Dutch East Indian Company followed the restoration of the relationship in
1632. See Tsūkō \textit{ichiran}, vol. 6, 306-7. After 1790, the tribute to the shogunal capital was held every five years.
Arano, 58. Ssee also, Katō Eiichi, “\textit{Sakoku to bakuhansei kokka},” in \textit{Sakoku, Kōza Nihon kinseiishi}, vol. 2

\textsuperscript{185} See Tsūkō \textit{ichiran}, vol. 6; Nagazumi Yōko, “Orandajin no uketa goon to hōkō,” Kawakatsu Heita ed.,
“\textit{Sakoku}” \textit{o hiraku} (Tokyo: Dōbunkan, 2000), 24-34. As Nagazumi points out, in Tsūkō \textit{ichiran}, the Dutch
affairs are referred as “\textit{gohōkōsuji}.” See also Fujii, 61; Katō, 89. The Dutch began to use the term “keizers eigen
volck” for the purpose of flattering the Japanese in order to secure and facilitate the Japan trade.

\textsuperscript{186} Kaempfer, 226.

\textsuperscript{187} The China trade became concentrated in Nagasaki in 1635. See Tsūkō \textit{ichiran}, vol. 5, 228. The Chinese
merchants at Nagsaki usually communicated with the Chinese language translators serving for the Magistrate
Office.
bakufu did not give them the quasi-official status which it gave the Dutch and instead treated them in the same manner as it did Japanese merchants (akindo dōzen). Hayashi Gahō called the Chinese merchants barbarians (ban’i) in his annotation of the collection of the writings of his father; he considered this treatment of the Chinese at Nagasaki to be proper.

Nevertheless, it would be premature to conclude on this evidence alone that the Tokugawa bakufu placed China in the lowest status. As it did not regard either the Dutch or the Chinese as diplomatic partners as mentioned above, the bakufu did not actually identify the Chinese merchants as representatives of the Chinese states – the Ming or the Qing. “Akindo dōzen” implied that the bakufu even took the stance of regarding that those Chinese were unrelated to either of the Chinese regimes. Therefore, no matter what Hayashi Gahō called the Chinese merchants, it did not represent the bakufu’s attitude toward Ming-Qing China. Their treatment as mere merchants, as distinguished from that of the Dutch as quasi-shogunal vassal, was also reasonable, given the Tokugawa class stratification – shi-nō-kō-shō – which gave merchants the lowest status.

In February 1715 (Shōtoku 5/1), the bakufu introduced a trade credential called shinpai (Nagasaki tsūshō shōhyō) into the China trade at Nagasaki, as part of the new trade regulations,

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188 Arano, 11.

189 Hyashi Rzan bunshū, vol. 1, 136.

190 Arano, 11.
known as *Shōtoku shinrei (kaihaku goichi shinrei)*. Arai Hakuseki played a pivotal role in formulating the policy and drafted the regulations. At the time, the exodus of mineral resources through the Nagasaki trade had caused shortages which had restrained trade and increased smuggling (*nukeni*). The regulations aimed at restricting the Nagasaki trade according to the availability of the mineral sources, especially copper, and the bakufu limited the number of Chinese and Dutch ships visiting Nagasaki to thirty per year. Only those who swore to comply with the regulations and accepted the credentials were permitted to come back to Nagasaki.

Arai Hakuseki, who was concerned about Qing China’s expansionist policy and suspected that the fourth emperor Kangxi (r. 1662-1722) was maneuvering to weaken Japan’s national strength by exhausting its mineral resources through trade.

The argument that the credential system marked Japan’s success in claiming its superiority over China may seem valid if one sees the credential as an analogy to the Chinese tally, *kangō*, which the Ming dynasty had granted to its tributary states. Just as the tally was unilaterally issued by the Ming dynasty, the trade credentials were also issued unilaterally to a

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191 See *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 4. As to *shinpai*, see Ibid., 375-376; Ōta Katsuya, *Sakoku jidai Nagasaki bōekishi no kenkyū* (Kyoto-shi: Shibunkaku, 1992), 524-628.


194 Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan*, 198.
restricted number of Chinese merchants. In either case, those who refused to surrender to the authority of the trade permissions were excluded from trade with either China or Japan. The Japanese era name, Shōtoku, was used in the trade credential, and the Chinese, who believed that their emperor was the only one in the universe privileged to set an era name, surrendered to the Japanese era name.¹⁹⁵ This might reinforce the impression that it was a Japanese version of the tally, and Chinese merchants’ acquiescence to the Japanese era name suggests their recognition of Japan’s superior status.

The trade credential was, however, designed neither to deprive China of the diplomatic symbols of its claims to superiority and centrality nor to demote it to the lowest level of the hierarchical order of Tokugawa international relations. It should be first remembered that the use of a Japanese era name had been a diplomatic practice from 1635. Otherwise, the bakufu would have had to justify why only Chinese merchants were exempted from the diplomatic practice. In the trade credential, China was referred not to by the formal state name, “Great Qing (Da Qing) or Qing, but with the term, “Tō”; this can not also be evidence of a Japanese claim of superiority over China, as the term itself had no connotation of Chinese inferiority. The employment of the term was rather congruent with the bakufu’s stance that the Chinese merchants were unrelated to the Chinese state.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 198-199.
Furthermore, while the Chinese tally was an officially issued, or more specifically emperor-issued, trade permission bestowed on tributaries, the Tokugawa bakufu intentionally avoided giving an official appearance to the trade certificate. Nagasaki Magistrate Ōoka Kiyosuke, another central figure in forming trade regulations, testified that the bakufu considered that “kōken”, a credential issued by the public authority, namely the bakufu, would be a better way to regulate the number of Chinese ships. This proposal may have derived from its desire to establish Tokugawa Japan’s superior status over Qing China. However, concerned that its authority would be compromised in case the Chinese ignored the new trade regulations, the bakufu decided to wait for several years until it ascertained that the Chinese were complying with the trade regulations. The trade credential as a result came to be issued by Chinese language translators (Tōtsūji). The bakufu did not even once make an attempt to upgrade shinpai to kōken until the very end of its rule. The trade credential (shinpai) soon ignited a dispute in China. Some Chinese merchants, who failed to receive the credential and lost their access to the Japan trade because they had not come to Japan in 1715, took this matter up with Qing officials. They

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196 Tsūkō ichiran., vol. 4, 398-407. The trade regulations were shaped based on his proposal in 1714.

197 Ibid.


199 Ibid.
charged that the acceptance of the Japanese era name could be considered treason to the Qing. Local Qing officials in Fujian and Zejiang Provinces responded by confiscating the Japanese trade credentials and reported the matter to the imperial court in Beijing.\textsuperscript{200} Informed of the dispute, probably by Chinese on one of the seven ships which narrowly escaped and returned to Nagasaki with the credentials, the bakufu, through a letter, accused the Qing dynasty of ignoring the Japanese statutes.\textsuperscript{201} Despite this firm response, the bakufu did not want to antagonize Qing China any further. It also stated that the trade credential was a contract made between the translators – not the Nagasaki Magistrate Office – and the Chinese merchants, and thus was essentially like a pledge within a local community (\textit{gōsha no yaku}).\textsuperscript{202} In 1717, the dispute in China was eventually settled by a direct decision of the Emperor Kangxi. The emperor, who is considered one of the wisest monarchs in Chinese history, knew the indispensability of Japanese copper for the economy of his country.\textsuperscript{203} As a result, Chinese ships, bearing the trade credentials, continued to visit Nagasaki throughout the rest of the Tokugawa era, and the trade credential,

\textsuperscript{200} For the dispute in Qing China, see Matsuura Akira, “\textit{Kōkitei to Shōtoku shinrei},” in \textit{Sakoku Nihon to kokusai kōryū}, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Köbunkan, 1988), 29-53.

\textsuperscript{201} \textit{Kai hentai}, vol. 2, 2702.

\textsuperscript{202} Ibid; \textit{Tsūkō ichiran}, vol. 4, 430-431.

which was originally designed as a temporary and transitional measure, continued to regulate the Nagasaki trade.

This chapter has focused on the Tokugawa China policy from the last years of the sixteenth century to the early eighteenth century. I demonstrated that from the beginning, the Tokugawa bakufu consistently had no intention of being reintegrated into the Chinese tributary system. It consistently sought to restore diplomatic and trade relations with China, without becoming an inferior constituent of the Chinese world order. The bakufu’s rejection to recognize Chinese superiority did not mean that it had any alternative idea of a status relationship between the two countries. Although there was the traditional claim of equality since the early seventh century and an ideological and religious claim of superiority, the Japanese perception of China had complicity. The Tokugawa China policy in fact did not project any explicit vision of status relationship between the two countries, except for indicating that the bakufu was not going to be a Chinese vassal. When the rapprochement failed, the bakufu gave up pursuing the restoration of any official communication with China.

This chapter has also attempted to refute the argument that China was a part of Japan-centered world order which the bakufu formed. After the early China policy was frustrated by the rejection of the Ming dynasty, and after it decided not to arrange any direct official contact with China, as previous studies have argued, the bakufu formed its own international order
which some historians have called *Nihon-gata ka-i chitsujo*. No official contact continued to be
the Tokugawa attitude toward China after the Manchu conquest in the mid-seventeenth century.
Although there is an argument that the bakufu placed Qing China at the bottom of its
hierarchical international order, I have contended that China was also not a constituent of the
Tokugwa international order, still less its inferior constituent. The Manchu conquest reinforced
the Japanese ideological claim of superiority over China but did not encourage the bakufu to
attempt to spell out Japanese superiority in actual relationship with China. The less formal
treatment of Chinese merchants than that of others did not also mean that the bakufu regarded
them as the representative of China. It chose not to cause a conflict with China by virtually
recognizing Qing China as another suzerain of the Ryukyus, and by not giving an official status
to the trade credential (*shinpai*). It was not until the early Meiji period that the status relationship
became an issue between Japan and China.
CHAPTER 4

EARLY MEIJI KOREA POLICY:
THE CONTINUITY OF TRADITION AND REMNANTS OF THE PAST

Doomsday arrived for the Tokugawa regime after more than two and half centuries of rule over Japan. After years of political strife among the imperial court, the Tokugawa bakufu, and the anti-Tokugawa domains, in November 1867, the fifteenth and last shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu (r. 1866-1868), restored the reins of government to the imperial court; this marked the end of the bakufu and seven hundred years of warrior predominance. In January 1868 (Keiō3/12), the imperial court declared the restoration of imperial rule (Ōsei fukko), and an emperor-centered new government consisting of the imperial court and anti-Tokugawa forces such as Satsuma and Choshu, was formed.

The Meiji Restoration government, called Meiji after the era name of Emperor Mutsuhito (r. 1868-1912), began to make overtures to the Yi dynasty of Choson Korea in the spring of 1868. The purpose was to notify Japan’s neighbor of the imperial restoration and to establish formal state-to-state relations. However, this proved to be difficult. The different visions and diplomatic notions of the Japanese and the Koreans clashed, and negotiations continued in a
meandering and stupefied fashion for years. The misunderstanding eventually escalated to a minor military clash following a probable Japanese provocation in the autumn of 1875. It was not until the conclusion of the Kanghwa Treaty in February 1876, following the clash that the two countries eventually established diplomatic relations.

Many historians have dealt with the topic of Japanese policy toward Korea in the early Meiji period. One of the best-known studies in any language is Tabohashi Kiyoshi’s *Kindai Nissen kankeishi no kenkyū* (Studies on modern Japanese-Korean relations).1 His detailed study, based on rich sources, has not lost its historiographical importance for the study of Meiji Korea policy and Japanese-Korean negotiations of that time, even though more than half a century has passed since its first publication in 1940. Recent Japanese historians such as Takahashi Hidenao and Yoshino Makoto have furthered our understanding of the policymaking processes of the Meiji government in their series of articles.2 A study by a Korean historian, Sim Ki-jae, of both the Japanese and Korean sides is also worthy of notice.3 Hilary Conroy’s classic work, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea: 1868 -1910 A Study of Realism and Idealism in International*

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3 Shim Ki-jae, *Bakumatsu ishin Nitchō gaiōshi no kenkyū* (Kyoto-shi: Rinsen Shoten, 1997).
Relations, and Peter Duus’s recent work, Abacus and Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910 are among the English studies of Japanese-Korean relations in the Meiji period. The most detailed primary source-based study focusing on Japanese-Korean relations of the early Meiji period is a work by a Korean scholar, Kim Key-hiuk, titled The Last Phase of the East Asian International Order Korea, Japan and the Chinese Empire.4

The Meiji government’s attitudes toward Korea demonstrated obvious change and discontinuity with those of the Tokugawa bakufu. More exactly speaking, the new regime had no intention of maintaining the previous regime’s diplomacy with Korea. The Meiji government denied the diplomacy which warrior rulers had dominated since the Muromachi period by declaring the restoration of the prerogatives of foreign affairs to the emperor. Since the prerogatives had originally belonged to the imperial court, the restoration of them in a sense indicated continuity with the time before the warrior takeover of foreign affairs. Compared to the Tokugawa era, however, change and discontinuity certainly occurred. The imperial regime also intended to install an unprecedented treaty-based relationship introduced by the West in its diplomatic relations with Korea. Peter Duus, for example, argues that Meiji Japan recognized that adopting Western-style diplomacy was a demonstration of modernization necessary to enhance national prestige and notes that Meiji leaders applied it to Korea.5 Ishii Takashi calls the


5 Duus, 14.
Japanese attitudes toward Korea as well as China after the Meiji Restoration “*datsu-A gaikō* (a diplomacy of dissociation from Asia).”\(^6\)

Nevertheless, early Meiji Korea policy cannot be understood only in the context of change and discontinuity. In this chapter, I will first demonstrate the continuity of the traditional Japanese perceptions and attitudes toward Korea in early Meiji Korea policy. Some previous studies have indicated that Meiji policymakers were the inheritors of the traditional contemptuous perception of Korea discussed in Chapter 2.\(^7\) They have, however, merely enumerated who said what and often lacked insight into the policymaking process. I thus will scrutinize how the traditional perceptions affected the policymaking process.

I will furthermore emphasize another continuity from past tradition in the early Meiji Korea policy had another aspect. As discussed in Chapter 2, Tokugawa Korea policy contained a discrepancy: although desiring to behave as a superior for ideological and political reasons, the Tokugawa bakufu had actually placed itself on the same level as a country that was supposed to be an inferior. This aspect of Japanese-Korean relations remained as a legacy in early Meiji policy. The new regime, as an inheritor of the traditional perception of Korea, envisioned that Japan’s superior status should be expressed in diplomatic relations with the neighboring country

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\(^6\) Ishii, 6.

through the emperor’s direct association with the Korean king. This attitude brought into the open tension between the two countries, which had been latent during the Tokugawa era. Korea would not surrender to the Japanese vision. When it persisted in maintaining the traditional form of diplomatic relations, however, Meiji Japan could not find any way to proceed except to compromise. As a result, early Meiji Korea policy also came to inherit the discrepancy that the Tokugawa bakufu had faced.

Traditional perceptions and notions of diplomatic relations with Korea and Western-style diplomacy had to resolve a fundamental discrepancy. Meiji Japan saw the relationship between the two countries as hierarchical, premised upon Japanese superiority. After the bakufu was overthrown, from the viewpoint of the Meiji government which was also the inheritor of the traditional view of Korea, the emperor, Tennō, was supposed to represent this superior status through direct association with the Korean king. Western diplomacy, by contrast, was based on the principle of equality between sovereign states, and Japan would have to move somewhat in this direction in order to be accepted as a truly modern state. Some historians have attempted to demonstrate that these two seemingly conflicting perspectives can be merged into one coherent explanation. Fujimura Michio has argued that early Meiji diplomacy veered from “shō chūka gaikō (smaller Middle Kingdom diplomacy)” to “shō seiyō gaikō (smaller Western diplomacy),” after the political crisis of 1873, which was caused by a dispute within the government leadership over Saigō Takamori’s proposal for “sei-Kan ron (conquest of Korea”).8 Kim Key-hiuk suggests

8 Fujimura Michio, “Meiji Ishin gaiko no kyu kokusai kankei e no taio,” Nagoya Daigaku Bungakubu kenkyū
another transformation theory, seeing the Japanese practice of Western-style diplomacy as a result of the frustration of the “ishin gaikō (Restoration diplomacy),” whose roots he finds in the late Tokugawa “sei-Kan ron (arguments for conquering Korea).”

One can offer a comprehensive explanation for the Japanese adoption of Western-style diplomacy and the continuity of traditional foreign perceptions and diplomatic notions; thus I refuse to support the transformation theories of these two historians. The Meiji government undoubtedly had the intention from the beginning of adopting Western-patterned foreign relations and acting in accordance with its universal principles (udai no jōri) and international law (bankoku kōhō or rekkoku kōhō). The practice of this new diplomacy was not, however, consistent. The traditional diplomatic notions and perception of Korea remained influential among Tokyo policymakers. Ishikawa Hiroshi, for example, argues that with the Kanghwa Treaty of 1876, Western diplomacy was the only way for the Japanese to spell out their belief regarding Japanese superiority over Korea. I argue that “new” and “old” continued to coexist in the early Meiji Korea policy; the treaty which opened modern Japanese-Korean relations, for example, revealed that Japan was still under the sway of this tradition.

9 Kim, 154-155.

The Beginning of the Meiji Korea Policy

When imperial rule was restored following the collapse of the Tokugawa regime, the recovery of diplomatic prerogatives from the shogun, called Taikun diplomatically, was a matter of course for the Meiji government. On February 8, 1868 (Keiō 4/1/15), the new government proclaimed the restoration of imperial rule. On the same day, it notified the ministers to Japan of five Western powers – France, Holland, Italy, the United Kingdom, and United States – that the emperor would preside over domestic and foreign affairs.11 It further announced the new regime’s principle of foreign policy, “amity and opening the country (washin kaikoku),” and the observance of treaties which the Tokugawa bakufu had previously concluded with foreign countries.12 This was, in effect, the new regime’s proclamation of the change of a sovereign representing Japan externally from the shogun to the emperor. When the British Minister to Japan, Sir Harry Parks, and other ministers thereafter presented their credentials to the emperor in May (Keiō 4/leap 4), the new regime was recognized by the Western powers.13

In the spring of the year, the Meiji government took its first action regarding Korea policy. On April 15 (Keiō 4/3/23), the Council of State (Dajōkan) dispatched an order to the daimyo of Tsushima-han, Sō Yoshiaki (later Shigemasa), to communicate to the Korean court the restoration of imperial rule and the overthrow of the bakufu. It also added that the imperial

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12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., vol. 1, no. 101. Parkes presented the credential from Queen Victoria on May 22 (Keiō 4/leap 4/1).
court was to superintend all Korean affairs and was expected to maintain Japan’s long historical ties with its neighboring country.\textsuperscript{14}

The order did not come at the instigation of the new regime; it was actually the result of active lobbying efforts by Tsushima-han.\textsuperscript{15} Tsushima’s enthusiasm in response to the Korea issue reflected its concern for domainal security and had been visible well before the Meiji Restoration. For the Tokugawa bakufu, the value of the domain was its experience and knowledge of diplomatic and commercial relations with Korea accumulated since medieval times. Tsushima was hence entrusted with the administration of diplomatic relations with Korea, as well as the duty of defense vis-à-vis Korea, in the same way that other daimyo were obliged to defend their domains as part of military service obligations assigned by the bakufu (\textit{gun’ya}k\textup{u}). For Tsushima, the fulfillment of these obligations and trade with Korea were of vital importance for the domain’s political and economic survival. Located between Japan proper and the Korean Peninsula, the Tsushima domain was agriculturally poor and unable to grow rice sufficient to feed its population. Diplomatic obligations, however, brought considerable financial aid and the status of one hundred thousand \textit{koku} from the bakufu to a domain which had the capability to generate merely thirty thousand \textit{koku} of income.\textsuperscript{16} Tsushima was also privileged to enjoy a

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., no. 345-6.

\textsuperscript{15} Kido Takayoshi, \textit{Kido Takayoshi Ibunshū}, Tsumaki Chūta ed. (Tokyo: Taizanbō, 1942), 41-44.

\textsuperscript{16} See Tashiro Kazui, \textit{Kinsei Nitchō tsūkō bōekishi no kenkyū}. 1 \textit{koku} is 5 English bushel and is also 180 litters according to Philip Brown. See Philip C. Brown, \textit{Central Authority and Local Autonomy in the Formation of Early Modern Japan} (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1993), xvi.
monopoly of the Korean trade. The importance of Korean affairs for Tsushima went even beyond this. Paying homage to the Tokugawa shogun, it simultaneously humbled itself to being treated as a vassal by Korea. This was necessary for the domain to trade smoothly and to replenish the local supply of rice. The Korean trade had enriched the insular domain in the first century of the Tokugawa period but had constantly declined over the next one and half centuries. Toward the end of the era, it seems to have no longer profited the domainal economy.17 Decline of the trade did not, however, decrease Tsushima’s interest in Korea, because its existence as a domain had been secured by the hereditary duties assigned by the bakufu. The suspension of visits by the Korean embassy to Japan in 1811 had hence further concerned Tsushima because this implied the domain’s loss of significance for the bakufu and a possible cut-back in financial aid.18

Menacing foreign incursions only strengthened these apprehensions. In 1861, a Russian battleship, the “Possadonick”, arrived unexpectedly and occupied the Imozaki area on Tsushima Island. Although the Russians, confronted with a British protest, withdrew after a short while, this incident, called the Possadonick Incident, proved that the domain might be subjected to an increasing Western threat.19 When Korea’s firm seclusionist policy thereafter brought about a

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17 Tashiro, *Kinsei Nitchō tsūkō bōekishi no kenkyū*.

18 The suspension of the visits of Korean embassies after 1811 was due to the fiscal difficulties which the bakufu suffered, rather than its loss of interest in the diplomatic intercourse. Ikeuchi Satoshi, “Meiji shoki Nichō kankei to Tsushima,” *Kyushu shigaku*, 116 (1996): 73-6.

military confrontation with France and the United States in 1866, Tsushima came to think of its own security as linked with the security of Korea. After the “Possadonick” Incident, Tsushima considered leaving its ancestral soil as it groped toward the transference of the manor. After the transference miscarried for unknown reasons despite the bakufu’s informal approval, Tsushima sought financial aid from the bakufu and on the eve of the Restoration turned to efforts to bring about the dispatch of a shogunal envoy to Korea. The hope was to persuade Korea to open its eyes to the reality of the changing world before suffering a fatal assault from superior Western military strength. The nightmare was that Korea’s anticipated defeat by the superior military strength of the Western powers would result in their seizure of the Korean Peninsula, which would imperil the security and survival of Tsushima. This presumption may partially have derived from the traditional Japanese perception that Korea, militarily inferior to Japan, would not be able to defend itself against Western aggression. Tsushima zealously lobbied such top-ranking bakufu officials as the Senior Councilor (rōjō) Itakura Katsukiyo and the Naval Magistrate (kaigun bugyō) Katsu Yoshiyasu (Kaishū).\textsuperscript{20} As a result, the bakufu realized that Korea’s firm anti-foreign (anti-Western) policy had implications for national security, not merely of the tiny island, but for all of Japan. Edo therefore decided to dispatch an unprecedented shogunal mission to Korea and named the Magistrate of Foreign Affairs (gaikoku sōbugyō),

\textsuperscript{20} Kim: 100-110.
Hirayama Takatada, to lead the mission. The purpose was to persuade the neighboring country to rectify its antagonistic attitudes toward the West.  

After the fall of the Tokugawa bakufu with the Korea issue still pending, Tsushima transferred its hopes to the new regime. The Meiji government, however, could not engage the Korea issue. Although it had obtained international recognition, the new regime had not yet pacified all the territories of Japan; civil war with pro-bakufu forces continued until the following early summer. In addition, the new regime did not have the preparation, experience, or know-how to address this diplomatic issue. One episode might show the inability of the imperial court to take over Korean affairs from the Tokugawa. On November 9, 1867 (Keiō 3/10/14), the last shogun of the Tokugawa bakufu, Tokugawa Yoshinobu, relinquished the political prerogatives which the Tokugawa had held since 1603 to the imperial court. Approving of this the day after, the imperial court ordered Yoshinobu to remain in charge of diplomatic affairs. Yoshinobu obtained an imperial edict giving him full charge of Korea policy, and by the end of 1867, the dispatch of the Hirayama mission was about to be carried out. However, the Korea issue was once again set adrift when the last shogun was branded a rebel against the emperor (chōteki) because of the Battle of the Toba-Fushimi between pro-bakufu forces and imperial forces in the suburbs of Kyoto in January 1868 (Keiō 4/1).

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The Meiji government’s use of Tsushima in its notification to Korea of the imperial restoration indicated it was still dependent on the diplomatic institutions which the old regime had set up. In other words, its diplomatic inexperience required it to tolerate Tsushima’s hereditary role (ieyaku). The appointment of Sō Yoshiaki as the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (gaikoku jimuho), along with the notification order noted above, probably came about as a way of glossing over the contradiction between the continuing Tokugawa diplomacy and the new diplomacy, which would demonstrate direct imperial governance (Tennō shinsai).23

There were differences of timing and expectations between the Meiji government and Tsushima over the Korea issue. Tsushima seemed to expect the new government to establish diplomatic relations with Korea as soon as possible, and this was quite understandable because of its concerns with security and survival. On the other hand, the Meiji government seemed to be taking quite gradual steps toward establishing diplomatic relations. On May 14 (Keiō 4/4/22), Tsushima received another governmental order. In addition to the order issued on April 15, Tokyo instructed the domain to notify Korea of the imperial restoration, reiterating that instructions on the style of diplomatic relations with Korea would be issued after the pacification of the whole country (tenka heitei). For the new regime, internal turbulence was actually a matter of the survival of the regime and also of Japan at that time. Although government leaders were obviously concerned about national security vis-à-vis foreign threats, especially the moves of Imperial Russia on Sakhalin Island, the Korea issue was simply not considered as urgent as the

civil war and the Sakhalin issue. On May 19, 1868 (Keiō 4/4/27), the Bureau of Foreign Affairs (Gaikoku Jimukyoku), passed another order to Tsushima, which reiterated what the Council of State had said on April 16. It stated that the matter of status relations between the two countries (kokutai kankei) and the treatment of the “three-hundred year old” Tokugawa-Korean association were hence issues for a later date.

Tsushima did not, however, stop asking the government to take immediate action to rearrange the diplomatic relations. The following two Tsushima proposals are worthy of attention. On May 27 (Keiō 4/leap 4/6), Tsushima submitted a proposal to the Bureau of Foreign Affairs and Iwakura Tomomi, one of the most pivotal figures of the Restoration government. The proposal shows the domain’s understanding of the history of Japanese-Korean relations: there had been a Japanese foothold (Nihonfu) on the Korean Peninsula in antiquity, and Korea had been virtually within Japan’s sphere of influence before diplomatic prerogatives had fallen into the hands of the Ashikaga bakufu. The Tokugawa bakufu’s relationship with Korea was, however, on an equal footing based upon the parity between the shogun and the Korean King. Tsushima even confessed its humiliating quasi-tributary status vis-à-vis Korea over the past several centuries. It then stated: Diplomatic relations with Korea ought to be reformed in

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26 Ibid., vol. 2, 124-5.
27 Tabohashi, vol. 1, 137.
accordance with the normal practice of the world (bankoku ippan). The proposal gives no specific explanation of “bankoku ippan,” which probably suggested treaty-based diplomatic relations, introduced to Japan by the Western powers in the 1850s. Along with the proclamation of washin kaikoku noted above, the government had previously issued a decree titled “washin kaikoku, kokui sen’yō no fukoku (decree on opening and friendship and the enhancement of national prestige),” stating that foreign relations should proceed toward the conclusion of friendship treaties (washin jōyaku) under international law (udai no kōhō). Tsushima furthermore considered establishing renewed diplomatic relations with Korea before Western powers determined relations with it to be necessary for the sake of enhancing Japan’s national prestige; Tsushima argued that Korea should function as Japan’s outer base (gaifu).

Another proposal, probably submitted by early July, contained a more concrete discussion of the status relations between Japan and Korea. It stated that since the emperor, replacing the shogun, was to preside over diplomatic intercourse with Korea, the protocols for his communication with the Korean king and the style of his state letter must be fixed for the purpose of reflecting the “justice (gomeibun)” and “reason (gojōri)” of the imperial restoration. Noting that Korea was no better than a subordinate of Qing China (fuzoku dōyō) and was not an

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29 Ibid., vol. 3, 34, 45-51.
independent country (tokuritsu koku), it continued: Whereas the shogun and the Korean king had associated as peers since medieval times, parity would besmirch the dignity of the emperor in direct association with the king. Imperial dignity would not, that is, be secured unless the emperor were positioned as a superior to the Korean monarch. A paper appended to this proposal also suggested that while the emperor should be styled “Nihon koku Tennō Heika (His Imperial Majesty of Japan)” by the Korean king, the king should be styled “Chōsen Kokuō Denka (His Highness King of Korea)” by the emperor.\textsuperscript{32} On July 3 (Keiō 4/5/14), the Bureau of Foreign Affairs consented to the Tsushima proposal of the differentiated use of honorifics with respect to the emperor and the Korean king in a meeting with the Tsushima retainer Ōshima Masatomo, a pivotal figure in domainal Korean policy since the Bakumatsu period.\textsuperscript{33}

The Japanese themselves did not, in fact, seem to be sure that diplomatic reform would win Korean approval. In a meeting with Ōshima on July 3 (Keiō 4/5/14), approving the usage of the honorifics, the Bureau of Foreign Affairs added that more deliberation would be necessary as Korea’s response was uncertain.\textsuperscript{34} On July 15 (Keiō 4/5/26), the Bureau again stated that direct association between the two monarchs would not be necessary for the notification of the restoration, and added that a decision would not have to be made because associations with other nations would also need to be deliberated. Some time between mid and late July and early

\textsuperscript{32} DNGB, vol. 2, no. 330-4.


\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 30.
August, Tsushima submitted a further proposal on diplomatic protocol, repeating that any parity between “emperor (kō)” and “king (ō)” would besmirch the dignity of the emperor. The subsequent part of the proposal, however, revealed that Tsushima also anticipated Korea’s refusal of the Japanese ideal of association between the Japanese emperor and the Korean king. Korea would refuse to accept a hierarchical relationship with the emperor; in the case of equal association between sōsai (president) or sōtoku (viceroy), Korea would still not be satisfied if its king continued to be treated as a subject, following the precedent of parity with the shogun. It then made an ambiguous statement, “According to the principle of the emperor’s direct association, it would not be a case of parity; nor would it be an association based on suzerain-subordinate relations. It would accordingly be difficult to achieve a direct association without setting a proper form by taking a middle ground.”

The conclusion which the two parties finally found was to refer to direct association only if asked by the Koreans and to answer merely that the imperial court would later issue an order on the form of the association. On August 10 (Keiō 4/6/22), Date Munenori, who was the daimyo of Uwajima-han and the director of the Bureau of Foreign Affairs, passed a final governmental order to Tsushima which reconfirmed the previous instructions: Tsushima was to notify Korea of the imperial restoration and the intention of the new regime to maintain the

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historical relationship between the two nations. Matters related to the status relations between the two monarchs would be dealt with after domestic pacification.36

The Imperial Restoration and Western-style Diplomacy

The application of the particular honorific, “Majesty,” to the Japanese emperor was by no means either unprecedented or innovative; it had been traditional practice since the Japanese had adopted Chinese legal and political institutions, called *ritsuryō*, in the early eighth century. The ancient court ranking system and protocols had been maintained, though as a mere shell, after power shifted from the imperial court to warriors, and the practice of honorifics had also remained within the knowledge of political and intellectual elites.37 It was accordingly not strange at all that the Meiji government consented to Tsushima’s proposal when diplomatic prerogatives returned to the emperor. On the other hand, the Korea monarch, as a Chinese vassal, was to be styled “Highness.” In Sinocentric international relations, the Chinese emperor was the only one who was supposed be styled “Majesty (c. *bixia* or *huangshang*),” and the Korean king was allowed to be styled with the inferior honorific. Outside the Chinese world order, the Japanese emperor had for centuries enjoyed the supreme honorific whenever his domestic supremacy held sway in name or in deed, and a compromise with Korea over this point could detract from the imperial dignity.


37 For example, see *Taishū hennenryaku* and *Sappan kyūki zatsuroku*. They called the emperor “kōei heika.”
This use of honorifics also demonstrated imperial restoration in the sphere of diplomacy. First of all, as mentioned above, the appearance of the particular honorific suggested that the emperor was to preside over diplomatic affairs. In the domestic political context, it meant resolving the contradiction between the warrior ruler’s external representation of Japan and his internal subject status vis-à-vis the emperor. It also indicated that the Japanese desired to restore the status relations which they believed had existed between Japan and Korea before the warrior rulers established equal relations with the Korean king. When the anti-bakufu forces overthrew the Tokugawa regime in the name of imperial restoration, the legitimacy of the new regime necessarily depended upon the emperor, and his authority grew out of the mythological and ideological beliefs regarding him and his lineage. When the imperial authority was emphasized, the traditional historical perception of Japanese-Korean relations was concomitantly revitalized. The Japanese thought that since Korea had been a tributary state in the Japanese memory of antiquity, the emperor’s association with the Korean king ought to be restored as a hierarchical relationship, repealing the parity which the Ashikaga and Tokugawa shoguns had maintained.\(^{38}\) This was objectively an attempt to resolve the contradiction in the Tokugawa Korea policy between the Japanese perception of Korea and the actual state of equal diplomatic relations, regardless of who represented Japan’s superior status to Korea.

Attempting to apply restoration ideology in actual foreign policy however caused a problem with Western-style diplomacy which the Meiji government intended to adopt as a

\(^{38}\) The Japanese thought that the discriminated use of the honorifics would be also necessary in consideration of Japan’s status relations with China. See DNGB, vol. 1, no. 43.
demonstration of *bunmei kaika* (civilization and enlightenment). In Western-oriented diplomatic practice, the principle of equality between sovereign states would be projected in diplomatic protocols, especially in the status relations between monarchs. That is, they would associate and exchange official letters with each other on an equal footing. No matter what titles they possessed, such as emperor, empress, king, and queen, they would be styled “Majesty,” excepting such cases as Grand Dukes and presidents of republics. Proclaiming his esteem for and observance of international law, the Japanese monarch should treat his counterparts, including the Korean king, as a peer styled “Majesty.” The Japanese, however, followed their own traditional custom rather than the Western custom in this initial instance. When it notified foreign representatives in April 1869 (Meiji 2/3) of the selection of Ichijō Haruko (later called Empress Dowager Shōken) as the consort of the Emperor Meiji, the Japanese use of honorifics with respect to some Western monarchs became a diplomatic issue. The Japanese applied their own, as well as the East Asian, tradition of the hierarchical differentiation of honorifics to Western monarchs, based on their titles. In particular, the Westerners would not approve the Japanese usage of the vernacular term, *Tennō*, in reference to the Japanese emperor in diplomatic documents. They insisted that requiring the Meiji government to use non-Japanese titles which made sense according to Western diplomatic practice. Diplomatic talks on this matter continued until September 1870 (Meiji 3/8), when the Meiji government finally agreed to apply “Majesty” to all monarchs.\(^{39}\) The

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Meiji government might have been ignorant of the contradiction between the two different diplomatic customs before and immediately after the dispute occurred; the intensity of this dispute showed that the Japanese resisted complying with the Western diplomatic practices, rather than simply needing time to digest them.

Japanese persistence in their own tradition and resistance to Western diplomatic customs, contradicting their own proclamation, was possibly rooted in their ideological self-perception and Weltanschauung. Some Western representatives observed that behind such attitudes, there was a belief in the incompatibility of their national structure (kokutai) with Western practices. The notion of the divine and unbroken imperial lineage had traditionally functioned as a rationale for Japanese superiority and supremacy; the emperor was deemed to embody Japan’s superior status vis-à-vis the rest of the world. The imperial restoration revived and stimulated this notion. On the other hand, Japan faced a conflicting reality in that it was compelled to integrate itself into the Western-dominated international order and to feel both fear and initial inferiority toward the Western powers. Abandoning its traditional foreign policy, called sakoku or kaikin, and its xenophobic exclusionist attitudes, jōi, in the face of superior Western military power in the 1850s and 1860s, Japan had surrendered to unequal treaties and had been brought into the treaty-port system.

What drove Japan into modernization through the adoption of Western civilization was its eagerness to survive in the Western-dominated world and to acquire higher international status.

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40 Sugimoto Fumiko, “‘Tennō-gō’ o megutte,” Rekishi hyōron 457: 100.
Although the fact of their country’s inferior status vis-à-vis the Western powers, evident in its military inferiority and expressed in the forced unequal treaties, implanted an inferiority complex in Japanese minds, the Japanese did not entirely abandon their ideological beliefs and notions of superiority and supremacy. The Western impact did not function as a destructive force against the traditional Japanese perception of the non-Western world, especially of adjacent countries and peoples, which were in a similar or even worse situation at the time. The new regime also ascribed Japan’s backwardness and inferiority vis-à-vis the advanced Western powers to the improper governance and policies of the previous regimes, especially the Tokugawa bakufu, rather than to the nature of the Japanese people themselves. It regarded Japanese superiority and supremacy as something which had been lost and should be restored by modernizing and strengthening the nation.41

Moreover, the contradiction inherent in Western-style diplomacy may have enabled the traditional Japanese perception of hierarchical international relations to remain to some extent. Peter Duus states, “While Westerners denied the old ritual hierarchies, they created a new hierarchy of power, and the more ‘civilized’ a country was, the higher it stood in that hierarchy. The Western nations gave lip service to the ‘equality of nations,’ but in practice they regarded themselves as on a higher level than those countries with whom they had concluded unequal treaties, including Japan.”42 The unequal treaty structure indeed was not the only way the

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42 Duus, 13.
Western powers expressed their superiority and predominance vis-à-vis the non-Western world. Military conquest, followed by annexation and colonization, could confront those nations. Japanese leaders were aware of this “lip service.” Shibahara Takuji states, “From the beginning, they seldom actually believed from their hearts the rules, based on ‘tenchi no kōdō’ (universal justice) and ‘udai no kōri (universal reasons),’ which should recognize equality between nations. Rather they deeply believed that what existed in the actual world was nothing but international power politics and the law of the jungle.”

Understanding the inevitability of having to comply with international law, the Japanese were simultaneously aware that it could not be an adequate weapon for protecting them. Already in the year the restoration government was established, Kido Takayoshi insightfully noted that international law was a tool for subjugating the weak. Iwakura Tomomi, in 1869, also mentioned that international law was not something that could be either learned or simply observed. Claiming to achieve equality with the Western powers, Iwakura saw that the principle of equality was a facade even among “civilized” nations. In his eyes, international politics was little more than an arena of antagonism and rivalry for predominance over others. He accordingly concluded, “All countries are our enemies.”

At the same time, the Western-dominated world created by military superiority was perhaps easy for the Japanese to digest. Martial might had been one of the criteria within the

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43 Shibahara, 87.


45 Shibahara., 21.
Japanese view of their hierarchical international rationale as applied to relations among states. Ideologically the emperor had been connected to the belief in Japanese martial superiority and emphasized as the ruler of Japan, with its military might. When the new regime compared its modernization reforms to those of the legendary first emperor Jinmu’s inauguration of the imperial state (Jinmu sōgyō) in 660 B.C.E, and when it deployed those reforms as a means of restoring what it believed had been lost or to substantiate certain religious or ideological beliefs, namely “the imperial way paramount over all (bankoku ni tatsuetsuseru kōdō)”, equality with all Western countries may not have been its ultimate goal. A logical conclusion would have been to achieve the superiority and supremacy of Japan over all others, in an antagonistic and hierarchical world.

The Letter Dispute and the Beginning of Troubled Negotiations

Tsushima-han began to carry out the governmental instructions it had received beginning in the fall of 1868. It sent its retainer, Kawamoto Kuzamaemon, to give advance notice of

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46 Empress Jingū’s conquest of Korea and her son Ōjin as a deity of war are good examples. Although Asukai Masamichi has argued that the emperor was “militarized (bukeka)” by ex-warrior leaders after the Meiji Restoration, it is possible to argue that the emperor had been given a militant character in the traditional Japanese belief of military superiority. It is possible to understand that the emperor’s role as “daigensui (commander in chief)” as having been not simply modeled after Western monarchs but also as growing out of an expectation of his representation and embodiment of restored Japanese military might and superiority. Asukai Masamichi, Meiji Taitei (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1989), 140-141.

47 Dajōkan nisshi, The entry of the fifth month of the second year of the Meiji period (1869/6-10-7/8) (no. 53).

the arrival of an official envoy on November 13, 1868 (Meiji 1/9/29). After repeated preparatory talks with the resident Tsushima retainers at Japan House (j. Wakan; k. Waegwan) in Pusan, Kawamoto received a visit from An Tong-jun, the language officer (hundo) of Tongnae District (Tongnaebu), and on January 30, 1869 (Meiji 1/12/18) delivered to him the text of the letter from Sō Yoshiaki. The letter had been drafted in accordance with the deliberations between the Bureau of Foreign Affairs and Tsushima, and referred to the imperial restoration and the Japanese intention of maintaining the diplomatic ties which had lasted for centuries. Some historians have believed mistakenly that it was a letter from Emperor Meiji. It should be recalled, however, that the Meiji government had previously stated that direct communication between the monarchs would be an issue to be considered later after the civil war was over. The missive actually took the form of a note from the daimyo of Tsushima to the Korean Minister of Rites.

As has been discussed in previous studies, the Korean official found the letter unacceptable for several reasons. For example, Sō Yoshiaki ascribed to himself titles which were unfamiliar to the Koreans, “sakon’e no shōshō (Deputy of Left Imperial Guard)” and “ason (court vassal)”. The Korean official discovered a strange seal, instead of the traditional seal, tosho (k. tosō), which Korea had bestowed upon Tsushima. He also discovered the Chinese characters, kō (c. huang; k. hwang; emperor) and choku (c. chi; k. ch’ik; imperial edict), in the letter. The

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49 Tabohashi, 151.


51 For example, see Duus, 30.
presence of the two characters, referring to the Japanese emperor and his decree, offended the Koreans; in the Sinocentric world order to which Korea belonged, those were to be used only by the Chinese emperor.\textsuperscript{52} This marked the outbreak of the so-called letter dispute (shokei mondai) and also the beginning of difficult Japanese-Korean negotiations, which lasted for more than seven years.

On January 31 (Meiji 1/12/19), the formal Tsushima mission, led by chief ambassador (\textit{taishū taisashi}) Higuchi Tesshirō, a senior retainer (\textit{karō}) of the domain, reached Pusan.\textsuperscript{53} Informed of Higuchi’s arrival, An appeared at Japan House two days later. With no intention either of having a conversation with Higuchi or of accepting the Tsushima letter, An demanded that Higuchi leave Korean soil immediately. Higuchi’s visit as \textit{taishū taisashi} was, he stated, against fixed regulations, repeating the criticisms of the letter.\textsuperscript{54} Faced with such an attitude on the part of Korea, Tsushima-han sent Ōshima Masatomo to Pusan in March or early April 1869 (Meiji 2/2), but the situation did not improve.\textsuperscript{55} On April 10 (Meiji 2/2/29), An passed the response to the letter of the Korean Court to the Tsushima retainers; it merely repeated the same accusations of Japanese violations of fixed diplomatic protocol.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{52} CJ, vol. 3, 15-8; Duus, 30-31.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., vol. 3, 19.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Fusan fushi genkō}, vol. 6 (Fusan: Fusan-fu, 1937), 367-371; Kawamoto Tatsu, \textit{Nissen tsūkōsh} (Fusan: Fusan Kenkai, 1915), 658-661.
\textsuperscript{56} CJ, vol. 3, 30-33.
Without any progress toward settling the dispute, the Tsushima retainers ran out of patience and in the end took firm measures. On April 20 (Meiji 2/3/9), they placed An Tong-jun, visiting Japan House, under restraint. Under detention for four days, An made some important remarks: the Koreans suspected that the Japanese had intended to subjugate them by using the Chinese characters in question; they also did not believe that the overthrow of the bakufu and the imperial restoration had actually occurred. An said, “Even when the association (with Korea) had been mandated by the regent (kanpaku, which the Koreans had called the shogun), foreign affairs had been reported from him to the emperor and would not be conducted by him without imperial instructions. If the displacement of the shogun were necessary, it would be quite reasonable that a minister equivalent to his position should be assigned to associate (with the Korean king).”

An’s remarks suggest some important points. First, although his understanding of the relationship between the emperor and the shogun in diplomacy was not accurate, more importantly, the Koreans had noticed the Japanese ulterior motive of treating their neighboring country as an inferior. Second, the Korean rejection of the Japanese letter did not mean its rejection of intercourse with Meiji Japan; the Koreans did not want to let their king associate directly with the Japanese emperor and instead preferred to maintain the traditional form of diplomatic relations which had been practiced with the Tokugawa shogun for more than two hundred years. In addition, though An did not say so, the Korea resentment of the Japanese use

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57 Ibid., 37.
58 Ibid., 37-42.
of the particular Chinese characters derived from their concern over losing parity with Japan, along with another concern over tributary relations with Qing China.  

An’s suggestion of an association between a Japanese minister and the Korean king contained a serious contradiction with the Japanese vision of Japanese-Korean relations. As seen in Chapter 2, the Korean stance toward status relations with Japan had traditionally been to maintain equality within the Sinocentric world order. In other words, the relationship needed to be based on the Chinese supremacy. The notion of Japanese superiority also conflicted with Korea’s traditional contemptuous perception of Japan. For the Koreans who had been aware of the presence of the emperor above the shogun since the Muromachi period, the king’s association with the shogun, or an equivalent minister, was the only way to maintain equal diplomatic relations with Japan. No matter who or what regime ruled Japan, the Korean view of status relations with Japan thus remained unchanged. For the Japanese, an equal association would still euphemistically imply the superiority of the Japanese emperor over the king. However, since the Meiji government had proclaimed the reversion of diplomatic prerogatives to the emperor, that form of diplomatic relations would contradict the principle of direct imperial rule. The emperor himself needed to embody superiority over Korea through direct association with the king. Like the Tokugawa bakufu, the Meiji government, moreover, had no intention of placing Japan within the Chinese tributary system.

59 Tabohashi, vol. 1, 165.

60 See Miyake, Kinsei Nitchō kankeishi nokenkyū.
While the Tsushima retainers were carrying out arduous negotiations with the Koreans, the Meiji government seemed to become more active in formulating Korea policy. The government had decided the year before that the establishment of diplomatic relations with Korea was an action to be undertaken after domestic pacification. Pacification was by then almost complete. The civil war (Boshin Sensō) on the main island (Honshū) had been virtually over since the pro-Tokugawa Aizu-domain surrendered early in November 1868, and the resistance forces led by a shogunal vassal, Enomoto Takeaki, besieged in Western-modeled Goryōkaku Castle in Hakodate, surrendered to the imperial forces on June 27, 1869 (Meiji 2/5/18). Five days before the end of the fighting, namely on June 22, the Bureau of Foreign Affairs issued an order and stated, to Ōshima, that a treaty must be concluded with Korea in accordance with international law (bankoku kōhō). On October 29 (Meiji 2/9/25), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Gaimushō), reshuffled and renamed in August (Meiji 2/7), submitted a proposal to the Council of State (dajōkan). The proposal repeated the necessity of concluding a treaty with Korea and asserted diplomatic centralization by terminating Tsushima’s “private association (shikō).” The Ministry understood these actions not only as applications of international law, perhaps but also as a natural conclusion drawn from the logic of the imperial restoration. It concurrently understood that the establishment of a treaty-based relationship with


62 Ibid., 64.
Korea would be a demonstration of *bunmei kaika* (civilization and enlightenment) and was important for the aggrandizement of national (imperial) prestige (*kokui* or *kōi*).\(^{63}\)

Another reason for the increased activity of the government was that the Japanese had come to regard the Korea issue as more crucial for national security. In July or early August 1869 (Meiji 2/6), the French diplomatic advisor, Comte de Cantons de Montblanc, in response to the Russian occupation of Kushun Kotan (Ōdomari) in southern Sakhalin, submitted a statement from Paris. He warned of the close linkage between the Sakhalin and Korea issues, stating that Russia’s aim was to strengthen its position in East Asia by constructing a military base in Sakhalin. If Japan remained a spectator, Russian expansion to Korea would be only a matter of time. Japan would then suffer the same fate as Sakhalin.\(^{64}\) On October 29 (Meiji 2/9/25), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated to the Council of State, “Great powers, including Russia, are now coveting Korea like meat on the table. No one but the imperial state (*kōkoku*) can undertake the responsibility of saving Korea by maintaining international law. If Korea were seized by a great power such as Russia as a result of our neglecting this matter, it would represent a permanent harm and an imminent danger to the imperial country.”\(^{65}\) A position paper titled “*Chōsen ron* (On Korea)” drafted by Miyamoto Koichi, an official of the Ministry, also stated, “Although association with Korea is of no utility, it would be invaded by Russia if it were left alone. This could cause great harm to Japan. We help Korea not because we love Korea but

\(^{63}\) Ibid., 72.

\(^{64}\) DNGB, vol. 2, no. 334.

\(^{65}\) Ibid, vol. 3, no. 335.
because we love Japan." The Council of State shared the same concern: possibly in November 1869 (Meiji 2/10), it reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that a stagnant policy toward Korea would allow Western intervention, which would further constitute a menace to Japan.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had certainly become familiar with the unfavorable state of the Tsushima-Korean negotiations by the summer of 1869. Ōshima Masatomo reported to the government on all the happenings in Korea sometime in June (?)(Meiji 2/6). The Ministry, however, gave no sign of an intention to compromise with Korea. The proposal to the Council of State contained not a single word responding to the Korean suggestion of an association between a Japanese minister, equivalent to the shogun, and the Korean king. There were several possible reasons. First, the association of any minister with the Korean king would contradict the idea of direct imperial rule. Second, it was not in accord with Western-style diplomacy. Third, it reflected the Korean wish to maintain the form of diplomatic relations with the Tokugawa bakufu which the Meiji government was trying to overturn. Fourth, an equal association would definitely not satisfy the Japanese vision of superior status over Korea.

Actions taken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the following months indicated that instead of searching for a compromise solution, it was trying to discover any and all evidence of Japan’s superior status in previous Japanese-Korean diplomatic intercourse. On October 29, 1869 (Meiji 2/9/25), the Ministry proposed to dispatch its officials to Korea for an investigation.

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66 Ibid.
into the country’s political conditions, military preparations, and relations with China and Russia, preliminary to dispatching a formal government envoy to negotiate with Korea on diplomatic relations.\(^6^9\) Another purpose for which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dispatched the Sada mission to Korea was to discover evidence of Korean subordination to Tokugawa Japan. On November 10 (Meiji 2/10/7), the Council of State approved the proposal, and three officials of the Ministry, Sada Hakubō, Moriyama Shigeru, and Saitō Sakae left Tokyo on January 7, 1870 (Meiji 2/12/6) and arrived in Pusan on January 23 (Meiji 2/12/22).\(^7^0\)

Almost in parallel with the decision to dispatch the Sada mission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attempted to discover the same evidence in a different way. On November 18, 1869 (Meiji 2/10/15), the Ministry gave instructions to Shizuoka-han. Its domainal lord was Tokugawa Yoshinobu’s relative Iesato (Tayasu Kamenosuke), who had taken over as head of the household of the Tokugawa head family (sōke) after Yoshinobu’s retirement because of his defeat in the civil war. The Ministry ordered the domain to investigate and report on the state of Tokugawa-Korean relations, specifically on the following four points: the Tokugawa bakufu’s reception of Korean embassies, the last reception of a Korean embassy in Tsushima in 1811, evidence indicating a Korean surrender to Japan after Hideyoshi’s invasion, and the question of whether the Korean offerings at the Nikkō Grand Shrine indicated Korea’s deference to Japanese


\(^7^0\) CJ, vol. 3, 102.
military strength. On the same day, Mito-han, a related Tokugawa domain, also received similar instructions to find evidence of Korean subordination.

The report from the Sada mission must have been disappointing to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, though the contents of the reports from the two Tokugawa domains are unknown. Returning from Korea, the Sada mission submitted its report to the Ministry on May 9, 1870 (Meiji 3/4/9). As for Korean subordination, it stated that there was no evidence of Korean subordination to Tokugawa Japan. The three officials – Sada, Moriyama, and Saitō -- also had an officious conversation with An Tong-jun at Japan House, possibly at the end of February or early in March. Sada asked why the Korean court had not responded to the Japanese letter which the Higuchi mission had delivered the year before. An did not answer his question but instead mentioned that the Koreans hoped to associate with Sanjō Sanetomi, who held the office of chancellor in the Meiji government. The report however made no reference to this conversation for unknown reasons.

Sada, Moriyama, and Saitō also submitted petitions individually to the Ministry, which further passed them to the Council of State on May 15 (Meiji 3/4/15). Calling the Korean

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71 Ibid., 103.
72 Ibid., 105-7.
73 Ibid., 94; Ibid., vol. 4, 22-25.
74 Ibid.
75 CJ, vol. 4, 11-4; DNGB, vol. 3, no. 58; Sin, 124.
76 DNGB, vol. 3, no. 89.
rejection of the letter an insult to Japan, the three officials unanimously insisted on accrediting an imperial mission, accompanied by armed forces, to Korea. Of the three, Sada sounded the most firm and aggressive; cautious about French retaliation, as well as Russia and American ambitions toward Korea, he stated that because of Korea’s ill-prepared military, it would be possible to capture the king within fifty days, with thirty battalions, and insisted on seizing the country as a bulwark (hanpei) for Japan.

Sada’s pronounced territorial ambitions for the Korean Peninsula were by no means peculiar at the time. Like Sada, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself saw Korea ideally becoming Japan’s bulwark. Miyamoto Koichi however declined to pursue that ambition not because he was against annexing Korea but because he recognized that the Japanese military was inadequate and that the project was not affordable. This ambition certainly grew out of the concern over national security; it was simultaneously rooted in the Japanese historical perception of the relationship with Korea. The Ministry statement called Korea a land which successive emperors had eagerly coveted (rekisei suien no chi). The inquiry into Korea policy which the Ministry submitted to the Council of State in May 1870 (Meiji 3/4) also eloquently showed how Japanese policymakers conceived of Korea policy with the history of the relationship clearly on their

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77 CJ, vol. 4, p. 29-36; DNGB, vol. 3, no. 88-1, 2, 3.
78 Sada, 44-52.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
minds. The inquiry, suggesting three policy options mentioned below, likened each of the options to legendary glories which ancient imperial ancestors had demonstrated regarding Korea, and even to Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s notorious invasion of Korea in the 1590s. Iwakura Tomomi, in his proposal on Korea policy in 1875, stated similarly that the government ought to take a lesson from the glorious achievements of Empress Jingū and Hideyoshi. It can be argued, in sum, that this expansionist inclination emerged when the Japanese perception of Korea, which was emphasized by the restoration, and concerns over national security and prestige intertwined in the particular international environment of the time.

The Policy Options of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Intergovernmental Equal Association, and the Breakdown of the Negotiations

Evidently sharing the same concern over national security and prestige, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not take the firm action the members of the Sada mission had hoped for. The Ministry saw the firm opinions of the members of the mission as too impractical (amarini shoseiron). It instead drafted and submitted an inquiry, based on the investigation of the mission, to the Council of State in May 1870 (Meiji 3/4). The beginning sentences stated that the Korean rejection of the Japanese letter was extremely discourteous and insulting to Japanese national dignity; that there was even an argument that the Korean attitude justified opening hostilities, but that this should not be done before dispatching an imperial mission (chokushi). It then suggested

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82 Ibid., no. 351.

three policy options, which also revealed that the Foreign Ministry was under the sway of the traditional historical perception on that the claim of Japan’s superiority over Korea depended as mentioned above. The first option stated that Japan would terminate communications and negotiations with Korea and withdraw all Japanese residents from the country until Japanese national strength was replenished. The second option stated Japan would dispatch Kido Takayoshi on an imperial mission and Sō Yoshiaki as deputy, with soldiers and battleships. Korea’s rejection of this Japanese approach would result in military chastisement. The third option also manifested that the early Meiji diplomacy was not consistent in the practice of Western-style diplomacy. It stated that since Korea was a Chinese tributary state, Japan would establish equal relations with Qing China in advance and then approach Korea. In an equal position with China, Japan ought to be able to treat Korea as an inferior. Should Korea still not comply with the Japanese request, that would be the time to discuss peace and war.84

Evaluations of each option then followed. The first option, namely the temporary termination of communication with Korea, was not a proper measure for averting a possible Russian seizure of the country; also, it would tarnish the great achievements of successive emperors, the afterglow of Toyotomi, and the amity which the Tokugawa had maintained. The dispatch of an armed imperial mission might result in the outbreak of war with Korea, which was not fiscally feasible. To establish diplomatic relations with Qing China was not as urgent as with Korea but would be the fastest way to convince Korea of Japan’s serious intentions. Even if war

84 DNGB, vol. 3, no. 351.
broke out, Chinese intervention, which occurred in Hideyoshi’s Korea campaign in the 1590s, would be unlikely once a treaty was signed with China. From this wording of the inquiry, it is obvious that the Foreign Ministry itself favored the third option.

In June 1870, the Tianjin Massacre, one of the major anti-Christian riots, occurred in China. Grand Councilor (sangi) Kido Takayoshi of Chōshū had in fact been appointed to have an imperial mission to China and Korea since January 4, 1870 (Meiji 2/12/3). Although neither Kido’s nor Japanese official documents explain what purpose the Meiji government intended to dispatch him for, Kido was committed to his mission to the two countries. The Foreign Ministry’s submission of the three policy options to the Council of State was probably unpleasant to him. Moreover, the incident in China disappointed him very much. He even considered leaving the government and traveling abroad. On the other hand, some Foreign Ministry officials, who had a different vision from the third option that the Ministry recommended most, saw the incident in China as providential. It revitalized the call for the immediate dispatch of an imperial mission. Sada, along with Moriyama and Saitō, submitted a proposal urging the government to take advantage of the incident by sending an imperial mission together with an armed force to Tsushima. They were concerned that the advancement of the Western powers into Korea had become more likely as a result of the turmoil in China and thought that Japan should be able to respond expeditiously no matter what happened.

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85 Ibid., no. 89.
87 Ibid., 66.
The Council of State, despite the changing atmosphere inside the government, nonetheless chose the third option in the end. Kido proposed that he be dispatched to Korea on July 24 (Meiji 3/6/26). This meant that he virtually raised an objection to the third option and supported the second one, though he was not still persuaded about a possible resort to arms. Ōkubo Toshimichi of Satsuma opposed Kido’s proposal. This influential Grand Councilor had consistently chosen to avoid any policy which he was afraid might escalate into a military confrontation with Korea. After the two councilors exchanged hard words over Kido’s proposal, the Council of State, choosing the third option that same day, decided to send Yanagiwara Sakimitsu, a young court noble and official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to China to hold preliminary talks on establishing diplomatic relations.88

Slightly before the Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted its inquiry on the three policy options, Izuhara-han (formerly Tsushima-han) had begun to consider its own formula for breaking through the morass of the negotiations.89 This domain’s intended engagement in the Korea issue was originally directed to ensure the survival of the domain and the acquisition of fiscal aid from either the bakufu or the Meiji government. In the tide of centralization after the restoration regime came into being, tension with the Ministry of Foreign Ministry had necessarily been increasing over its policy initiative. Since it had also realized by the end of 1869

89 Tabohashi, vol. 1, 256.
that the Higuchi mission had failed, Izuhara-han probably needed to demonstrate to the Meiji government its own continued indispensability in Korea diplomacy.

In May 1870 (Meiji 3/4), Ōshima Masatomo ordered Urase Yutaka, an Izuhara retainer and translator of the Korean language, to go to Korea. Ōshima also gave Urase an instruction, which Kido Takayoshi had approved in April (Meiji 3/3). Ōshima was afraid that if Higuchi, whose mission had proved a failure, continued to stay in Korea without attaining anything before Kido’s negotiations with China were completed, Tsushima’s reputation would be impaired. He presumed that negotiations with the Korean authorities could not be pursued without a determination to resort to arms, though he obviously did not want military action to be taken by the government. Based upon this judgement, he thought, the letter which Korea had refused to receive would need to be revised so that notification of the imperial restoration could be accomplished. The issue of the form of formal association between the two countries should be temporarily shelved, and equal intergovernmental communication as a temporary negotiation route would instead need to be pursued until official Sino-Japanese relations were established.

Equal intergovernmental association (seifu tōtai) might have achieved a breakthrough in the difficult negotiations. Urase arrived in Pusan in late May or early June (Meiji 3/early5) and met with An Tong-jun on June 11 (Meiji 3/5/13). Explaining Tsushima’s difficult position and

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91 Ibid., vol. 5, 9-16.

the advocacy by extremists in the Japanese government of firm measures against Korea, he proposed a compromise formula: he suggested replacing the term kōjo (k. hwangsang; emperor) with chōtei (k. choting; imperial court), and restoring the seal, traditionally bestowed by Korea, to Tsushima.93 An Tong-jun still persisted in the Korean proposal for association between the Korean king and a Japanese hereditary minister.94 According to An’s previous remarks, “hereditary minister” pointed to the Chancellor (daijō daijin), Sanjō Sanetomi.95 After explaining that the Korean proposal would contradict the ideals of the imperial restoration, Urase advanced a proposal for equal intergovernmental intercourse.96 An agreed to the formula and promised to bring back a formal reply from the Korean court by July 8 (Meiji 3/6/10).97

On September 13 (Meiji 3/8/18), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs heard of the favorable response of An Tong-jun to the compromise formula, the Minister of Foreign Affairs showed obvious interest.98 The following day, Hirotsu Kōshin and Moriyama Shigeru, the two officials of the Ministry who had been appointed to an inspection mission to Korea the month before, submitted a written statement in response to Urase’s report. They requested that a higher-ranking Ministry official be sent to Korea with them, as Korea might well be willing to associate with

94 Ibid.
95 Sada, 43.
98 Ibid., no. 95.
Japan. On September 20 (Meiji 3/8/25), the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sawa Nobuyoshi, and his deputy, Terashima Munenori, requested that the Council of State proceed with negotiations with the Korean authorities based on the compromise formula, and that someone superior to Moriyama and Hirotsu be appointed from the Ministry. On October 12 (Meiji 3/9/18), the Council of State appointed Yoshioka Kōki, an official of the Ministry, as envoy to Korea, and he left Japan on October 15 (Meiji 3/9/21).

Pursuing equal intergovernmental association indicated that the new regime had not yet emerged from the diplomacy of the previous regime. The formula was not entirely Ōshima’s innovation but was derived from the Korean proposal for equal association between a Japanese minister, equivalent to the shogun, with the Korean king. As mentioned above, the proposal came from Korea’s desire to maintain the traditional form of diplomatic relations with Japan. The Japanese had previously declined the Korean proposal with no compunction in 1869. Why did it become interested in and actually propose a similar formula a year later? The formula Ōshima proposed was similar to but slightly different from the previous Korean proposal. Both could certainly contradict the principle of imperial direct rule. However, for the Japanese, equal intergovernmental association was a temporary solution until equal diplomatic relations with Qing China were established. The Japanese might also have seen the association of the emperor’s government with the Korean government as less contradictory. For those who were


afraid of the possible consequences of a radical approach, namely the immediate dispatch of an imperial mission, possibly with arms, this seemed a sober and safe way to break through the stagnant negotiations; Ōkubo Toshimichi, always cautious in Korea policy, saw it as harmless.¹⁰² Because the Tianjin Massacre had increased concerns over possible Western advancement into Korea, Japanese leaders and officials might have felt that it was more necessary than ever to set up an official communication route with Korea by any means possible.

When Yoshioka and the other two officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs arrived at Pusan on December 24 (Meiji 3/11/3), difficulties awaited them.¹⁰³ Months before the Yoshioka mission was dispatched, an unexpected incident had also occurred. On June 1 (Meiji 3/5/3), a German battleship, the *Hertha*, arrived at Pusan without prior notification to the Korean authorities. This incident itself was soon resolved as the battleship left the port the next day after the Korean protests. The problem was that five Japanese, including two Izuhara retainers, were on board the ship; and their presence raised suspicions within the Korean Court of a Japanese-Western collaboration. This aggravated anti-Japanese sentiment On July 11 (Meiji 3/6/13), An told Urase that the Korean Court, upset with the Japanese presence on the foreign ship, had not listened favorably to his report regarding Urase’s proposal.¹⁰⁴ Informed, from Urase’s report on September 13, that the incident had stiffened Korean attitudes, the Meiji government was cautious so as not to alarm Korea, which had been adopting an anti-foreign policy under King

¹⁰² *Ōkubo Toshimichi monjo*, vol. 4, 6.

¹⁰³ *DNGB*, vol. 3, no. 102.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., no. 92.
Kojong’s father and regent, Hŭngsŏn Taewŏn’gun (Yi Ha-ŭng). The mission sailed for Korea, not on a Western steamer but on a traditional Japanese ship (*wase*n). A letter from Foreign Minister Sawa to the Korean Minister of Rites, which the mission undertook to deliver, carefully avoided words which might displease the Koreans. However, it did not know that the Korean court had decided on October 9 to suspend negotiations with Japan over the revision of the Japanese letter.¹⁰⁵

They must also have realized quite soon that the Tokugawa diplomatic legacy was confronting them.¹⁰⁶ They had to face the resistance of Izuhara (Tsushima) residents at Japan House. Yoshioka insisted that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was in charge both of the notification of the imperial restoration and of negotiations over an equal intergovernmental association.¹⁰⁷ Eager to maintain the hereditary position of their domain, the retainers countered that Tsushima (Izuhara) would first negotiate a revision of the letter which the Koreans had refused to accept and would notify Korea of the imperial restoration.¹⁰⁸ Yoshioka, refusing, attempted to arrange a meeting with the Korean authorities but faced rejection by An Tong-jun. The Korean official also reasoned that Yoshioka was not an Izuhara retainer.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Tabohashi, vol. 1, 235-238.
¹⁰⁶ Ibid., no. 103.
¹⁰⁷ CJ, vol. 6, 55.
¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 56-7.
¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 59.
As a result, Yoshioka was forced to wait for almost five months before he got an opportunity to talk with An Tong-jun. On May 17, 1871 (Meiji 4/3/28), he finally met with An at Japan House. Yoshioka explained that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was to conduct all foreign affairs without exception and informed An of the preliminary talks with Qing China toward the conclusion of a treaty. The Korean official did not, however, make any comment on Sino-Japanese negotiations and merely stated that the traditional manner of communication should be followed. This meeting thus bore no fruit for the Japanese.

While waiting for the meeting, the Yoshioka mission had in fact found a solution for saving the difficult situation. This was to turn the historical Tsushima-Korean ties to its advantage. On March 28 (Meiji 4/2/8), the three officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs proposed to Tokyo that the lord of Izuhara, Sō Shigemasa, be appointed to the Foreign Ministry as a negotiator. Although this meant that the officials of the Ministry were admitting that they would inevitably continue to count on Tokugawa diplomacy, they did not intend to stop pursuing diplomatic centralization. On January 3, 1871 (Meiji 3/11/13), Sō Shigemasa had submitted a petition requesting that the domain be allowed to resign its hereditary domainal service. Informed of the submission of the petition by Sō himself, the Yoshioka mission suggested in a

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proposal that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs accept the resignation. They had found a chance in
the petition to kill three birds, not two, with one stone. Sō’s renunciation of hereditary service and
the mission to Korea would facilitate negotiations with Korea. His position as an official of the
Ministry of Foreign Affairs simultaneously would also facilitate diplomatic centralization. And
the demise of Tsushima’s hereditary service would further deprive the Koreans of their grounds
for refusing to contact the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.113

The proposal of Sawa Nobuyoshi to the Council of State on July 12 (Meiji 4/5/25)
indicated that the Ministry approved of the proposal of the Yoshioka mission.114 The hereditary
service of Izuhara, however, came to an end before the Council of State approved the proposal.
On August 28 (Meiji 4/7/14), the Meiji government abolished all the domains (han) and replaced
them with prefectures (ken). As a result, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs no longer had to be
bothered with the issue of diplomatic centralization, at least domestically. Fifteen days after this
dramatic moment in modern Japanese history, the Council of State appointed the former lord of
Izuhara (Tsushima) as an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and ordered him to go to
Korea.115

However, in late October (Meiji 4/early 9), the Sō mission was postponed and was
eventually never dispatched.116 On November 15 (Meiji 4/10/3), the Meiji government decided

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115 DNGB, vol. 4, no. 199.
to scale down the mission by replacing the former daimyo of Izuhara with his former retainers, and formally announced the cancellation of the Sō mission on January 27 (Meiji 4/12/18). Former Izuhara retainers, Sagara Masaki and Urase Yutaka, along with Hirotsu Kōshin, an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were then designated to go to Korea instead. The dispatch of the Iwakura Mission to the United States and Europe and the fiscal conditions of the time were probably behind this decision. The government was busy preparing for the large mission being dispatched to the United States and European nations; the constrained finances of the government impeded another diplomatic mission, and a compromise was required for this second scaled-down mission.

While deciding to dispatch the Sagara mission, as a replacement for the Sō mission, the Japanese seemed to be increasingly pessimistic about the protracted negotiations. On November 15 (Meiji 4/10/3), Hirotsu Kōshin, hearing of the decision not to dispatch Sō Shigemasa, noted to officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Yanagiwara Sakimitsu, that if the dispatch of an Izuhara retainer, instead of his former lord, should drive the Koreans to such firm actions as suspending the supply of necessities to and commercial activities with Japan House, the Ministry would need to consider countermeasures. Yanagihara seemed to anticipate that the rupture of negotiations would be inevitable, though he thought that any rupture would be temporary.

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117 DNGB, vol. 4., no. 197.

118 Ibid. no. 200.

119 Ibid., no. 201.
because the Koreans, he inferred, would be afraid of such consequences. In response to Hirotsu’s
case, Yanagiwara, two days later, submitted a proposal to Foreign Minister Iwakura Tomomi
and his deputy Terashima Munenori. He suggested that negotiations be terminated, and that all
Japanese residents be withdrawn if what Hirotsu warned of should occur. The top leaders of
the Meiji government also seemed to take a dim view of the success of the Sagara mission. One
day before the departure of the Iwakura Mission, namely on December 20 (Meiji 4/11/9), Sanjō
Sanetomi, Ōkubo Toshimichi, Kido Takayoishi, Saigō Takamori, and Itagaki Taisuke gathered
at Iwakura’s mansion and agreed not to undertake any new domestic and foreign policy
measures until the mission’s return. This arrangement was not intended to negate the decision
to dispatch the Sagara mission, but indicated that the government would not take any measures in
the event of its failure.

While pessimism spread among the Japanese, the process of drafting the letter which
the Sagara mission would carry also showed the changing attitudes of the Meiji government. On
December 9 (Meiji 4/10/27), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted to the Council of State
the draft of a letter which Sō Shigemasa would address to the Vice Minister of Rites of Korea
through his retainer. The Council of State did not approve the letter draft, which Yoshioka and
Moriyama probably drafted. On January 7, 1872 (Meiji 4/11/27), the Central Board of the

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120 Ibid.
121 Sin, 274.
Council of State (Dajōkan Shōin) passed an inquiry of opinion, instead of the expected approval, on the revision of the draft to the new Foreign Minister Soejima Taneomi, who had taken over from Iwakura in December 1871 (Meiji 4/11). Moriyama and Hirotsu submitted a written statement to Soejima and his deputy Terashima the following day. They criticized the revision of the draft and requested the approval of the original draft. This statement indicates how different the two drafts were, though it is unknown today exactly what their contents were. The Central Board considered using the new title and seal of Sō Shigemasa which the Japanese had been avoided using since his letter offended the Koreans early in 1869. Hirotsu and Moriyama argued that the letter notifying Korea of the imperial restoration and the consolidation of diplomatic prerogatives in the new regime should be in the traditional style, and the old seal, tosho (k. tosô), should be used. The term “direct rule of the Son of Heaven (Tenshi shinsei)” also appeared in the draft revised by the Central Board, whereas the two officials thought that it should not be used until the establishment of the relationship was ensured, because the Chinese characters, “kō” and “choku” had also offended the Koreans in 1869. The Central Board, however, finally declined their appeal and decided on January 13 (Meiji 4/12/4) to employ its own revised draft.

Why did the Central Board want to employ the style which it could have easily imagined would offend the Koreans again? In addition to the Chinese character kō, the term Tenshi, for example, suggested an emperor, which meant to the Koreans the Chinese emperor

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exclusively. The Japanese would easily have understood that for the Koreans, accepting a letter including that term would conflict with their tributary relationship with China and also contradicted the notion of equal intergovernmental association with Japan. Spreading pessimism might have driven the Japanese into the daring action, notwithstanding their awareness of that point. Another probability is that the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese Treaty urged them to take the action. On November 9 (Meiji 4/9/27), the Meiji government and the Qing dynasty signed a treaty which specified parity between the two countries. As a peer with Korea’s suzerain, the Meiji government might have thought that it would no longer need to pursue equal intergovernmental association and to yield to Korea regarding the issue of diplomatic protocols.126

Sagara Masaki, Urase Yutaka, and Hirotsu Kōshin, arrived in Pusan on February 22, 1872 (Meiji 5/1/14), aboard the steamer Manju-kan.127 Along with the use of the term Tenshi, their use of the Western ship, despite the earlier Korean reaction to the Hertha, might have indicated that after spending years in difficult negotiations, the Meiji government regarded the dispatch of the Sagara mission as a final diplomatic attempt before a possible temporary breakdown in negotiations.128 As they may have anticipated, the Japanese soon faced a Korean demand to withdraw the steamer. Although they simply complied with the demand, the determined Japanese attitude was more evident in the dispatch sent by Yoshioka Kōki to the

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126 DNGB, vol. 4, no. 188.
128 DNGB, vol. 3, no. 8
Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On February 24 (Meiji 5/1/16), Yoshioka, who had been stationed in Korea since early 1871, stated in the dispatch to Tokyo that they would exhaust their efforts to notify the Koreans of the abolition of Tsushima’s private association and the institutional reforms following upon the imperial restoration. He continued that all responsibility would rest with Korea if the negotiations should break down.\(^{129}\) Two day later, Yoshioka and the other Japanese resident officials at Pusan confirmed the following three points: Korean officials would be informed of the establishment of official relations with China; the traditional seal was to be used during negotiations; there was no disagreement on the Japanese use of the letters, *dai* (great) and the title, *kōtei* (emperor), among foreign countries including Qing China.\(^{130}\)

The negotiations went as the Japanese had foreseen. On February 28 (Meiji 5/1/20), Sagara and other Japanese received a visit from Korean officials and delivered the transcript of the letter from Sō Shigemasa to the Vice Minister of Rites, and a copy of the Sino-Japanese Treaty.\(^{131}\) However, the Koreans thereafter continued to avoid making a clear reply and refused to meet with the Japanese despite the latter’s repeating of their requests. This Korean attitude finally drove the Japanese to take a desperate action. Since Tsushima and Korea had concluded a trade agreement in 1609, Japanese had been effectively segregated inside Japan House.\(^{132}\) Vexed


\(^{130}\) CJ, vol. 11, 39-43; DNGB, vol. 5, no. 137.

\(^{131}\) Sin, 291.

\(^{132}\) Tashiro, *Kinsei Nitchō tsuiko bōekishi no kenkyū*, 44-57.
at the Korean attitudes, on July 2 (Meiji 5/5/27), Yoshioka, Moriyama, and some others crossed
the wall of Japan House and ventured to meet directly with the Magistrate of Tongnae Chŏng
Hyŏn-dŏk. When this initiative resulted in failure, the negotiations also broke off.\textsuperscript{133}

Subsequent Japanese action further aggravated anti-Japanese sentiment among the
Koreans. After the failure of the Sagara mission, the Meiji government attempted to extend the
consolidation of Korea diplomacy under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Japan House. On
October 17 (Meiji 5/9/15), Hanabusa Yoshikata, an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
unilaterally requisitioned Japan House, which had been in the care of Tsushima for centuries, and
renamed it the Legation of Great Japan (\textit{Dai Nihon Kōkan}).\textsuperscript{134} This action, taken without prior
notification, upset the Koreans, who retaliated by announcing suspension of supplies to Japanese
residents.\textsuperscript{135} Tensions only increased upon the discovery of smuggling by Mitsui salesclerks, and
the Koreans posted a warning note on the gate of the Japanese legation in May, 1873, blasting
the Japanese for Westernization as well as for smuggling.\textsuperscript{136}

In response to this note, which the Japanese called “insulting”, voices arose inside the
Meiji government for a firm solution of the Korean issue. In mid-June 1873, Saigō Takamori, the
leading Grand Councilor (\textit{hittō sangi}) of the caretaker government (\textit{rusu seifu}) during the
absence of the Iwakura Mission, began to propose his own dispatch as a formal envoy to

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\textsuperscript{133} Tabohashi, vol. 1, 292.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., vol. 1, 216-218
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 218.
\textsuperscript{136} DNGB, vol. 6, no. 273.
\end{flushright}
negotiate with the Korean government. This is what is called Saigō’s “sei-Kan ron (the argument for chastisement of Korea by conquering it).” Existing missives, including his own letters and written statements, show that despite the proposal of this mission, Saigō was by no means optimistic about the negotiations. He in fact regarded his own mission as a final diplomatic effort for peace and even thought it highly likely that this measure would induce the Koreans to resort to violence against him. At the same time, he was not as pacifistic as some historians have maintained as mentioned in Chapter 5.137 Insisting that his mission not be accompanied by armed forces so that the mission could exhaust the efforts for peace, he anticipated that Korean violence would give Japan justification for punitive military action, though military preparations would, he estimated, require several years.138

Saigō’s sei-Kan ron proposal caused serious disunity and a rupture within the leadership of the Meiji government. The members of the Iwakura Mission, who had returned to Japan by early autumn, opposed the plan. They included Kido Takayoshi, Iwakura Tomomi, and Saigō’s childhood friend Ōkubo Toshimichi. They considered that the government should put a priority on domestic modernization rather than on a risky overseas military operation that would be very expensive and might induce foreign intervention. They also deemed the dispute with Russia over Sakhalin Island to be a more urgent issue.139 Although Saigō’s zeal had won Central


Board approval on October 15 despite this opposition, his opponents finally succeeded on October 24 in reversing the approval and bringing about the indefinite postponement of his mission until such time as it might obtain imperial sanction.\textsuperscript{140} The postponement did not entirely kill Saigō’s proposal but rather indicated that those opponents, who were originally against the dispatch of a formal envoy itself, were still seeking a compromise with Saigō. Although they wanted to retain a person of such enormous influence within the government, Saigō resigned all his high offices and left the government for his hometown, Kagoshima. Other Grand Councilors supporting him – Itagaki Taisuke and Gotō Shōjirō of Tosa, and Etō Shinpei and Soejima Taneomi of Hizen – followed him out of the government. As a result, the anti-sei-Kan leaders took over the reins of the government.\textsuperscript{141} This is what is called the political crisis of 1873 (\textit{Meiji rokunen seihen} or \textit{Seikanron seihen}).

\textbf{Resumption of Negotiations and Their Impasse}

It was early in January 1874, that the Meiji government began to take steps toward resumption of negotiations with Korea. Because the anti-sei-Kan leaders in the dispute with Saigō had insisted that the Sakhalin issue was more urgent, the government decided on January 19, 1874 to dispatch Rear Admiral Enomoto Takeaki to St. Petersburg to negotiate the issue with

\textsuperscript{140} \textit{Meiji Tenmō-ki}, vol. 4, 140.

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 141-142.
Russia. Soon after that, the government leaders began to work on the Korea issue. This might seem premature since they had recently won an indefinite postponement of Saigō’s plan; but there seem to have been increasing pressure from pro-Saigō (pro-sei-Kan) people. One might otherwise suspect that there were other motives behind the anti-Sei-Kan leaders’ objection to Saigō, as some historians actually do. On January 26, Chancellor Sanjō Sanetomi ordered two Grand Councilors, Ōkubo and Ōkuma Shigenobu of Hizen, to investigate the Korea issue, along with the Taiwan issue to be discussed in the next chapter.

In very early February, Sanjō circulated his own statement to other government leaders, which suggested that an envoy be dispatched to Korea after settling negotiations with Russia. Prior to this, army and naval officers would be dispatched; the envoy would be accompanied by several battleships. This might seem jingoistic, but it was not at all. The military presence would, he thought, prepare not for the opening of hostilities from the Japanese side, but for such contingencies as a Korean provocation. His intention was obviously to pursue a peaceful conclusion of the issue. Even in the event the embassy failed, he intended to be patient and to take all measures short of war.

142 DNGB, vol. no. 19.  
143 Ibid., vol. 5, no. 21.  
145 For example, see Mōri, _Meiji rokunen seihen no kenkyū_; idem., _Meiji rokunen seihen_.  
147 _Sanjō-ke monjo_, (MS copy, collection Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan Kensei Shiryōshitsu).
Sanjō’s idea did not, however, win much support from the other leaders, who preferred even more prudent measures. Iwakura Tomomi made notes on the circulated statement, suggesting that he agreed on sending someone to investigate Korea, but thought that person should not be part of any military contingent. Iwakura Tomomi made notes on the circulated statement, suggesting that he agreed on sending someone to investigate Korea, but thought that person should not be part of any military contingent. Kido Takayoshi thought Sanjō too hasty and optimistic. Ōkubo commented that an official envoy should not be dispatched without a resolution of war. That is to say, as he had done so in the dispute with Saigō, he was against the dispatch of an official envoy which he was afraid would lead to a military conflict with Korea and exhaust Japan’s national resources.

Possibly a few days after Sanjō circulated his statement, Ōkubo and Ōkuma submitted a report to the Council of State in accordance with the order which Sanjō gave on January 26. It first stated that since the Central Board had already decided to dispatch an envoy to Korea, several officials ought to be sent in order to achieve that purpose. The decision of the Central Board referred to the dispatch of a formal mission to Korea which Saigō had proposed and which had been postponed. However, this proposal never meant that the two leaders, both of who had been against Saigō, renounced their previous position. It did not also mean that Ōkubo, who was against Sanjō’s idea, contradicted himself. The “several officials” in fact meant not a formal (imperial) envoy but an inspection mission as a preliminary. In an attachment to the proposal, the

148 Ibid.
149 Ibid.
151 Ōkubo Toshimichi monjo, vol. 5, 343-5.
two Grand Councilors stated, “Since the Restoration, several missions have already been
dispatched to Korea. Its refusal deserves to be called a national humiliation. If we again dispatch
an envoy with expressions of amity and sincerity, and if they [the Koreans] do not comply with
our requests, we should launch punitive military action. This would not be proper unless we have
prepared for it in advance.”\(^\text{152}\) The avoidance of dispatching a formal envoy meant that they were
not determined to open hostilities against Korea and still intended to pursue the peaceful
establishment of diplomatic relations with the neighboring country.

Ôkubo and Ôkuma considered dispatching a small inspection mission aboard a
traditional Japanese ship, without the title of “mission (shisetsu)” perhaps so as not to irritate the
Koreans.\(^\text{153}\) This policy proposal in fact resembled – and may have been based on – the proposal
which Moriyama Shigeru had already submitted to Foreign Minister Terashima Munenori on
January 11 and also to Ôkubo and the Central Board. Moriyama stated that it would not be
appropriate to dispatch a formal envoy at that time; instead he proposed reviving the mission of
Sō Shigemasa cancelled in 1871, aboard a traditional Japanese ship.\(^\text{154}\) The Central Board
approved Ôkubo and Ôkuma’s policy proposal within a few days and reappointed Sō Shigemasa,
former daimyo of Tsushima (Izuhara), to an inspection mission on April 7.\(^\text{155}\)

\(^\text{152}\) Ôkubo Toshimichi monjo, vol. 5, p. 345.

\(^\text{153}\) Sanjō-ke monjo.

\(^\text{154}\) DNGB, vol. 5, no. 47.

The Sō mission however met the same fate as the earlier one. On May 2, Hirotsu Kōshin proposed to send Moriyama Shigeru to Korea in advance of dispatching Sō, reasoning that the political situation in Korea had changed in Seoul. On December 22, 1873, King Kojong (r. 1863-1906) declared that he was taking charge of administration directly, and that his father and regent, Taewŏn’gun, who had conducted a firm anti-foreign policy, was now out of power. The Korean Court was thereafter controlled by kinsmen of the Min, the Queen’s family.156 The new leadership began to review the country’s previous policy toward Japan and concluded that An Tong-jun had impeded association with Japan. The Korean Court dismissed An and his superiors, Magistrate of Tongnae Chŏng Hyŏn-dŏk and Governor of Kyŏngsang Province Kim Se-ho.157 An was after all sent to Seoul and beheaded in April 1875.158 The Meiji government probably began to receive information regarding these changes in the spring of 1874. In response to Hirotsu’s proposal, Sanjō issued an order on May 15 to Moriyama to go to Korea before dispatching Sō.159

As soon as he reached Pusan on June 14, Moriyama confirmed that the political winds in Korea had indeed turned favorable. On June 21, he reported on the changing political environment in the country and requested that Sō Shigemasa be dispatched promptly. He then


157 Kim, 211. See also Tabohashi, vol. 1, 332-334.

158 Ibid., 569.

159 DNGB, vol. 7, no. 67.
acted *ultra vires* by having Urase Yutaka contact Korean officials some time in July. Some time in August, Urase sent a letter to the new language officer (*hundo*) of Tongnae, proposing to exchange letters between the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Rites, and to return to Sō Shigemasa the responsibility for Korean affairs. On August 16, the new Magistrate of Tongnae, Pak Che-gwan, sent Nam Hyo-wŏn to Japan House, and Nam met with Moriyama. After repeatedly mentioning the formula given in Urase’s letter, Moriyama proposed more details: letters would be exchanged between the Deputy Foreign Minister and the Deputy Minister of Rites, as well as between the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Rites; the Koreans would not object to the Japanese use of such Chinese characters as “*kō*” and “*choku*”; the Koreans would not have to use those characters in their own letters. Nam expressed personal support for the proposals and promised Moriyama he would bring back a favorable reply.

Besides the change in leadership, there seemed to be another reason that Korean attitudes had become less hostile. As mentioned in Chapter 5, in late April 1874, the Meiji government had launched a punitive expedition to the aboriginal territories of Taiwan on the pretext of responding to the massacre of shipwrecked Ryukyuans in 1871 and the maltreatment of the shipwrecked residents of Bitchū, Oda Prefecture (part of present-day Okayama Prefecture), in 1873. On August 4, the Ministry of Rites of the Qing Dynasty passed a dispatch from the

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160 Ibid., no. 75.
161 Ibid., no. 76.
162 Ibid., no. 77.
Zongli Yamen (Foreign Office) to the Korean court. It informed the Koreans that the Japanese had subdued the aboriginal tribes. Five thousand soldiers of the expeditionary forces stationed in Nagasaki would be directed to Korea after completing operations in Taiwan. If the Japanese dispatched troops to Korea, France and the United States would aid them by sending troops.¹⁶³

In September 1874, Japanese-Korean negotiations showed the most significant progress since they had begun in 1869. When Hyŏn Sŏg-un, An Tong-jun’s replacement, and a subordinate official visited the Japanese legation on September 3, Moriyama suggested three options and asked them to choose one.¹⁶⁴ First, Korea would accept the letter from Sŏ Yoshishige to the Deputy Minister of Rites which it had rejected in 1872. Second, another Japanese official would be dispatched to deliver the letters from the Foreign Minister and the Deputy Foreign Minister to the Minister of Rites and the Deputy Minister of Rites respectively and negotiate with the officials of Tongnae on the form of association between the two countries. Third, finding it difficult to choose either of these options, Korea would instead dispatch a mission to Tokyo to negotiate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁶⁵ On September 24, Moriyama confidentially received a letter from the kinsman of the Korean royal family and the Commander of the Royal Guard, Cho Yŏng-ha. It was a more explicit indication of Korea’s regret for the rupture of negotiations in 1872 and wish to restore the relationship with Japan.

¹⁶⁴ DNGB, vol. 7, no. 78.
¹⁶⁵ Ibid., vol. 7, no. 78-1
Moriyama replied by asking for Cho’s assistance to the Korean court’s quick choice of any of the three options. On September 28, Hyŏn revisited the Japanese legation and informed Moriyama that the Korean court had decided to choose the second option. On October 2, in compliance with Moriyama’s request, Tongnae issued an official notification of the court’s approval of the second option to Moriyama. The second option was not actually new, but was rather a revival of the equal intergovernmental association which the Japanese had once failed to realize. In Tokyo, ratifying Moriyama’s action after his return, the Meiji government decided on December 28 to dispatch him to Korea again, and in January 1875 ordered Hirotsu Kōshin to accompany him.

Soon after Moriyama arrived in Pusan on February 24, 1875, negotiations were deadlocked again. When Hyŏn Sŏg-un visited Japan House the day after Moriyama’s arrival, Moriyama made a demand that he go to Tongnae and deliver the letters from Foreign Minister Terashima and Sŏ Shigemasa directly to the magistrate. Hyŏn declined the unconventional demand and requested that he look at the transcripts of the letters in accordance with convention. Moriyama also refused the Korean request. On March 2, in exchange for Hyŏn’s promise to bring back a reply from the court within twenty-five days, upon the request of

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166 Ibid., vol. 10, no. 81.
167 Ibid, no. 82.
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid., no. 102.
170 Ibid., no. 103.
Tongnae, Moriyama eventually showed Hyŏn the transcript of the letters on the following day.171 Hwang Chŏng-nyŏn, new magistrate of Tongnae and Pak Che-gwan’s replacement, and Hyŏn, however, found several problems in those letters. Defying precedent, they were not written in Chinese, the common language used in East Asian international relations since antiquity, but rather in Japanese. Chinese was used merely in the attached translations. The letters also contained the terms, Dai Nihon (Great Japan) and kōjō (emperor). The letter from Sō Shigemasa stated that he was to return the Korea-issued trade permission, tosho, which Korea had bestowed on Tsushima.172 This meant that Tsushima virtually declared the termination of the traditional intercourse with Korea.

This confrontation over the style of the Japanese letters was in fact derived from the agreement in September 1874. It concluded the association between the Japanese Foreign Minister and the Korean Minister of Rites and between the Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister and the Korean Vice Minister of Rites, but included no details regarding the style of letters, the language, or other issues.173 When he informed Moriyama on September 28, 1874 of the decision of the Korean Court to choose the second option noted above, Hyŏn Sŏg-ŭn requested that kojō (k. hwangsang) be replaced with tenshi (k. ch’ŏnja; Son of Heaven). Moriyama did not believe Hyŏn, not surprisingly because the Koreans had detested the term, tenshi, as well as kōjō also used to style the Chinese emperor, when it appeared in the Japanese letter of 1872.

171 Sanjŏ-ke monjo.
172 DNGB, vol. 5, no. 105.
173 Ibid., no. 95.
Moriyama therefore asked Hyŏn to receive either a verbal response or a letter from the Magistrate of Tongnae Chŏng Hyŏn-dŏk regarding his request. Moriyama received a letter from Chŏng on October 2, in which there were no such words asking the Japanese to use tenshi instead. Not knowing whether Hyŏn’s request was based on instructions from the Korean Court, Moriyama did not consent to his request.\textsuperscript{174} The report from Tongnae on the Japanese letters caused brief discussion inside the Korean court, which under the initiative of King Kojong, eventually decided to hold a reception for Moriyama before receiving the Chinese translation of the letters and requiring revision of the letters on March 12.\textsuperscript{175}

However, another dispute occurred over the reception which the prefect of Tongnae was to hold for Moriyama. On March 27, Tongnae scheduled this reception for March 31.\textsuperscript{176} Moriyama then stated that he would wear full Western-style court dress and pass through the main gate of the reception hall. Hyŏn Sŏg-ŭn however refused the unprecedented breach of protocol, demanding that Moriyama follow the traditional protocol which Tsushima-han had practiced.\textsuperscript{177} On the scheduled reception day, the Koreans furthermore postponed the reception and instead sent a letter to Moriyama, in which Hyŏn repeated his attack on Moriyama for his violation of the conventional practice. Since neither the Japanese nor the Koreans in fact wanted a

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., vol. 8, no. 53.

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid.
breakdown in peaceful negotiations despite this dispute, they continued to talk for the following six months.\textsuperscript{178} Neither party was, however, able to find a compromise in the end.

Moriyama’s negotiation strategy was not to offer a compromise until the Koreans received the Japanese letters and held the reception in the manner on which he insisted. Seeing Korea’s virtual compromise on March 12, he probably believed that a firm attitude would convince the Koreans to give way to the Japanese.\textsuperscript{179} In order to move the stagnant negotiations forward, Moriyama and Hirotsu Kōshin requested Tokyo to dispatch a small number of battleships to the Korean coast in April 1874.\textsuperscript{180} The government then dispatched three battleships – the \textit{Daini Tei'yū} the \textit{Takao}, the \textit{Un'yū-kan} in May.\textsuperscript{181} The Koreas also persisted in their own claim that the Japanese comply with the conventional protocol in the reception. In July, the Koreans discovered that Moriyama had no further intention of continuing the negotiations. In response, on August 9, the Korean government officially announced its final decision to refuse the Japanese letters, and on September 21, Moriyama left Pusan.\textsuperscript{182}

\textsuperscript{178} Tabohashi, vol. 1, 587-8.

\textsuperscript{179} DNGB, vol. 5, 91.

\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., vol. 8, no. 61.

\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., no. 62.

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., vol. 7, no. 55.
The Kanghwa Incident and the 1876 Japanese-Korean Treaty

The commander of the battleship Un’yū-kan, Inoue Yoshika, reported to Tokyo that on September 20, while investigating a sea route along the western coast of the Korean Peninsula and heading for Nuzhuang, China, the Japanese battleship had approached Kanghwa Island of Korea and sent a boat to obtain drinking water. The boat was then unexpectedly shelled by Korean batteries. The Japanese returned fire and destroyed the batteries.183 This is the Japanese account of the Kanghwa Incident. Most scholars today do not credit Inoue’s report, instead accusing Japan of conspiring to provoke Korea. 184 This observation was shared by contemporaries; a dignitary, Sasaki Takayuki of Tosa, for example, wrote in his diary titled Hogohiroi, “I suspect that our side caused this incident. A naval officer told me that Inoue had mentioned to a colleague that it would be fortunate if Korea fired first.”185

Some questions remain, however: if the incident was truly a result of Japanese provocation, who was involved in the plot? Was the top leadership of the Meiji government implicated? The presence of the Un’yū-kan in Korean coastal waters was originally based on the appeals of Moriyama and Hirotsu as mentioned above and was not intended to open hostilities against Korea but rather to intimidate the country into compromising in the difficult negotiations. It is certainly possible to speculate that the Meiji government exploited the request from those

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184 See Kim Key-hiuk’s The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order.
officials of Foreign Ministry in Korea to provoke the Koreans. It should be mentioned here that there is at least no convincing evidence that the incident was instigated upon the instructions or conspiracy of any top-ranking government leaders such as Ōkubo Toshimichi.

Receiving a telegram about the incident from Inoue, returning to Nagasaki, on September 28, the Meiji government found a great opportunity to put an end to the long-pending diplomatic issue. It decided on October 3 to dispatch a mission to Korea. The issue they would deal with next was to decide on someone qualified to send. Grand Councilor Kido Takayoshi was eager to go to Korea. He would have possibly won the appointment if he had not suffered a stroke on November 20. The government in the end appointed Grand Councilor and Lieutenant-General Kuroda Kiyotaka of Satsuma as Minister Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary on December 9, and Senator (Genrōin giin) Inoue Kaoru of Chōshū as Deputy on December 27. Kuroda’s appointment was actually a result of his zealous appeal to other leaders. On the other hand, Inoue was reluctant. His appointment was deemed desirable because of the factionalism inside the government and apprehensions about Kuroda; a balance of power was considered necessary between the two major oligarchic cliques – Satsuma and Chōshū. Government leaders might also have been afraid that Kuroda’s extreme personality would

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187 Kido Takayoshi monjo, vol. 6, 298.
188 DNGB, vol. 8, no. 113.
189 Iwakura Tomomi kankei monjo, vol. 6, 442-3.
heighten the tension between the two countries.\textsuperscript{190} The Kuroda Mission left Tokyo on January 6, 1876 and reached Kanghwa Island on February 10.\textsuperscript{191}

Although it dispatched the envoy accompanied by armed forces, the Meiji government actually intended to settle the incident and establish treaty-based diplomatic relations with Korea peacefully. The instructions which Chancellor Sanjō gave the Kuroda mission stated that a relationship with Korea was to be established on the basis of eternal amity and equality.\textsuperscript{192} Tabohashi Kiyoshi has noted that this was based on Kido’s proposal.\textsuperscript{193} In a proposal submitted on October 5, Kido warned against a hasty resort to arms, which he thought must not be carried out without complete preparations, even in the event that Korea refused to admit its fault and stressed the need to pursue peaceful measures with himself as envoy.\textsuperscript{194}

Negotiations started on February 11, and the Kuroda mission introduced a treaty draft to the Korean representatives led by Sin Kwan-ho on the following day. The treaty draft, which is said to have been drawn up by Moriyama Shigeru, showed that the Japanese were putting Western-style diplomacy and international law into practice. Its first article stated, “Korea is an independent country (jishu no hō) and shares equal rights with Japan.”\textsuperscript{195} Before the rupture of

\textsuperscript{190} Segai Inoue-kō den, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1968), 693-4; Iwakura Tomomi kankei monjo, vol. 6, 443.
\textsuperscript{191} DNGB, vol. 8, no. 114.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., no. 114.
\textsuperscript{193} Tabohashi, vol. 1, 426.
\textsuperscript{194} Iwakura-kō jikki, vol. 2, 307-309.
\textsuperscript{195} DNGB, vol. 8, no. 116.
Moriyama’s negotiations in October 1875, the Japanese had been unable to decide on a stance toward Korea’s status within the terms of Sino-Korean suzerain-vassal relations. Their victory in the minor military clash might have encouraged them to take the concrete stance that Korea should be treated as an independent nation, detached from the Chinese tributary system. They hence intended the term “jishu no hō” to deny Chinese suzerainty over Korean, though they later realized that their interpretation of the word, jishu (c. zizhu; k. chaju), as “independence” was not shared by the Chinese and the Koreans, who interpreted it as “autonomy” under Chinese suzerainty. The draft also represented the practice of another aspect of Western-style diplomacy. Besides the treaties which Japan had concluded with Western powers since the late 1850s, the presence of unequal clauses such as the Japanese privilege of extraterritoriality showed that Japan was prepared to “pay only lip service” to the notion of equality. While desperate to rank themselves with Western powers by revising their own unequal treaties, they intended to behave as “civilized” and treat Korea as “uncivilized.”

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196 The stance of the Meiji government over whether Korea should be treated as an independent nation or a Chinese subordinate had been ambiguous. Moriyama Shigeru and Hirotsu Kōshin submitted a written statement to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in December 1874, and an inquiry about this question to Chancellor Sanjō in January 1975. The dialogues dragged on, and Sanjō and Terashima could not give their subordinates any concrete instructions. Terashima for example stated that to treat Korea as an independent nation and to carry out a direct association between the two monarchs would be a difficult decision because of the long history of the Tokugawa association with the country and Sino-Korean suzerain-vassal relations. See Sanjō-ke mono; DNGB, vol. 5, no. 99.


198 DNGB, vol. 8, no. 116. I borrowed the word “lip service” from Peter Duus. See Duus, 13.
Nevertheless, the treaty draft also showed that while defining it as an equal independent sovereign state, the Meiji government still saw Korea through the lens of traditional diplomatic notions and protocols. Ishikawa Hiroshi argues that the Japanese perception of superiority over Korea could be spelled out only by forcing upon the neighboring country an unequal treaty after treating it as one.\(^{199}\) However, the treaty draft showed that the Japanese still sought to articulate superiority over Korea in the traditional manner. In the draft, Japan was described with the Chinese character, \textit{dai} (great), and styled “\textit{Dai Nihon} (Great Japan).”\(^{200}\) This was certainly the internationally recognized usage in referring to Japan, as Yoshioka Kōki mentioned to the Koreans in 1872. However, when the character was not given to Korea, as it was merely styled “\textit{Chōsenkoku} (Korea),” it necessarily implied Korea’s inferior status according to traditional East Asian diplomatic customs.\(^{201}\)

In addition to the presence or absence of the Chinese character, Japan and Korea were hierarchically distinguished by the titles of their monarchs. The Japanese had been yielding to the Koreans regarding the titles of the monarchs through the previous years of negotiations, as noted above. The draft referred to the monarchs of the two countries: the Japanese emperor was styled \textit{Tennō}, written in two Chinese characters, “\textit{ten} (c. \textit{tian}; k. \textit{ch’ŏn}; heaven)” and “\textit{kō} (c. \textit{huang}; k. \textit{hwang}; emperor),” pronounced “\textit{nō}” in this particular term, while the Korean king was styled

\(^{199}\) Ishikawa, p. 63.

\(^{200}\) DNGB, vol. 8, no. 117.

\(^{201}\) Ibid.
kokuō, written in two Chinese characters, “kuni (c. guo k. kug)” and “ō (c. wang; k. wang).”

The two characters, kō and ō diplomatically expressed a hierarchical distinction in the East Asian community, though those had traditionally been synonymous in Japanese domestic usage.

Although this difference in the monarchical titles – emperor and king – would not represent a hierarchical distinction between the two and between their countries per se, according to the Western diplomatic practice, the several facts testified that the Meiji government viewed the monarchical titles in a traditional sense. The use of the title Tennō contradicted the protocol the Meiji government itself had established. After the dispute over monarchical honorifics with Western powers years earlier, it decided to style the Japanese monarch “Dai kōtei (great emperor)” diplomatically in 1873, instead of the vernacular title whose use in diplomacy Westerners had disliked.203 The presence of the vernacular monarchical title in the draft indicated that the Meiji government had no intention of employing the protocol employed in diplomacy toward the West in that toward Korea.

The two different honorifics were more revealing of the inconsistency of the Japanese practice of Western-style diplomacy. The draft styled the Japanese emperor “Majesty (j. heika; k. p’yoha)” but the Korean king “Highness (j. denka; k. jōngha).”204 Regardless of what titles monarchs or sovereigns possess, Western diplomatic practice required the employment of “Majesty” for all. The Japanese draft did not, however, give the Korean king the honor. The

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202 Ibid.
203 Ibid., vol. 2, no. 56.
204 Ibid.
different honorifics would connote the superior status of the Japanese emperor over the Korean king, according to both traditional and Western diplomatic practices.

The Koreans were not as ignorant of the Japanese employment of the East Asian diplomatic customs as they were of Western-style diplomacy. They had hardly any knowledge of treaties, still less of unequal clauses, but were at least able to see that the Japanese treaty draft was unacceptable for reasons other than having an unequal clause. On February 18, six days after receiving the draft, the Korean Court notified the Kuroda mission that it would establish diplomatic relations and conclude a treaty with Japan. King Kojong’s pragmatic judgement and Chinese persuasion lay behind the decision. The Koreans did not, however, fail to notice that their sovereign was given a status inferior to his Japanese counterpart. They demanded that references to the monarchs and the character for “great” be eliminated from references to Japan.

The Kuroda mission did not reject the Korean demands. Its members agreed not to refer to the monarchs, though this was unusual compared to other treaties which Japan had concluded with the Western powers, and instead proposed using the character “great” for both countries. This compromise came about because of the Japanese negotiators’ faith in the

\[205\] Kim, 246.

\[206\] DNGB, vol. 9, no. 21.

\[207\] Peng, 117-8.

\[208\] DNGB, vol. 9, no. 21.

\[209\] Ibid., no. 24; Tabohashi, vol. 1, 357-9.
guidelines, given by the central government before their departure for Korea, of pursuing peaceful measures and putting a priority on establishing treaty-based relations with Korea.\footnote{210}{DNGB., vol. 9, no. 20.} They might also have realized that the single Chinese character, with which only China was crowned in the Sinocentric international order, could express Korea’s independence of Qing China, as the first article of the treaty draft did. The Koreans did not offer further disagreement with the Japanese proposal. Following further negotiations on the details of other articles, on February 26, the Japanese and Korean representatives signed the Kanghwa Treaty, in which Japanese superiority was merely expressed by the unequal clauses, not by either monarchical titles or honorifics.\footnote{211}{Nikkan gaikō shiryō shūsei, vol. 1, 245-248.}

Although it marked the beginning of modern Japanese-Korean diplomatic relations, the signed treaty simultaneously revealed that Meiji Japan’s Korea policy incorporated the legacy of Tokugawa diplomacy, albeit reluctantly. The Japanese treaty draft announced that the Japanese sought to spell out their superior status over Korea in both the traditional and the Western sense. The treaty finally signed by the two countries, however, showed that the Japanese gave up those claims to superiority in the traditional manner because of Korean resistance. Japan was determined to conclude the treaty without using military measures, and had no way to force the Koreans to accept the original draft. Probably Japanese officials did not want to fail in accomplishing the primary objective, namely the establishment of treaty-based diplomatic
relations, by persisting on the minor issues. The absence of any reference to the sovereigns showed not only that the treaty appeared less normally “Western” but also that the Japanese were unable to acquire diplomatic advantages, based on the imperial restoration. As established Japanese-Korean relations were similar to the equal intergovernmental association which had previously been attempted, the treaty revealed that it was a compromise with the Koreans who persisted in using the style of traditional equal diplomatic relations which they had used with the Tokugawa bakufu. The diplomatic relations established after years of arduous negotiations thus showed that the Meiji government, which possessed the same contemptuous perception of Korea as the Tokugawa had, continued to be faced with the same discrepancy between their ideal of spelling out Japan’s superior status in and the reality of the diplomatic relations which did not truly project Japan’s ideal status vis-à-vis Korea.

The objective of the early Meiji Korea policy was to establish diplomatic relations with the neighboring country in accordance with the principle of “amity and opening” and for the sake of convincing Korea to jettison the firm anti-foreign seclusionist policy which the Japanese were afraid would cause a menace to their national security. The new regime intended to introduce treaty-based relations adopted from the Western practice to diplomatic relations with the neighboring countries with which the previous regime had maintained diplomatic relations in its own way for more than two hundred years. However, the early Meiji Korea policy was not so consistent with the Western model. When it was an inheritor of the traditional historical perception of Japanese-Korean relations and contemptuous perception of Korea, and when those
perceptions were emphasized by the restorationist zeal, the new imperial regime tried to spell out Japan’s superior status in the traditional way within the framework of treaty-based diplomatic relations. From the commencement of Korea policy in the spring of 1868 until the conclusion of the Kanghwa Treaty in February 1869, the traditional perception and diplomatic notion remained in the minds of Japanese policymakers.

Meanwhile, Korea had no intention to accept any other form of diplomatic relations with Japan than the traditional equal status relationship which it had maintained with the Tokugawa bakufu for more than two hundred years. Finding no way to convince or force it to stop persisting in the traditional form of diplomatic relations, the Meiji government chose to made a compromise with Korea. The formula of equal intergovernmental association revealed that while it shared the same or similar contemptuous perceptions of Korea with the Tokugawa bakufu, the new regime reluctantly succeeded to the Tokugawa diplomacy. The succession of the Tokugawa diplomacy furthermore meant that it simultaneously became the inheritor of the contradiction which the Tokugawa Korea policy had continued to contain for more than two hundred years. In the early phase of the Meiji period, the Meiji government could not get rid of the Tokugawa legacy and prevail the contradiction as is seen in the Kanghwa Treaty.

In September, 1893, the Korean Ambassador Resident Kim Po-jun was granted an audience with the Emperor Meiji at the Imperial Palace. He addressed the emperor as “Your Great Imperial Majesty (k. Tae Hwangje p’yoha; j. Dai Kōtei heika)” and styled his own
monarch, King Kojong, “His Majesty Great Sovereign (k. *Tae Gunchu p’yoha*; j. *Dai Kunshu heika*).” That Kim styled his own monarch “Majesty” was not because Korea had renounced suzerain-vassal relations with Qing China. This did not occur until Korea renamed itself Great Empire of Korea (*Tae Han Jeguk*) in October 1897 and emerged from the Chinese tributary system, subsequent to the Chinese defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895. Rather, Korea’s use of the honorific, which collided with the notion of Chinese suzerainty, resulted from its inevitable adjustment to Western-style diplomacy, as Japan had done previously. This resulted from opening its doors and establishing diplomatic relations with the Western powers beginning with the U.S.-Korean treaty of 1882.

When Korea decided to adopt Western-style diplomacy, it became more difficult for Japan to express its traditional conception of Japanese-Korean relations in actual diplomatic intercourse. Also when it considered the demonstration of Western diplomatic practice to be a part of *bunmei kaika* and means of aggrandizing Japan’s international status, the Meiji government could not also have continued to treat Korea as an exception. Continued practice of Western-style diplomacy could also be a weapon for denying Chinese suzerainty which would have prevented Japan from enhancing its influence on the Korean Peninsula. Some officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs actually proposed to style the Korean king “Majesty” for that purpose in the late 1880s. Thus, when Japan and Korea, both non-Western nations, were situated

212 DNGB, vol. 10, no. 54.

in the Western-dominated world, they inevitably had to move closer to Western-style diplomacy and international relations by modifying or renouncing their indigenous foreign perceptions and diplomatic notions. The two countries’ mutual employment of the honorific, “Majesty,” to style their monarchs in 1893 indicated the growing Westernization of their diplomacy.

Westernization of diplomatic relations did not, however, mean that the Japanese completely abandoned their traditional contemptuous perception of Korea. Japanese policymakers retained this perception, which rather continued to be reproduced in various ways in parallel with the Japanese penetration of Korea in subsequent decades. The new perception of a dichotomy between “civilized” or “advanced” Japan and “uncivilized” or “backward” Korea held since the Meiji Restoration further reinforced the belief in Japanese superiority.214 As a result, the discrepancy between the ideal based on such a perception and the reality remained in Meiji Japan’s Korea policy. And its demise did not come until the termination of Korea as an independent sovereign state. When Korea was annexed into the Japanese empire in 1910, the name, Chosŏn (k. Chosôn), and the title of king (l. ŏ; k. wang) were spared as the Koreans hoped. When the former sovereign of a country which had vanished from maps became a subject of the Japanese emperor, and came to be styled “Ri-ô denka (His Royal Highness Yi),” the discrepancy finally perished.215

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CHAPTER 5

EARLY MEIJI SINO-JAPANESE RELATIONS: JAPANESE POLICIES TOWARD THE RYUKYUS AND THE TAIWANESE ABORIGINAL TERRITORIES

Throughout the Tokugawa era, there had been no diplomatic relations between Japan and China since the Tokugawa bakufu’s attempt to restore formal government to government relationships with the Ming dynasty in the first two decades of the seventeenth century. Since then, the bakufu had maintained a commercial relationship, avoiding direct government-to-government contact with the Ming and Qing dynasties. The Ryukyus had been under Japanese ascendancy since Satsuma’s military conquest in 1609; the Japanese maintained indirect contact with the East Asian mainland and a stance of avoiding unnecessary friction with China by keeping Satsuma’s fief in the form of kingdom and tolerating its tributary relationship with the Ming and Qing dynasties. China had meanwhile pretended to be blind to the Japanese presence over its vassal state as long as tributary relations were kept intact, though this pragmatic attitude contradicted the Middle Kingdom ideology. Despite this latent tension, early modern Sino-Japanese relations, without a diplomatic relationship, had thus remained calm. Such a calm (and
relatively estranged) relationship might have been the usual form of the relationship between the two countries except for the military clashes in Korea in the late seventh and sixteenth centuries.

After the absence of diplomatic relations from the mid-sixteenth century, China and Japan restored diplomatic ties when the Qing dynasty and the Meiji government signed a treaty in 1871. Although the treaty was described as a “friendship treaty (j. shūkō jōki; c. xiuhao tiaogui), modern Sino-Japanese relations were troubled from the beginning. Soon after signing, the Meiji government began in 1872 to end the dual subordination of the Kingdom of the Ryukyus to China and Japan. Almost concurrently, it began to consider launching a punitive expedition against the Taiwanese aboriginal territories on the pretext of punishing a massacre and other atrocities which the aboriginal tribes of the island had committed against shipwrecked Ryukyuans and Japanese in 1871 and again in 1873. The Audience Question, the dispute over the audience of foreign, including Japanese, representatives with the Qing Emperor Tongzhi (r. 1861-1874), followed in 1873. When the Meiji government carried out an expedition to Taiwan in the spring of 1874, tensions increased between the two countries, and difficult negotiations continued for months. The Sino-Japanese war might have broken out two decades earlier if the crisis had not been settled by British mediation in October 1874.

Many historians have argued that Japan changed its attitudes toward China after the Meiji Restoration, arguing that those Japanese actions in the Ryukyus and Taiwan marked the commencement of Japan’s consistent aggression and expansionism toward China and the East Asian mainland. Japanese have often described this as a continental policy (tairiku seisaku).
Others called it imperialism and militarism. Inoue Kiyoshi has defined Sino-Japanese relations from the early Meiji period to the end of the Second World War as seventy years of Japanese aggression toward China (Chūgoku shinryaku no nanajūnen) and contrasted them with two thousand years of friendship. In his work on the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 - 1895, Nakatsuka Akira sees the war as the culmination of Japanese policies of continental expansion, which had begun early in the Meiji era. Some interpret the annexation of the Ryukyus and the invasion of the aboriginal territories on Taiwan to be the inception of Japanese militarism and aggression toward China. Others have traced the origin of Japanese ambitions for continental expansion back to the Bakumatsu period, arguing that the Meiji government tried to realize the expansionist dreams advocated by Yoshida Shōin and others. Zhang Qixiong discusses modern Japanese aggression toward China, tracing its origin back to Bakumatsu intellectual expansionist discourses, in the context of the historical conflict between the Han Chinese and surrounding minority ethnic groups, such as the Mongols and Manchus, over the rule of the Middle Kingdom.

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1 See Note 54 of Chapter 1.


On the other hand, Peter Duus writes, “Given its limited fiscal, political, and military resources, the Meiji government was in no position to embark on an expansionist policy in the 1870s and 1880s.” Some Japanese historians virtually support his statement by demonstrating that Meiji Japan did not take action to become a continental power (tairiku kokka) before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. From the perspective of military history, Tobe Ryōichi and Kurono Taeru argue that early Meiji military formation and the policies of the 1880s indicate that the Japanese had not initiated an expansionist policy toward the East Asian mainland. These two Japanese historians state that Japanese military strategy was formed rather on the assumption of defense against foreign invasion. The assumed invader was Qing China, with which Japan had been antagonistic over Korea since the early 1880s. Through an examination of Japanese policy toward Korea and China from the early 1880s up to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, based on the scrutiny of primary sources in several languages, Takahashi Hidenao and Ōsawa Hiroaki deny that Japanese East Asian policies of the time before the Sino-Japanese War were designed to make Japan a continental power.

One purpose of this chapter is to elucidate that the policies toward the Ryukyus and the Taiwanese aboriginal territories were derived from the Meiji government’s concern over

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7 Duus, 14.


national security and prestige. Regarding Japanese overseas expansion from the time of the Sino-Japanese War until the end of the Second World War. Mark R. Peattie notes, “It is obvious that concern over national security as an insular nation was the most outstanding and decisive factor driving Japan into constructing a modern empire.” It is possible to apply this argument about Japanese concern over national security to the annexation of the Ryukyus and the expedition to the Taiwanese aboriginal territories in the 1870s. That is to say, those actions were consistently motivated by concern over national security and the desire for a better international status in the Western-dominated world. Some previous studies have already argued that the Ryukyu Disposition was motivated by a desire for national security and prestige. Although Okinawan scholar Kinjō Seitoku has pointed out that the Ryukyu and Taiwan issues need to be comprehensively understood as intertwined, previous studies have failed to consider the two issues in relation to each other in terms of Meiji Japan’s concern over national security and prestige. Meiji Japan concluded that in the light of the Western notion of territorial sovereignty, the ambiguous status of the Ryukyus, which had been subordinated to both China and Japan, had to be resolved by incorporating the archipelago kingdom into Japan. The Meiji government also deemed the chastisement of the aboriginal tribes who had maltreated Japanese subjects and


12 Ibid., 65.
the seizure of their land to be necessary actions for the sake of national security and prestige. The
expedition as punitive action had the meaning of a demonstration of Japanese sovereignty over
the Ryukyus. Robert Eskildsen calls Japanese ambition for the colonization of the Taiwanese
aboriginal territories “mimetic imperialism”; the Japanese desired to raise their low international
status in the Western-dominated world by imitating the Western powers, namely by colonizing
the aboriginal territories.\textsuperscript{13} For the Japanese, the seizure of the aboriginal territories furthermore
had the more serious intention of preventing the Western powers from taking over the island,
located to the south of Japan. Many previous studies have argued that the direct cause of the
Taiwan expedition was the ex-samurai discontent with the Meiji government, especially after the
political crisis of 1873.\textsuperscript{14} I will argue that Meiji policymakers did not see the ex-samurai
discontent directed against them as a mere domestic problem but also as an obstacle to the
expansion of Japan’s power and prestige for its national survival.

Did Japan, abandoning its traditional attitudes toward China, attempt to launch
aggression toward China by depriving it of its tributary relations and territory for the sake of
Japan’s national security and prestige in the first decade of the Meiji period? In his book review
of Takahashi’s work, Kobayashi Hidehiko notes that the absence of an expansionist policy

\textsuperscript{13} Eskildsen, 388.

\textsuperscript{14} Matsunaga Masayoshi has already pointed out this historiographical problem. See his article, “Taiwan
ryōyūron no keifu: 1874 (Meiji shichi) nen no Taiwan shuppei o chūshin ni,” \textit{Taiwan kingendaishi kenkyū} 1
would not necessarily mean that Meiji Japan had no ambition to expand toward China. Some Japanese leaders actually had evident expansionist ambitions, and China was never excluded from their targets; Iwakura Tomomi, one of the most prominent court politicians in the Bakumatsu and early Meiji periods, stated that the seizure of China would be necessary for Japan’s national security. Soejima Taneomi and Etō Shinpei also envisaged expansion to China, for the same reason as Iwakura. Kurono’s, Ōsawa’s, and Takahashi’s studies of the 1880s and the early 1890s do not directly counter the position that Japanese aggression toward China began in the first decade of the Meiji era.

Another purpose of this chapter is to argue that those Japanese policies of the 1870s were not designed to put such ideas into practice. Firmly believing in their substantial domination, the Japanese did not perceive the unilateral annexation of the Ryukyus as an encroachment upon China. Nor did the expedition to the aboriginal territories aim at encroaching upon China. The fact that the Meiji government unexpectedly encountered the Western powers’ accusation that the expedition would be an encroachment on Chinese territorial sovereignty only proved that lesser powers would be tossed about by the intentions of greater powers. Until immediately before carrying out the expedition, the Meiji government had expected international (Western) recognition of their expedition to the aboriginal territories as a legitimate action,

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especially after the Soejima mission had negotiated with the Qing government in 1873. When the Western powers unexpectedly and quite suddenly turned their attention toward the expedition, the domestic condition no longer allowed the Meiji government to cancel the overseas campaign, knowing that military action in the aboriginal territories would be regarded as an invasion of Chinese territory. Yet this still did not mean that Meiji Japan had become aggressive toward China, still less that it had begun to carry out an already laid-out plan to conquer China.

Although Marius B. Jansen has noted that Meiji leaders chose competition with China rather than cooperation, this argument cannot necessarily be applied to explain Japanese attitudes toward China during the period with which this study deals.18 Japanese policymakers certainly did not choose to cooperate with China to survive the difficult circumstances of the time. More exactly, surrounded by Western suspicion of a possible Sino-Japanese anti-imperialist alliance, they discovered that it would not be a wise policy. However, they simultaneously had no desire to abandon peace with this neighboring country over the Ryukyu and Taiwan issues. They were cautious about causing conflict with China. Although its intention to establish treaty-based diplomatic relations revealed the change of Japanese attitudes toward China, the Meiji government was simultaneously the inheritor of traditional perceptions of Sino-Japanese status relations. As the Tokugawa bakufu had done, it wished to avoid disputes with the Qing government over the status of the Ryukyus and even made compromises, contradicting the claim

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of exclusive sovereignty. They were cautious about military action in the aboriginal territories, which shared a land border under Chinese control on the island of Taiwan and chose to pursue a diplomatic solution, even when the dispute over the Japanese expedition threatened to cause a breakdown in relations between the two countries.

The Opening of Modern Sino-Japanese Relations

Diplomatic relations with China had been considered by the Tokugawa bakufu in its last years. Some years after renouncing its “ancestral policy (sohō)” called “sakoku” or “kaikin” in the late 1850s, the bakufu began to seek formal ties with its neighbor, which it had failed to establish in the early seventeenth century. In late May 1862 (Bunkyū 2/late 4), the bakufu dispatched a delegation, consisting of Takasugi Shinsaku of Chōshū and other retainers of the bakufu and some daimyo, from Nagasaki to Shanghai on the Sensai-maru in order to trade with China.19 This was an epochal event in early modern Sino-Japanese relations, since trade between the two countries had been sustained only by unilateral visits of Chinese merchants for more than two centuries. More remarkable was that the bakufu simultaneously attempted preliminary negotiations with the Shanghai Circuit Superintendent (daotai) on treaty-based formal relations.

However, these initiatives made no progress. Similar unsuccessful attempts were made in 1863, 1865, and 1867. 

As soon as it was established, the Meiji government proclaimed "washin kaikoku." This proposal was to be extended without exception to all foreign countries. The establishment of diplomatic relations with China was hence one of the diplomatic goals to be achieved. In response to the governmental announcement of amity with all the countries and preservation of the treaties concluded previously with the Western powers on February 8, 1868 (Keiō 4/1/15), Kido Takayoshi proposed establishing diplomatic relations with China. In late April or May of that year (Keiō 4/ leap 4/u), the Nagasaki Court (Nagasaki saibansho), which had taken over from the Nagasaki Magistrate (Nagasaki bugyōsho) of the former regime in late February or March, 1868 (Keiō 4/2/u), sent a note in reply to a letter the Shanghai Governor had sent in late March or April (Keiō 4/3/u) regarding the bakufu’s request that an agreement be reached on issuing visas. The Nagasaki letter, notifying China of the imperial restoration, proposed the establishment of diplomatic relations, a matter beyond the jurisdiction of local Chinese officials. On August 10, 1869 (Meiji 2/7/3), the Deputy Director of the Bureau of Foreign Affairs Terashima Munenori, submitted to Director Sawa Nobuyoshi a proposal to work toward

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20 See Shutsu bōeki shiryū: Hakodate Kenjunmaru Shihai e hakkō ikken, in Bakumatsu bōeki shiryō; DNGB, vol. 2, pt. 1, 252-253, 256-257. See also Zoku tsushin zenran: ruijū no bu, senkanbu. The bakufu dispatched the Kenjun-maru in 1863 and Pekin-gō in 1865; the Ganjisu-gō in 1867 was dispatched by Hamamatsu-han and Sakura-han.


22 Ibid., no. 67
government-to-government relations with the Qing government for the sake of promoting foreign trade.23

For the Meiji government, the China issue was not, however, as urgent or crucial as the stalled negotiations with Korea, the dispute with Russia over Sakhalin, or the revision of the unequal treaties. As the China trade at Nagasaki had expanded since the Tokugawa bakufu had opened the country in the late 1850s, the need for formal communication had increased due to the number of legal matters arising between Japan and the nationals of other countries. Receiving an inquiry from Nagasaki Prefecture, dated November 1869 (Meiji 4/10), regarding the treatment of these matters, the government decided to achieve de facto formal relations by dispatching an envoy led by a minor official of the Foreign Ministry. However, Tokyo did not consider treaty-based relations with China to be an urgent issue.24 Shinobu Seizaburō has noted that the leaders of the new regime understood that diplomacy could be a matter of national survival.25 In their eyes, for instance, Korea was not of great importance in economic terms, as Kido Takayoshi noted, while opening and leading it into the international community was regarded as closely related to the Japanese concern with national security and prestige.26


24 Ibid., pt. 3, no. 86.


26 Kito Takayoshi *nikki*.  

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Meanwhile, the Meiji government did not perceive that the China issue was as crucial in that regard as, for example, the Korea issue.

Since the early 1870s, China had gotten more attention as a means of breaking through the quagmire of negotiations with Korea. On January 4, 1870 (Meiji 2/12/3), the Council of State appointed Kido Takayoshi as Ambassador Plenipotentiary to China and Korea, though his mission was later cancelled because of the Tianjin Massacre in June.\(^{27}\) In the spring of 1870, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted an inquiry which included three options for Korean policy to the Council of State, as noted in Chapter 4. The Ministry had in fact conceived of the establishment of diplomatic ties with China as the most likely way to solve the Korea issue. In the aforementioned proposal of 1869, Terashima Munenori stated that the Korea issue should be negotiated with the Qing government by dispatching an envoy to China.\(^{28}\) In the same month as Kido’s appointment as Ambassador Plenipotentiary, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in its reply to an inquiry from the Council of State on diplomatic and commercial relations with China, noted that diplomatic relations with China would make it easier to put an end to the Korea issue.\(^{29}\) It thought that obtaining parity with Korea’s suzerain would make it easier to convince that nation to establish diplomatic relations with Japan. In late June, the Council of State finally


\(^{28}\) Ibid.

favored the third option, which suggested obtaining parity with Qing China before dispatching a formal envoy to Korea in order to achieve the opening of Korea, though it also stated that government-to-government relations with China would not be imminent.30

Fujimura Michio has interpreted the Meiji government’s seeking treaty-based equal relations with China as marking a turnabout from traditional diplomacy to Western-style diplomacy in China policy. He has argued that the Meiji government intended to shatter Chinese superiority in the international relations of East Asia, based on the notion that Tokugawa Japan, which had equal relations with China’s tributary, Korea, was indirectly situated inside the Sinocentric world order.31 Equal Japanese-Korean relations would give the impression that Tokugawa Japan participated in the Chinese tributary system. Establishing treaty-based equal relations therefore assumed that Meiji Japan would improve its status vis-à-vis China.

Nevertheless, neither the Tokugawa bakufu nor the Meiji government understood that Japan was considered by China to be a lower constituent of the Sinocentric international order in the early modern period. I have argued, in Chapter 3, that the Tokugawa bakufu had neither the intention of being integrated into the tributary system nor the perception of being situated in the Chinese tributary system. The Meiji government also had no intention of surrendering to Chinese suzerainty, and the third option revealed that traditional Japanese diplomatic notions

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30 Ibid., vol. 3, no. 191. In June 1870 (Meiji 3/5), the Meiji government saw the China issue as the third most important diplomatic issue next to the Korea and Sakhalin issues.

held since antiquity still influenced Japanese foreign policymaking. Although it certainly intended to establish Western-style treaty-based relations, this policy option simultaneously assumed spelling out Japan’s superiority over Korea in a manner based on traditional perceptions. Obtaining parity with Qing China also came from the traditional notion of the status relationship with China rather than from the Western diplomatic principle of equality between sovereign nations. The ancient claim of Sino-Japanese equality based on parity between the two emperors was inherited by Tokugawa policymakers and by their successor, the Meiji government. In its 1868 proposal on status relations between Japan and Korea, Tsushima-han suggested that the Japanese emperor, who was supposed to represent the status of his country, be styled “Majesty,” as an equal counterpart to the Chinese emperor, and that the Korean king be styled “Highness.” The Bureau of Foreign Affairs (later renamed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) favored this proposal in diplomatic protocols and in Japan’s status relations with its East Asian neighbors.

Meiji Japan’s pursuit of parity with China suggests another coincidence with Tokugawa attitudes toward China. The Tokugawa bakufu had an ideology of Japanese superiority over China, rooted in the notion of a divine land and an unbroken imperial lineage, although this had never been given concrete expression in actual China policy. The restoration ideology also considered the imperial path (or idea) (kōdō) an appropriate rationale for Japanese superiority

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33 Ibid., 78.
over the entire world.\(^{34}\) However, the presence of the emperor who was supposed to embody Japanese superiority and supremacy did not push Meiji policymakers beyond seeking more than parity in a relationship with China.

The Meiji government began to pursue the third option by dispatching an envoy. The Council of State ordered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to dispatch a ministry official on July 23, 1870 (Meiji 3/6/25) by approving the proposal, and designated a young court noble and official of the ministry, Yanagiwara Sakimitsu, on the 27th (Meiji 3/6/29).\(^{35}\) The mission assigned to him was not, however, to negotiate with Chinese officials to establish diplomatic relations but merely to investigate the situation in China. The dispatch of this mission was originally proposed by another ministry official, Miyamoto Koichi. Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there were conflicting views regarding the appropriate nature of formal relations with China. Some maintained the need to make a treaty through direct negotiations with the Qing government; others considered that using the mediation of the British and French ministers would work better because of their concern that those prominent Western powers, which would not be pleased with closer contact between the two East Asian countries, might intervene in the content of the treaty and even try to thwart the Sino-Japanese relationship.\(^{36}\) Miyamoto’s proposal was to arrange a compromise between the two parties.

\(^{34}\) *Meiji Tennō-ki*, vol. 1, 230.
\(^{36}\) Terashima also proposed to obtain the British mediation.
Yanagiwara however was dissatisfied with the government decision regarding his mission. Under his own name and the joint names of his attendants, Hanabusa Yoshikata and Tei Nagayasu, he submitted a petition to the ministry. The petition was an attempt to extend the mission to preliminary treaty negotiations; he also asked permission to visit places other than Shanghai, such as Beijing, and to upgrade the status of his envoy.37 His effort seemed to persuade the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Council of State; the credentials addressed from Sawa and Terashima to the ministers of the Zongli Yamen, dated the August 23 (Meiji 3/7/27), stated that the mission was to be dispatched for the purpose of preliminary negotiations.38

The Yanagiwara mission set about preliminary negotiations with Qing officials in Tianjin early in October 1870 (Meiji 3/early 9). The mission arrived in Shanghai on September 4 (Meiji 3/8/9) and on the 12th (8/17) disposed of trade issues in negotiations with Shanghai Governor Tu Zongying, with an agreement on the establishment of formal commercial relations and Japan’s dispatch of resident officials to Shanghai. Yanagiwara and his attendants then reached Tianjin on September 28 (Meiji 3/9/4). The Zongli Yamen declined his request to visit Beijing on the pretext that there was no precedent, but on the other hand agreed to treaty negotiations with one of the Yamen ministers, Chenglin, in Tianjin. Negotiations started over the treaty draft which Yanagiwara suggested to Chenglin on October 13 (Meiji 3/9/19). The absence

37 DNGB, vol. 3, 198
38 Ibid., 204. In the original draft of the credentials, Yanagiwara’s demands were accepted to some extent, as it stated that his mission was to be dispatched not to Shanghai but to China, for example; it did not still allow him to attempt preliminary negotiations. See Ibid., 199. It is unknown why the Council of State and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs virtually approved his demand.
of language articulating the privilege granted to Yanagiwara in proposing a treaty draft could imply malfeasance; he might not have realized that he was acting *ultra vires* as he did not conceal his action from Tokyo.\(^\text{39}\) The young Japanese diplomat probably did not regard the draft as a formal statement of the Meiji government. On the other hand, the Chinese considered it to be so.\(^\text{40}\) This recognition gap became a cause of the dispute between the two countries in the formal negotiations which took place.

Yanagiwara’s draft showed that he followed the government objective of obtaining an equal status with Qing China. In Article One, both countries were honored with the Chinese character for great (c. *da*; j. *dai*). Article Two styled the monarchs “Great Emperor of Great Qing (c. *Da Qingguo Da Hunagdi*; j. *Dai Shinkoku Kōtei*)” and “Great Emperor of Great Japan (c. *Da Riben Da Huangdi*; j. *Dai Nihonkoku Tennō*)” and proclaimed the parity (c. *bixiao*; j. *hiken*) of the two countries. The draft also made the two countries equal in some odd ways; Article Five honored extraterritoriality to both of them equally; Article Eight stipulated statutory tariffs instead of tariff autonomy. Needless to say, extraterritoriality and the absence of tariff autonomy were typical characteristics of the unequal treaties the Western powers had forced upon them. This contradicted the Japanese desire for revising the unequal treaties and achieving equality with the Western powers, and revealed the limitations of Yanagiwara’s understanding of Western-style diplomacy. China’s failure to grasp the peculiar aspects of the draft also exposed

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its limitations. For example, Li Hongzhang, who supported treaty relations with Japan along with his mentor Zeng Guofang, did not know that extraterritoriality was not practiced among the Western powers until he learned this in a conversation with Soejima Taneomi, the Japanese Foreign Minister, in Tianjin in April 1873.41

The Zongli Yamen had decided after some hesitation to conclude a treaty with Japan, reversing an earlier decision against this course. On October 14 (Meiji 3/9/20), one day before receiving Yanagiwara’s draft, the Yamen sent a dispatch to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stating that a treaty would be unnecessary if there were fiduciary relations between the two countries.42 Although anticipating the conclusion of a treaty in the future, the Yamen, concerned about the obligations entailed by the treaty, had wanted to defer it as long as possible. Yanagiwara tried to convince the Yamen to change its decision by sending notes and having conversations with Chenglin and Li Hongzhang. It helped that on the Chinese side, such high officials as Chenglin, Li, and Zeng opposed the policy of indefinite delay. They all insisted on accepting the Japanese request for treaty-based relations. Chenglin and Li Hongzhang, for example, were afraid that a rejection of the Japanese approach would thrust their eastern neighbor onto the side of the Western aggressors.43 Convinced by Yanagiwara’s seeming determination and by the Chinese proponents, the Yamen decided that it was no longer possible

41 DNGB, vol. 6, no. 44.
to put off the Japanese request and therefore sent a dispatch on October 30 (Meiji 3/10/6), stating that if Japan sent a minister to Tianjin, China would negotiate and conclude a treaty to establish official long term state-to-state relations.\textsuperscript{44}

Even after the Zongli Yamen decided to pursue treaty-based relations with Japan, opposition remained on the Chinese side. A well-known dispute is the one between Li Hongzhang and Inhang. Inhang was a prominent Manchu official and the military governor (\textit{xunwu}), hierarchically next to the viceroy (\textit{zongdu}), of Anhui Province. In a report to the Imperial Throne on December 18, 1870 (Tongzhi 9/leap 10/26), he opposed the Yamen’s decision, reasoning that foreign countries, which according to him, had the character of dogs and sheep, were always looking for ways to exploit China’s weakness. He also argued that Japanese piracy, \textit{wakō} (c. \textit{weikou}; k. \textit{waegu}, literarily dwarf pirates in English), had harmed China just as Britain and France had done. Li Hongzhang in his report to the throne on January 8, 1871 (Tongzhi 9/11/18) noted that Japan, a relatively powerful country, had not been China’s tributary since the time of Khubilai Khan of the Yuan dynasty and had never posed a menace to China by collaborating with the Western powers, and that before asking for Western assistance, China should conclude a treaty with sincerity and a lack of pretension (\textit{jimi}).\textsuperscript{45} In response to Li’s

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Li Wenzhong-gong quanj\i: yishu hangao, vol. 1, 3-4.}
\footnote{It is possible to argue that Li saw Japan more realistically than Yinghang, in light of the historical facts of Sino-Japanese relations; this does not at all mean that Li was free from the traditional Chinese perception of foreign countries, including Japan. He actually viewed a treaty with Japan as an example of the traditional treatment of barbarians, “cajolement (\textit{jimi}).” See Li Wenzhong-gong wenji: zouga\o, vol. 17, 53-54. One of the drafters of the Chinese document, Chen Qin, also saw Japan as a “barbarian country (\textit{yi}).” See also Iwabuchi Shigeki, “Nisshin Shūkō Jōki no Shinchōgawa sōan yori mita tai-Nichi seisaku,” Shigaku zasshi 231: 38-60.}
\end{footnotes}
request, Zeng Guofang, supporting this proposal, and submitted a report to the throne, which favored the conclusion of a treaty with Japan for reasons similar to Li’s. Receiving Zeng’s report on March 9, 1871, the Qing imperial court ordered Li to take charge of negotiations with Japan regarding a treaty.

As soon as the plenary negotiations between China and Japan began, however, each side was shocked by the action of the other. The Japanese envoy, led by Finance Minister Date Munenari appointed as Ambassador Plenipotentiary, reached Tianjin on July 24, 1871 (Meiji 4/6/7). In the first talks held on August 1 (Meiji 4/6/15), the Date mission submitted a treaty draft to the Chinese representative. The Japanese draft surprised and even upset them because it differed from the draft which Yanagiwara had submitted the year before. The Japanese treaty draft was actually proposed to the Council of State on June 17 (Meiji 4/4/30) by Yanagiwara and another subordinate official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tsuda Mamichi; the Council of State approved it on July 5 (Meiji 4/5/8). Fujimura Michio has conjectured that one of the drafters was Tsuda who had, as a former shogunal retainer (bakushin), studied in Holland in the early 1860s and was an authoritative figure in international law in the Meiji government. What

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47 Chuban iwu shimo, vol. 80, 9-11.

48 Date was appointed to the ambassador as a replacement of Foreign Minister Sawa Nobuyosh who had been originally appointed. Date had been the Director of the Bureau of the Bureau of Foreign Affairs, the predecessor of Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
upset the Chinese was that the formal Japanese draft was very similar to the unequal 1861 Sino-
Prussian treaty.\footnote{Fujimura, “Nisshin shūkō kōki no seiritsu: Nisshin dōkaku no taassei,” 70.}

The two Japanese treaty drafts, including Yanagiwara’s, manifested both changes and
continuity in Japanese attitudes toward China. As mentioned above, a Sino-Japanese relationship
based on parity had been one of the consistent Japanese notions of status relations between the
two countries since antiquity. However, the Japanese had never attempted to spell this out in
actual diplomatic relations since the time of the state letter addressed to Sui China by Prince
Shōtoku in the early seventh century. Also, of course, it was unprecedented that the Japanese
would attempt to exploit an unequal treaty-based state-to-state relationship which Western
powers had forced China to accept. Although Yanagiwara was probably unaware of this, as
shown by his treatment of extraterritoriality and tariffs, the Chinese realized that his draft would
place China in a position of inequality. Article Seven granted most-favored nation status to both
countries; the Zongli Yamen realized that different degrees of equality (or inequality) between
the Japanese and Chinese treaties with the Western powers could bring disadvantages to China.
In the proposed treaty draft, extraterritoriality was unilateral, and tariff autonomy was given only
to Japan.\footnote{DNGB, vol. 4, pt. 1, no. 136.}

Nevertheless, the employment of Western diplomatic strategies did not mean that
Meiji Japan had either abandoned traditional diplomatic notions which the third option revealed,
or totally rejected the Yanagiwara draft. Its objective of obtaining an equal status with China in order to be a superior to Korea, remained unchanged. Also, as mentioned above, Yanagiwara was still the proposer, along with Tsuda, of the formal draft, which was still crafted along the lines of the third option discussed above. The differences between the formal draft and Yanagagiwara’s rather came about because the Meiji government had become active in the revision of the unequal treaties which the bakufū had signed with the five countries – the United States, Great Britain, France, Holland, and Russia – in 1858.51 The treaty revision intended to attain parity with the Western powers by revising the unequal clauses would naturally lead to the conclusion that Japan ought to conclude the same treaty as the Westerners had. That is to say, for Japan to conclude an unequal treaty with China was congruent with the policy of obtaining equality with Europeans. As discussed in Chapter 4, traditional and Western-style diplomatic notions coexisted, albeit with unsolved discrepancies, in the Korea policy. While it intended to practice Western style diplomacy out of necessity and a sense of inevitability, the Meiji government still sought to spell out the traditional contemptuous perception of Korea in diplomatic relations with the neighbor. In the policy toward China policy as well, new and old notions of diplomacy coexisted.

Just as the Chinese were shocked by the Japanese treaty draft, the Japanese envoy was also shocked by the Chinese actions. China, which had never before proposed a draft treaty,
prepared their own treaty draft, based on Yanagiwara’s draft.\textsuperscript{52} As mentioned above, the Chinese regarded Yanagiwara’s personal draft as a formal proposal from the Meiji government. The day after receiving the Japanese draft, Li Hongzhang sent two subordinate officials to deliver a Chinese draft to the Japanese envoy. The two officials stated that the Japanese draft, containing unequal clauses, did not satisfy the Chinese and contradicted their vision of the relationship with Japan. The Date mission decided to reject the Chinese draft and asked the Chinese to accept their draft as a basis for negotiations. The most serious problem they found was the second article of the Chinese draft stipulating “mutual support” against foreign aggression and threats rather than the Chinese refusal of the Japanese draft.\textsuperscript{53} Before the Date mission left Japan, the Meiji government had been confronted with a Western rumor to the effect that China and Japan planned to conclude a treaty forming an alliance and felt compelled to deny the rumor. The Japanese therefore needed to exclude that article from the treaty.\textsuperscript{54} On the other hand, the Chinese had no intention of concluding a treaty unless Japan accepted their draft.\textsuperscript{55} The situation was against the Japanese from the beginning; it was not the Chinese but the Japanese who desperately needed to achieve the establishment of diplomatic relations at the time. Unless they

\textsuperscript{52} Fujimura, “Nisshin Shūkō Jōki no seiritsu: Nisshin dōkaku no tassei,” 86.

\textsuperscript{53} Tanibuchi: 51-52; Wang Xi, 92. Wang Xi argues that the article expressed the Chinese intention of allying with Japan against the West. Examining unpublished Qing documents, Tanibuchi contends that with this article, the Chinese schemed to prevent Japan from collaborating with the Western powers and to use Japan as a means to compete with the West.

\textsuperscript{54} Li Wenzhong-gong quanji: zaogao, vol. 18, 45.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 45-46.
gave up, the Japanese would have no alternative but to surrender to the Chinese draft. On September 13, 1871 (Meiji 4/7/29), the Ambassador Plenipotentiary Date Munenori and the Viceroy of Zhili Li Hongzhang signed the treaty and the trade agreement, based upon the Chinese draft.\(^{56}\)

Although the treaty certainly brought Japan parity with China, Article Two made it unwelcome to the Japanese leaders.\(^{57}\) As mentioned above, there had been suspicions among Western diplomats even before the Date mission left for China, and the American and French ministers to Japan actually sent inquiries regarding the article to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs soon after the treaty was signed. Foreign Minister Iwakura Tomomi and other ministry officials were afraid that the treaty, by causing suspicion among the Western powers, would impede the revision of the unequal treaties. Although Iwakura had, for example, once proposed cooperating with China and Korea to survive in the Western-dominated world in early 1869 (Meiji 2/2), this Western reaction to a possible Sino-Japanese alliance have may be an indication that for both China and Japan, an anti-Western imperialists union would not have politically been realistic, at that time or afterward.\(^{58}\) The Meiji government decided to attempt to revise the treaty by

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\(^{56}\) Before signing the treaty, there were a few issues for the Date mission and the Chinese representatives to debate. First, while the Japanese desired that the Japanese emperor would be styled “Tennō (Tianhuang),” the Chinese did not agree to that. They finally compromised by not referring to their monarchs in the treaty. Second, the Japanese refused to style China “Zhongguo (Chūgoku).” They finally compromised by styling China that way only in the trade agreement.

\(^{57}\) The treaty certainly appears equal; Tanibuchi Shigeki argues that the Chinese draft secretly premised China’s hierarchical superiority. Tanibuchi: 60.

\(^{58}\) *Iwakura-kō jikki*, vol. 2, 696.
dispatching Yanagiwara Sakimitsu before its ratification. Yanagiwara reached Tianjin on May 8, 1872 (Meiji 5/4/2) and negotiated with Li Hongzhang and other Chinese officials. However, he had to return to Japan after several months without accomplishing anything.

The Ryukyu Disposition (Ryūkyū shobun) of 1872

On November 30, 1871 (Meiji 4/10/18), four Ryukyu ships (two from Miyakojima, two others from Yaeyamajima) encountered a tempest on the way from Naha, the Ryukyu capital, back to their home islands after rendering annual tribute to the Ryukyu government. One of the ships from Miyakojima Island, with sixty-nine crew members aboard, drifted helplessly off Taiwan. Three crew members drowned, and the surviving sixty-six were cast ashore on the southeast side of the island on December 17, 1871 (Meiji 4/11/6). The area where they landed was the dwelling area of the Mudanshe (j. Botansa), one of the aboriginal tribes of Taiwan. Drifting foreign sailors had repeatedly been massacred or despoiled by the tribesmen of the Mudanshe, and those shipwrecked Ryukyuans were no exception. Twelve barely escaped and were rescued by Chinese settlers; fifty-four were massacred. The survivors were then protected and handed over by the local inhabitants and Chinese officials of Fujian Province to the Ryukyu House in Fuzhou on February 24, 1872 (Meiji 5/1/16). They returned to Naha on July 12 (Meiji
The king of the Ryukyus, Shō Tai (r. 1966-1972), expressed his gratitude and sent a reward to the Fujian officials.  

Between the summer and the early autumn of 1872, the news of the Ryukyu shipwreck incident was reported to Tokyo from two directions. The first report of the incident came from the Japanese envoy in Beijing on June 27, 1872 (Meiji 5/5/22). Yanagiwara Sakimitsu, in Beijing for negotiations on the revision of the 1871 treaty, saw the news of the incident in the Chinese newspaper, Jingbao, of May 11, 1872 (Meiji 5/4/5), in Tianjin and reported it to the Foreign Minister, Soejima Taneomi, on May 19 (Meiji 5/4/13). The other report came from Kagoshima-ken (prefecture). The de facto governor of the prefecture (daisanji), Ōyama Tsunayoshi, received news of the incident on July 17 (Meiji 5/6/12) from two prefectural officials, Ijichi Sadaka and Narahara Shigeru, both of whom had recently returned from the Ryukyus. He then relayed the news to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on August 31 (Meiji 5/7/28). The report stated, “The residents of Miyakojima Island belonging to the Ryukyus were cast ashore on Taiwan last winter. As the attached papers note, most of the sixty-six crew

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61 DNGB, vol. 5, no. 65.
members were massacred, and this should not be tolerated. Therefore, I ordered Ijichi to proceed to the imperial court so as to relay the details of the incident.\footnote{JN-R34-F44843.}

As Ōyama stated, two documents were attached to his report, detailing the incident. One of them was written by Ijichi, based on his questioning of two of the survivors.\footnote{JN-R34-F44843-44848.} The other was written by high Ryukyu officials in the form of a petition to the Meiji government to respond to the incident. This was the first time since the Kingdom of Ryukyus had been subdued by Satsuma in 1609 that the Ryukyu court had petitioned Japan (or Satsuma) to take measures against the atrocities their people had suffered in Taiwan. Although similar incidents had occurred previously, the court had neither complained nor asked the Japanese to take any measures. As Edwin Pak-Iwa Leung mentions, the Ryukyuans might have submitted the petition, taking the form of voluntary submission, reluctantly in compliance with orders from Kagoshima officials.\footnote{Leung: 263-266. As to the atrocities which the Ryukyuans had suffered previously in Taiwan, see Zhongguo Diyi Lishi Danganguan ed., \textit{Qingdai Zhong-Liu guanxi dangan xuanbian}.}

The Kingdom of Ryukyu had been a Japanese subordinate since the early seventeenth century. In 1609, the domain of Satsuma, the predecessor of Kagoshima Prefecture, sent expeditionary forces and conquered the Ryukyus. There were several reasons the Japanese launched their first overseas military action since the Korea campaign. On the one hand, through this expedition, Satsuma expected to strengthen its domainal finances by dominating the

\footnote{Leung: 263-266. As to the atrocities which the Ryukyuans had suffered previously in Taiwan, see Zhongguo Diyi Lishi Danganguan ed., \textit{Qingdai Zhong-Liu guanxi dangan xuanbian}.}
profitable Ryukyu trade with China, to consolidate the sway of the House of Shimazu over the entire domain, and to demonstrate fidelity to the Tokugawa, whom it had opposed in the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600. The Tokugawa bakufu, which sanctioned the expedition, expected the Chinese tributary to be a possible mediator in its efforts to rehabilitate the diplomatic and commercial relations with Ming China which had been terminated by Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s invasion of Korea in the 1590s. Granted the conquered territories as a fief by the bakufu, Satsuma separated and integrated several northern islands belonging to the Kingdom of Ryukyus under its direct control. Although the Ryukyu royal house of Shō remained on the throne after the conquest, the Ryukyus were obliged to pay annual tribute and to send a congratulatory mission to Kagoshima, the domainal capital of Satsuma, and the shogunal capital of Edo every time a new lord (hanshu) or shogun ascended to office. Satsuma, moreover, required the Ryukyus to surrender a prince of the House of Shō, who was considered an heir to the king, to Kagoshima as a hostage, and stationed its retainers at strategic points within the archipelago. For such reasons, the Ryukyus have been defined by historians as a foreign country within the Tokugawa bakuhan system (bakuhan taiseinai no ikoku).


66 Sakai, “The Ryukyu (Liu-chiu) as a Fief of Satsuma”: 122-131; Matsushita Shirō, Kinsei Amami no shihai to shakai (Tokyo: Daiichi Shobō, 1983), 16-33; Miyagi, Ryūkyū shisha no Edo nobori, 11-34.

67 The Ryukyus, as a foreign country, had a different status from Korea, which was also a foreign country, but outside the bakuhan system.
However, Satsuma’s fief was simultaneously China’s tributary state. The Sino-Ryukyu tributary relationship had an even longer history than did Satsuma and the Ryukyus. Since it had first paid tribute to Ming China in 1372, the Ryukyu Kingdom had been one of its vassal states. The tributary relations continued after the Manchu conquest of China in 1644.68 As Araki Moriaki has noted, the Ryukyus were under the substantial control of Shimazu, while the king was formally invested with his title by the Chinese emperor.69 Although the Chinese recognition, along with the Japanese recognition, was indispensable for the Ryukyu throne to claim legitimacy, neither the Ming nor the Qing had ever intervened in the kingdom’s domestic affairs as they took the same stance toward the Ryukyus as they toward other tributary states, such as Korea. Since the Japanese were interested in exploiting the tributary relations for the sake of indirect trade with China and wanted to avoid antagonism with China, they maintained the appearance that the Ryukyus were a kingdom and subordinated to China.70 Although it had noticed Satsuma’s presence and influence on the Ryukyus despite Satsuma’s attempts at concealment, China, as the Middle Kingdom, could tolerate or pretend to be unaware of the Satsuma-Ryukyu relations as long as tribute continued to be paid.71

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70 Ibid.

Faced with Western inroads into East Asia, the Japanese realized even before the Meiji Restoration that the ambiguous position, from the Western point of view, of the Ryukyus in subordination to both China and Japan could not be maintained. Satsuma and the Tokugawa bakufu had already seen the frequent appearance and arrival of the Western ships as a possible menace to both Japan and the Ryukyus in the mid-1840s.72 Immediately after liberating Japan from “isolation” and concluding a “friendship” treaty with the Tokugawa bakufu in March 1854, the U.S. squadron led by Commodore Matthew C. Perry sailed down and concluded a similar convention with the Ryukyus in July. France and Holland subsequently appeared in the Ryukyus and also established diplomatic relations in 1855 and 1859.73 The Ryukyu court was in fact unwilling to sign treaties with these Western powers but did so under the instruction of Satsuma, which was also acting under the authorization of the bakufu.74 Interested in trading with the Western powers by opening the Ryukyu ports to them, Satsuma felt that dual subordination could not be maintained when the foreign powers were treating the Ryukyus as an independent sovereign state.75 Not only Satsuma but also the bakufu seemed to be aware that the resolution of the historical dual subordination and the unilateral integration of the Ryukyus into Japan would


73 Kinjō, 214. See also Ōkuma and Yokoyama.


75 Ikuta: 79-87.
be a realistic way for them to secure the Ryukyus, though they did not carry out this idea so as to avoid conflict with China.\textsuperscript{76}

This apprehension might have become an actual problem if the Japanese had made a different response to the Western approach to Japan and the Ryukyus. Although some Westerners recognized the Ryukyu’s dual subordination and virtual Japanese control, ambiguity remained regarding their notion of its territorial sovereignty. In 1861, for example, the British representative sent an inquiry to the bakufu regarding the Ryukyus’ legal status.\textsuperscript{77} Perry acknowledged Satsuma’s de facto rule over the islands, noting, “These islands come within the jurisdiction of the Prince of Satsuma.” He however considered that the occupation of Ryukyu ports would be necessary in case Japan refused to open its doors to his country and recommended occupying Ryukyu ports to the Secretary of the Navy of President Millard Fillmore’s administration (t. 1850-1853), John P. Kennedy, during his own voyage to Japan on December 14, 1852. He justified such an action by saying, “Now it strikes me, that the occupation of the principal ports of these islands for the accommodation of our ships of war, and for the safe resort of merchant vessels of whatever nation, would be a measure not only justified by the strictest rules of moral law, but which is also to be considered, by the laws of stern necessity; and the argument may be further strengthened by the certain consequences of the amelioration of the conditions of the natives, although the vices attendant upon civilization may

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid: 72, 79-87.

\textsuperscript{77} Yasuoka Akio, \textit{Meiji zenki tairiku seisakushi no kenkyū} (Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku Shuppankai, 1998), 87. The bakufu replied that the Ryukyus had belonged to the House of Shimazu since its conquest in the Keichō period but were not prohibited from communicating with Qing China.
be entailed upon them.” It was fortunate that the U.S. government, under the Franklin Pierce administration (t. 1853-1857), did not approve of this proposal and also that the Japanese did not make an unwise decision. The Western powers’ purportedly peaceful approach and demands for open ports could certainly have turned into armed aggression in the name of “civilization,” depending upon the Japanese response to their demands.

The change of regime from the Tokugawa to the restoration government in 1868 did not diminish Japanese uneasiness about national security. The new regime was also eager to save and restore national prestige (kokui) or imperial prestige (kôi) which it felt had been demeaned by the Western powers. The Japanese concern over national prestige and security had grown as the ruling and intellectual elites became increasingly aware of the presence of the Western powers beginning in the nineteenth century, and especially since the Bakumatsu period. In particular, the perception that they had been coerced into opening the country and surrendering to unequal treaties by the Western powers gave the Japanese impetus to aspire strenuously to the exaltation of their national glory within the Western-dominated international community.

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80 See for example Aizawa Yasushi, *Shinron*, in *Mitogaku, Nihon shisôshi taikei*, vol. 53 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1977), 93-94. Satô Nobuhiro, *Kondô hisaku, Kondô tairon jo*, in *Andô Shôeki, Satô Nobuhiro, Nihon shisô taikei*, vol. 45 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1980), 426-428. These two intellectuals’ discourse showed the Japanese concern over national prestige and its tendency to advocate or overseas expansion. This expression of concern over national prestige was not necessarily peculiar to Japan. In European countries, at that time, overseas expansion was often regarded as a way to enhance national prestige and greatness.

February 8, 1868 (Keiō 4/1/15), the Meiji government issued a proclamation entitled “taigai washin kokui sen’yōI no fukoku (decree on the overseas enhancement of national prestige)” and stated, “His Imperial Majesty wishes to complete armaments, enhancing the national prestige all over the world, and return the imperial ancestors’ favor. All the subjects of this empire are therefore to comply with this imperial will and wake a strong effort to accomplish it.” On April 6 (Keiō 4/3/14), namely on the day the Emperor Meiji read out the Charter Oath of Five Articles (gokajō no goseimon) before his ancestral deities, he issued an imperial letter (shinkan) called “kokui sen’yō no shinkan (imperial letter on the enhancement of national prestige)” to all the government officials. The letter stated, “I am afraid that if I stayed peacefully within the imperial palace, passed my time in idleness, and disregarded the trouble of the past hundred years, this country would become subject to foreign countries, humiliate the imperial ancestors, and pain would come to all my subjects. I swear therefore, with every court official and domainal lord, to enhance the imperial ancestors’ great achievement, by willingly enduring difficulties. I will reign over this entire country directly, govern all my subjects with benevolence, open up the oceans, exalt our national prestige throughout the world, and secure the empire in peace as high as Mt. Fuji.”

Calling all foreign countries “the common enemies (kōteki)” of Japan, Iwakura Tomomi also claimed, “In communicating with foreign countries, the primacy of our objective...”

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82 Meiji Tennō ki, vol. 1, 596.

83 Ibid., 649-654.
is neither to depreciate imperial prestige nor to forfeit national rights. Therefore, it is indubitably necessary to revise the treaties already concluded with England, France, Prussia, America, and so on in order to safeguard the independence of the imperial state.”

Fujimura Michio has argued that “washin kaikoku (opening and amity)” grew out of inevitability rather than a sincere desire for such a policy; the leaders of the restoration regime appeared to have a tendency toward xenophobia. Iwakura also stated, “Foreign powers have in-born villainous intentions. If we were awe-stricken by their tyranny, we would be destined to be their slaves.” It seems likely, in fact, that their concern over national security was also fostered to some extent by anti-foreign sentiment. Peter Duus points out that the Japanese concern over the national security was a paranoidic reaction to the Western Impact. No matter where it came from, however, the Meiji government was desperate to turn aside the perceived or potential foreign menace to Japan.

It was quite natural that the new regime paid attention to the status of the Ryukyus in terms of national security and prestige. According to international law and Western diplomatic notions, liberating the Ryukyus from their dual subordination to China and Japan and recognizing them as an independent sovereign nation could have been a possible choice. However, Meiji Japan had no intention of either loosening or renouncing its grip on its historical

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87 Duus, 16.
subordinate. In late January 1869 (Meiji 1/12), the new regime granted a general amnesty to the Ryukyus as it had done for all the domains in Japan proper. On March 2, 1869 (Meiji 2/1/20), the domain lords (daimyō) restored all of their domains and people to the emperor. Satsuma-han, as a result, was renamed Kagoshima-han, and its lord was reappointed a domainal governor (han chiji). These events (hanseki hōkan) technically meant that the land and people of Satsuma’s fief, the Ryukyus, were also returned to the emperor. On July 26, 1871 (Meiji 4/6/9), the Meiji government ordered Kagoshima-han to submit a report on the history of Satsuma-Ryukyu relations, and Kagoshima officials sent the report to Tokyo on August 17 (Meiji 4/7/2). When it promulgated the abolition of domains and their replacement by prefectures (haihan chiken) two days later, the Meiji government granted jurisdiction over the Ryukyus to the former Kagoshima-han, namely Kagoshima Prefecture.

However, these measures toward centralization did not actually affect the Ryukyus’ historical socio-political circumstances or their relations with China and Japan. It was not until the next year that the Meiji government took concrete action concerning the status of the Ryukyus. In February 13, 1872 (Meiji 5/1/5), Kagoshima Prefecture dispatched two officials to the Ryukyus. The aforementioned report by Ōyama explains, “The country [Ryukyus] is

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88 Kyūyō, additional vol. 4, 741.
90 Endō, 121.
located in the middle of the southern ocean, and her customs are irredeemably bigoted. The imperial state has been undergoing the restoration, whose influence is difficult to extend [to the Ryukyus]. This spring, accordingly, I dispatched a Kagoshima ex-samurai (shizoku) Ijichi Sōnojō (Sadaka) and two others to persuade the Ryukyus to comply with the will of the imperial court and reform their regular customs. The king respectfully received the pronouncement and commenced creating civilization.\footnote{JN-R34-F44843.} In addition, Kagoshima officials were assigned to order the Ryukyu Court to send an envoy to Tokyo to offer congratulations on the imperial restoration and exempted the kingdom from the tribute of three thousand koku on which they had defaulted; they were also forgiven a debt of fifty thousand yen to the Shimazu.\footnote{Majikina, 20-22. Ijichi and Narahara delivered Ōyama’s letter to the Ryukyu government on August 6, 1872 (Meiji 5/7/3).}

Since the summer of 1872, discussions over the treatment of the Ryukyus had continued in the central government in Tokyo. About two months before Ōyama’s report, on July 5 (Meiji 5/5/30), Inoue Kaoru, Chōshū clansman and the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Finance, submitted a proposal on Ryukyu policy to the Central Board (shōin) of the Council of State. Although Yanagiwara Sakimitsu’s report had reached Tokyo by that time, it is unknown whether or to what extent the news of the Ryukyu shipwreck incident affected Inoue. His proposal, as well as Ōyama’s, projected his concern over national prestige and security. Stressing the Ryukyus’ strategic importance for Japan, he wrote, “Needless to say, in the current time of the restoration, we should not allow the dual subordination of the Ryukyus to China and
Japan to continue. I therefore hope that the government will eradicate this ambiguous and unacceptable situation and take measures to enhance the imperial state.”94 He objected, however, to using forcible measures to accomplish the incorporation of the Ryukyus into the Japanese empire, suggesting that the Meiji government summon the Ryukyu king to Tokyo. Around the same time, but certainly prior to July 14 (Meiji 5/6/9), the Foreign Minister, Soejima Taneomi of Hizen, also submitted the ministry’s proposal. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also believed that despite the dual subordination, the Ryukyus had virtually been Satsuma’s territory.95 Soejima overall favored the same line as Inoue and proposed the dissolution of the Ryukyus’ dual subordination and their annexation to Japan. This would include the suspension of the Ryukyus’ interaction with foreign countries, the appointment of the king as domainal king (han-ō), and the raising of the king to the peerage (kazoku).96

In the view of Yamagata Aritomo, the need to bring the Ryukyus under Japanese territorial sovereignty came most from concern over national security. In September 1872 (Meiji 5/8/u), the Chōshū clansman of the Deputy Minister of War began a proposal by stating, “Currently all the countries of the world are checking each other and aiming to extend their borders arrogantly while greedily pursuing profit. Now is the crucial moment; we may be unable to control the territory, but this must not be conceded. If statesmen fail to be far-sighted and

94 Segai Inoue-kō den, vol. 1, 475-476.


96 Ryūkyū shobun, 8-9.
maintain vision of the future, we may be deprived by foreign countries of remaining profits. …

The Ryukyu archipelago stands in the southern seas. Aggrandizing gestures in the Ryukyus by other countries have much to do with us.” He then insisted that the Ryukyus be annexed both because of the need to clarify territorial sovereignty over the archipelago according to international law, and because of the need for border defense against possible foreign encroachment.97

After receiving those proposals, the Central Board referred them to the Board of the Left (sain) of the Council of State. The Central Board had already determined to terminate the Ryukyus’ dual subordination; it had stated in its inquiry to the Board of the Left, “Now is the time to clarify with what country jurisdiction over the Ryukyus lies and to solidify the foundation of Japan. The ambiguous state [of the Ryukyus], therefore, must be rectified.”98 The Board of the Left, however, opposed the unilateral annexation of the Ryukyus, not believing it inevitable. The legislative organ of the Central Board agreed on summoning the king to send a mission to Tokyo, suspending the Ryukyus’ independent intercourse with foreign countries, and stationing Japanese troops. The latter were not to prepare against foreign aggression but to maintain order in the islands. The Board, however, contended that dissolution of the island’s dual subordination was not necessarily desirable, giving four reasons for this opinion. First, Japan’s suzerainty over the Ryukyus had been more substantial than China’s. This

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98 Ryūkyū shobun, 8.
understanding of the Japanese predominance over the Ryukyus was commonly shared in the Meiji government, as Inoue, Yamagata, and Soejima had also made the same point. Second, foreign (Western?) countries had also acknowledged Japan’s ascendancy over the Ryukyus. Third, the establishment of a han would be contradictory after the abolition of the domains in Japan proper. Fourth, since the dissolution of dual subordination would cause unnecessary conflict with China, the Ryukyus’ tributary relations with China should be excluded from the suspension of their diplomatic activities.

The Council of State finally chose the proposition of Inoue and Soejima, and of Yamagata, rather than that of the Board of the Left, possibly by late September 1872 (Meiji 5/late 8). It is quite understandable that Japanese leaders favored the annexation of the Ryukyus and a clarification of Japan’s claim on the kingdom. For the Meiji government, preserving dual subordination would have run counter to the centralization policy of dismantling the feudal domains; its desire for domestic centralization was also motivated by the government’s concern with national security and prestige. For instance, Iwakura Tomomi, in a proposal of August 1870, the year before the abolition of feudal domains was implemented, stated that the prefectural system was necessary to exalt imperial prestige and to expand national

99 Nakamura Hiroshi

100 Ryūkyū shobun, 8-9.

rights and was moreover an effective way to emulate the great foreign powers. The imperial edict on the abolishment of domains on August 29, 1871 (Meiji 4/7/14) stated that the purpose of this policy was to provide security for all the subjects at home and be competitive overseas. Kido Takayoshi also expected centralization to become the basis for Japan to acquire an equal status with foreign countries.

From the same point of view, the Meiji government had understood the need to comply with international law, whether it liked this or not. According to the concept of territorial sovereignty in international law, if there were a land whose legal status, from the Western point of view, was questionable, it would belong to whoever occupied it first. In this sense, the statement of the Board of the Left, referring to international recognition of the de facto Japanese jurisdiction over the Ryukyus and the unlikelihood of foreign aggression into the kingdom in which the Japanese believed that their predominance was more substantial than Chinese suzerainty, did not appeal to the Central Board.

The arrival of a Ryukyu congratulatory mission in Tokyo in October 1872 (Meiji 5/9) marked the first step in the Ryukyu Disposition (Ryūkyū shobun). The Ryukyu court, receiving the order of the Meiji government to send a mission to Tokyo in February or early March 1872

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(Meiji 5/1), was reluctant to yield to the Japanese request, although it still hoped to preserve as much of the traditional relationship with Japan which had continued since 1609 as possible. The Meiji government was informed of this decision of the Ryukyu court, by Ijichi Sadaka, along with Ōyama’s report, on September 4 (Meiji 5/8/2). The Ryukyu mission, led by Prince Ie (Shō Ken) reached Tokyo on October 3 (Meiji 5/9/1). The imperial edict on the Ryukyu Disposition was issued on October 15 (Meiji 5/9/13), and the mission was granted an audience with the Emperor Meiji on the 16th. The emperor declared that the Kingdom of Ryukyu was to become Ryukyu-han, conferred the title of domainal king (han-ō) on Shō Tai, and raised him to the Japanese peerage. The Meiji government subsequently, on November 14 (Meiji 5/10/14), announced the establishment of Ryukyu-han to foreign representatives and notified them that the treaties the Ryukyus had previously concluded with such Western powers as the United States were to be observed.

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107 *Ryūkyū shobun*, 5-7.

108 DNGB, vol. 5, 376-384. At this time, Soejima is said to have proposed putting the Ogasawara Islands, about which there were questions of territorial sovereignty and which eventually were recognized as Japanese territories in 1875, under the administration of Ryukyu-han. His proposal was not, however, approved by the government. Yamagata Unosuke, *Ogasawaratō shi*, 184. Han-ō’s status was perhaps considered to be equivalent to hanshu (domainal lord); the Ministry of Foreign Ministry called the Ryukyu king (Shō Tai) “Excellency (kakka)”; only the Emperor, Empress, and Empress Dowager were called “Majesty (heika)”, and only imperial princes were styled “Highness (denka).” See Endō, 128.

This measure did not, however, complete the dissolution of dual subordination or the consolidation of Japanese territorial sovereignty over the Ryukyus; the Ryukyu Disposition was not actually completed until the establishment of Okinawa Prefecture (Okinawa-ken) in 1879. The establishment of Ryukyu-han was originally the proposal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But as the Board of the Left pointed out in its reply to the inquiry from the Central Board, this seemed to contradict the Meiji government’s pursuit of centralization.\(^{110}\) The government also distinguished the treatment of Ryukyu-han from that of other former-domains renamed prefectures (ken), and charged the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with exercising jurisdiction over the han, rather than the Ministry of Finance, which was in charge of local administration at the time, until the Interior Ministry (naimushō) was established in 1974.\(^{111}\) This was probably because of the treaties which the Ryukyus had concluded with the West. It might have also been because the Meiji government chose to take gradual and sober, rather than radical, measures to incorporate the Ryukyus into Japan. Tokyo leaders were probably afraid that impetuous measures might destabilize the Ryukyus. Although some Ryukyu leaders had been aware since the Bakumatsu period that dual subordination could not continue in the changing international environment and thought that the Ryukyus would need to be incorporated into Japan for survival, the majority of the leadership still adhered to the maintenance of the islands’ historical status. Ryukyu leaders did not even seem to understand the meaning of the Japanese

\(^{110}\) Ryūkyū shobun, 8-9.

\(^{111}\) Ibid., 21, 73.
policy; they expected that the five islands of the Amami Chain taken over by Satsuma in 1609 would revert to them, and the envoy led by Prince Ie petitioned for the reversion.112

The Meiji government might also have shared the same concern as the Board of the Left. Japan did not directly inform Qing China of the establishment of Ryukyu-han. It would be possible to interpret this as reflecting their stance that the Ryukyu issue was a Japanese domestic issue, based on a firm perception that Chinese suzerainty was nominal.113 However, Tokyo may also have been afraid that radical measures would encounter not only Ryukyuan but also Chinese objections. As the Board of the Left proposed leaving Sino-Ryukyuan tributary relations intact in order to avoid causing conflict with China, the Meiji government tacitly allowed the Ryukyus to continue to pay tribute to China.114

The Rise of Arguments for an Expedition to the Aboriginal Territories on Taiwan

From the beginning, the expedition to the aboriginal territories on Taiwan was inseparable from the Ryukyu issue. After reporting on the Ryukyu shipwreck incident, Ōyama concluded his report, stating, “I, Tsunayoshi, plead with the government to launch a punitive expedition to chastise the aborigines for the sake of imperial prestige. I would therefore like to be

112 Majikina, 15-6; Shō Tai-ko jitsuroku, Kishaba Chōken, Ryūkyū kenbunroku ichimei haihan jiken.

113 The Chinese envoy led by Chen Fuxun, in Japan to receive more than two hundred kulis liberated from the Peruvian ship, María Luz, witnessed the visit of the Ryukyu envoy to Tokyo. Tei Nagayasu, Soejima taishi teki-Shin gairyaku, in Meiji bunka zenshū, vol. 25 (Tokyo: Nihon Hyōronsha, 1968), 64.

114 Majikina, 17.
authorized to borrow battleships and annihilate the ringleaders and then enhance imperial prestige overseas and console the anger of the victimized islanders. I beg the government to grant my request."\(^{115}\)

Ōyama’s proposal for a punitive expedition against the Taiwanese aborigines who had maltreated Japanese subjects could have been considered a normal action to demonstrate Japanese sovereignty by protecting their people among the “civilized” nations of the time. When Yanagiwara Sakimitsu had a conversation with Mettohorusu (Medhurst?), a Western consul to Tianjin, on July 3, 1872 (Meiji 5/6/8), the Western diplomat told him, regarding the shipwreck incident, that Western countries would immediately dispatch battleships, investigate the incident, and try to acquire indemnities.\(^{116}\) In fact, when fourteen mariners of the American ship, “Rover,” were massacred by Taiwanese aborigines in March 1867, the United States launched battleships led by Admiral H. H. Bell to Taiwan in June 1867, on the pretext of China’s failure to protect the sailors. Charles William LeGendre, as Consul to Amoy, obtained a declaration from the local Chinese officials that the aboriginal territories were beyond Chinese administration. Since the military operation was not successful, he then negotiated with the tribesmen directly with the

\(^{115}\) JR-R34-F44843.

help of local Chinese officials, and in October 1867, obtained the promise of the aborigines not to maltreat shipwrecked foreigners.\textsuperscript{117}

Following Ōyama, other Satsuma clansmen, hearing the news of the Ryukyu shipwreck incident, started to advocate military action against the Taiwanese aborigines who had maltreated the people of their historical subordinate. Major Kabayama Sukenori, Kagoshima branch officer of the Kumamoto garrison and later the first governor-general of Taiwan in 1895, was informed of the incident by Ōyama, possibly before August 28 (Meiji 5/7/25).\textsuperscript{118} Without the sanction of Major General Kirino Toshiaki, the commander of the Kumamoto garrison who was in Hiroshima, Kabayama went to Tokyo for the purpose of convincing the government to launch an expedition to the aboriginal territories.\textsuperscript{119} In Tokyo, Field Marshall and leading Grand Councilor (\textit{hittō sangi}) Saigō Takamori, a Satsuma clansman, was basically in favor of the proposition, though not completely as mentioned below. Among the high officials of the central government with whom Kabayama talked, Takamori’s younger brother, Saigō Tsugumichi, Itagaki Taisuke, and Soejima Taneomi also favored a punitive expedition. Pro-expedition people maintained that such military action would be Japan’s obligation to protect the subjects of its

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\textsuperscript{118} Kabayama Sukenori, \textit{Taiwan kiji}, 178-179. Taiwan Kiji is Kabayama’s diary and is also induced in \textit{Saigo Totoku to Kabayama Taishō}. The original copy of the diary is in Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan, Tokyo.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 179-183. He arrived in Tokyo on September 10, 1872, and began to meet with other clansmen like Saigo Takamori the next day
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subordinate. They shared the common perception that Chinese suzerainty over the Ryukyus, which had been a fief of the House of Shimazu, was a mere formality, while Japanese suzerainty was not. However, Saigō might not have been as eager for overseas military action as his junior clansmen; or, surrounded by different views such as the question of the legal status of the aboriginal territories, the leading Grand Councilor of the caretaker government (rusu seifu) during the absence of Iwakura Mission might not have decided on the issue by himself.

Kabayama noted on September 15 (Meiji 5/8/13), “I submitted a proposal for an exploratory party to the Taiwanese aboriginal territories to Mr. Saigō this morning. Although he had some objections the other day, he approved of it today.” Kabayama’s zeal for the expedition was as a result reduced to an inspection, and he and Kirino submitted a proposal entitled Taiwan banchi tankentai haken ikensho to the War Ministry on September 16 (Meiji 5/8/13).

The Ryukyu Disposition seemed to urge the proponents of a punitive expedition to the Taiwanese aboriginal territories to take further steps. Possibly soon after the government decided to make the Kingdom of Ryukyus a domain (han), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs proposed launching a punitive expedition to the southeastern part of Taiwan, asserting that it belonged to

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120 Sega i Inoue-kō den, vol. 1, 475-476; Taiwan kiji, 184. Kabayama conferred with his fellow clansmen on September 18, 1872. Saigō brought Yamagata Aritomo’s proposal, about which Kabayama noted, “there are firm and sober opinions.”

121 Taiwan kiji, 184. Kabayama conferred with his fellow clansmen on September 18, 1872. Saigō brought Yamagata Aritomo’s proposal, about which Kabayama noted, “there are firm and sober opinions.”

122 Ibid., 182-183.
no one. On October 15 (Meiji 5/9/13), one day after the imperial edict on the Ryukyu Disposition was issued, Kabayama Sukenori further proposed that the War Ministry ask the government to make a decision on an expedition to Taiwan. Among the proponents of the expedition, it was especially Soejima Taneomi, the Foreign Minister, who played a pivotal role. Soejima was a Saga clansman born into a family committed to the nativistic school of National Learning. He was also familiar with international law as he had studied it under a Dutch-born naturalized American missionary, Guido Verbeck, at Nagasaki in the mid-1860s. His diplomatic policy has been described as “national rights diplomacy (kokken gaikō),” as is well exemplified by the Maria Luz case. Some scholars have speculated that Japanese like Soejima hurried the Ryukyu Disposition forward in October 1872 in order to strengthen the justification for an expedition; I do not find any evidence to go beyond stating that after the October event, Soejima apparently began working actively toward the realization of the expedition.

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123 Soejima-ke monjo.


The Ryukyu and Taiwan issues were not only intertwined but also derived from the Japanese concern over national security and prestige; this concern extended the expedition, which was originally proposed as a chastisement of the hostile Taiwanese aborigines, to overseas territorial expansion. Inoue Kaoru noted the motives for the expedition in a November 18, 12 (Meiji 5/10/18) letter to Kido Takayoshi, who was in Europe as a deputy-ambassador in the Iwakura Mission. He stated, “It has been argued that Formosa (Taiwan) is a strategically important island. The Dutch used to occupy the island. Foreign countries such as England, the United States, and Prussia have been eyeing it for a long time but have not yet put their ambitions into action because they have not obtained a pretext for carrying out their ambitions. Therefore, if we took advantage of this situation and requested that the Chinese government yield the Island to Japan (Qing China has also acknowledged that half of Formosa is under its jurisdiction, but the other half is not and is a barbarians’ den), the Chinese government, being obsessed by so many difficulties and having no vigor to govern the island, would not object.”

Ōhara Shigezane, a Foreign Ministry official, also mentioned that Soejima wanted to secure the aboriginal territories before the Western powers took them over. Soejima in fact assumed that foreign powers had been watching for a chance to seize Taiwan, where Qing China ruled only

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128 Segai Inoue-kō den, vol. 1, 480-486.

129 Ibid., 477. In the 1850s and 60s, some Americans, British, and Prussians thought of constructing a colony in the aboriginal territories, though their home governments were not at all interested in colonization. It is unknown that Inoue’s these remarks indicated that the Japanese knew of the Western interest in the aboriginal territories. See Eskildsen, “Meiji shichinen Taiwan shuppei no shokuminchiteki sokumen,” 64.

130 Iwakura Tomomi kankei monjo, vol. 5, 218.
half of the island in spite of her claim to the entire land. He was concerned about a rumor to the effect that the German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, was watching Taiwan at that time.131 As mentioned below, Soejima therefore expected the Japanese seizure of not only the aboriginal territories but also the entire island to secure Japan’s southern shores.132

There was also the advice of two Americans behind this expansionist zeal. One of them was Charles E. DeLong, the U.S. Minister to Japan. On October 24, 1872 (Meiji 5/9/22), the self-made former mine worker visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss the U.S.-Ryukyu Convention of 1854. In a conversation with Soejima, DeLong, asking whether the Japanese intended to take action in response to the Ryukyu shipwreck incident, mentioned that since the Chinese jurisdiction over Taiwan was nominal, regardless of the Chinese claim, anyone who wanted to possess the island could occupy it.133 The American minister’s reference to the questionable legal status of Taiwan indeed seemed convincing to the Japanese foreign minister. Soejima must have been glad that DeLong’s view of the legal status of the aboriginal territories coincided with the claim made previously by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Soejima responded by expressing his interest in seizing Taiwan.134 Although he said to DeLong that the Japanese

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132 Tei, 64-65.

133 DNGB, vol. 7, no. 6.

134 Ibid.
government intended to launch a punitive expedition to Taiwan, this was actually untrue. As mentioned below, the Meiji government had not yet made a decision on the overseas expedition at the time.\textsuperscript{135} Seeming to lack concrete knowledge of Taiwan, he inquired of DeLong regarding the U.S. expedition to the island in 1867 and asked him to provide information regarding both the island and the expedition.\textsuperscript{136} In response to Soejima’s request, DeLong also agreed to introduce the former U.S. Consul to Amoy, Charles LeGendre, to him. The American Minister’s cooperative attitude toward Soejima is said to have come not from his affection for Japan but from his East Asia strategy. He was afraid that Japan, after accomplishing modernization, might ally with China and Korea against the Western powers; therefore, he wanted Japan to isolate itself from other Asian countries.\textsuperscript{137}

LeGendre, also known as the father of the legendary kabuki actor Ichimura Uzaemon XV, had much more influence on the Japanese policy toward Taiwan than DeLong. He was a French-born naturalized American who had participated in the Civil War as a Union officer. For his distinguished services in the war, he had been appointed Consul to Amoy in October 1867. In late October 1872, he stopped over in Japan on leave, while en route to the United States. Since

\textsuperscript{135} Payson J. Treat, \textit{Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Japan 1853-1895}, vol. 1 (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1932), 476.

\textsuperscript{136} DNGB, vol. 7, no. 6.

his nomination by the Grant administration to be Minister to Argentina had been rejected by Congress by reason of his foreign birth, he needed to secure a new position.\textsuperscript{138} He was acquainted with Taiwan, especially the aboriginal territories, because of his experience in negotiating with the aboriginal tribes over the Rover Case.\textsuperscript{139} Soejima seems to have had some information regarding his career and his visit to Japan in advance.\textsuperscript{140} Asked by Soejima to arrange a meeting with LeGendre, DeLong readily agreed to Soejima’s request and persuaded LeGendre to delay his departure.\textsuperscript{141}

Meetings with LeGendre on October 25 and 27 (Meiji 5/9/22 and 24) must have further encouraged Soejima’s intention to engage in overseas military action. In their first meeting, on the 25th, LeGendre mentioned that the Qing dynasty itself had admitted its lack of control over some of the aborigines.\textsuperscript{142} In the second meeting, on the 27th, he further suggested that Japan take over Taiwan and stated that two thousand soldiers would be enough to conquer the island,


\textsuperscript{139} For details of the Rover Case, see Caruthers, “Charles LeGendre,” 31-57; Sufen Sophia Yen, 165; JN-R34-F44903-44960; Huang Jiamo,, 201-258.

\textsuperscript{140} Taiwan kiji. In the entry for September 21, 1872 (Meiji 5/8/19), he refers to the American expedition to Taiwan.

\textsuperscript{141} DNGB, vol. 7, no. 3; Caruthers, “Charles LeGendre”, 60-61.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., no. 5.
though both DeLong and he did not expect the Japanese to take immediate military action as
mentioned below. Soejima expressed his pleasure with LeGendre’s advice and added that Japan
could easily send ten thousand soldiers.\footnote{Ibid., no. 20.}

Conversations with the two Americans revealed that Soejima’s interest in the expedition
was also due to his concern with domestic problems which the Meiji government faced at the
time. Soejima seemed to see an overseas military campaign as an outlet for the discontent of the
ex-samurai (warriors) with the new policies taken by the government. More direct and serious
pressure was posed by ex-samurai within the military. He stated that there were more than four
hundred thousand “brave” samurai who would be willing to fight. The ex-samurai problem was
not necessarily external to the government.\footnote{DNGB, vol. 7, no. 6.} More direct and serious pressure was posed by ex-
samurai within the military. Looking for a chance to display their strength, the imperial army and
navy of the new regime, which prior to the enactment of conscription in 1873, still consisted of
ex-samurai, and which was equipped with modern armaments, had had its eye on Taiwan since
the news of the Ryukyu shipwreck incident was announced. Their enthusiastic demand for
military action against the aborigines had reached an alarming point, and the government had
difficulty restraining this military enthusiasm and outrage.\footnote{Tei Nagayasu, 65.}

\footnote{Ibid., no. 20.}

\footnote{DNGB, vol. 7, no. 6.}

\footnote{Tei Nagayasu, 65.}
Fascinated by LeGendre’s experience and knowledge and realizing his usefulness, Soejima had repeated conversations with him and also worked on employing him in the Japanese government. As a result, on December 30, 1872 (Meiji 5/12/1)), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs appointed LeGendre as an advisor.¹⁴⁶ Both before and after his appointment, possibly beginning in early November, he drafted five memoranda, the so-called LeGendre Memoranda, at Soejima’s request.¹⁴⁷ In the first three memoranda, LeGendre explained at length that Chinese jurisdiction over the aboriginal territories was insubstantial either under international law or in views of the historical relationship between Qing China and the aboriginal tribes in Taiwan. He then suggested that Japan should take possession of not only the aboriginal land but also the entire island of Taiwan for the sake of Japan’s national security vis-à-vis the Western powers. The fifth memorandum was possibly submitted to the government some time in mid-March 1873.¹⁴⁸ In this memorandum, LeGendre advised that Japan take both military and diplomatic measures to realize the seizure of the aboriginal territories.¹⁴⁹ Soejima’s junior clansman, Ōkuma Shigenobu, mentioned that Soejima was fascinated by LeGendre’s grand

¹⁴⁶ Caruthers, “Charles LeGendre,” 58-92; Yen, 159-174; Mōri, “Soejima Taneomi no tai-Shin gaiko,“: 506-507. LeGendre’s monthly salary was one thousand yen; Foreign Minister Soejima’s was five hundred yen. Mori sees this as an indication of Japanese expectations of his usefulness.

¹⁴⁷ LeGendre seems to have drafted the first four memoranda by mid-November. Soejima notes that he saw them on November 19 (Meiji 5/10/19). Taiwan kiji.

¹⁴⁸ There are two versions of the fifth memorandum. Ichinose Norie mentions that one was the revised version of the other. Ichinose Norie, “Meiji shoki ni okeru Taiwan shuppei seisaku to kokusaihō no tekiyō” Hokudai shigaku 35 (1995): 27.

vision set forth in the fourth memorandum. LeGendre predicted that antagonism between the Western powers, especially between Britain and Russia, would soon become intensified in East Asia. He further argued that since foreign countries intended to expand their spheres of influence, seizing Korea in the North and Taiwan and the Penghu Islands in the South would therefore be the best strategy and indispensable for the Japanese empire’s further development.

Despite Soejima’s zeal, the Meiji government did not choose to launch an immediate military operation. On November 3 (Meiji 5/10/3), Kabayama Sukenori noted in his diary that Soejima had submitted a statement to the Central Board one day earlier, though the contents are unknown, and that a government decision would be made in a few days. The decision the government eventually made was not to launch an expedition to the aboriginal territories. On November 10 (Meiji 5/10/10), he noted, with pleasure, that the government had mostly resolved the Taiwan issue. It is unclear from his diary what exactly had been resolved. It was probably not to carry out an expedition immediately, since one day earlier Kabayama had been ordered to go to Taiwan, as well as China, not by leading troops but on an inspection mission. On December 9 (Meiji 5/11/9), government leaders gathered in Chancellor Sanjō’s mansion and made a final decision to dispatch an envoy to China.

150 Koh: 39.
151 JN-R34-44937-44945.
152 Ibid., 188.
153 Kabayama Aisuke, 187-188.
154 Ibid.
This decision perhaps reflected the objections and opinions, from both within and outside the government, to the immediate launching of an expedition to the aboriginal territories. Preaching to Soejima the legitimacy and legality of the expedition, LeGendre and Delong did not in fact expect the Japanese to take immediate military action. They stressed that Japan needed to have diplomatic negotiations with Qing China first to clarify the absence of Chinese territorial sovereignty over the aboriginal territories, before dispatching troops.\textsuperscript{155} The mainstream of the government leadership was also against Soejima’s firm stance.\textsuperscript{156} As noted above, Saigō Takamori, the most prominent leader in the caretaker government, also seemed to oppose the immediate launching of an expedition. The deputy of the Finance Ministry, Inoue Kaoru, and an official of the Ministry, Shibusawa Eiichi, raised objections to the expedition. Not necessarily questioning the propriety of the expedition itself, they thought that the overseas military campaign would not be feasible because of the fragility of the regime, the lack of military preparations, and the fiscal difficulties. On November 26, 1872 (Meiji 5/10.26), Inoue submitted a statement, drafted by Shibusawa, to Sanjō, arguing against the expedition and the seizure of the aboriginal territories on the grounds of inadequate military preparations.\textsuperscript{157} On December 15 (Meiji 5/11/15), Shibusawa attended a meeting on the Taiwan issue, standing in for Inoue, who was in mourning for his mother, and expressed his opposition to the

\textsuperscript{155} DNGB, vol. 5, no. 187.


\textsuperscript{157} Ibid.
expedition. In a letter dated December 18, 1872 (Meiji 5/11/18) to Kido, Inoue adduced the reason for his disagreement. Inoue’s opposition was grounded in the same reasons as Shibusawa’s. He thought that launching an overseas expedition before completing domestic modernization and reforms, and under fiscal difficulties and domestic instability, would be imprudent. Another objection to the expedition came from the concern over the relationship with China. Although he did not question the legitimacy of the expedition, Ōkuma Shigenobu, a Councilor of State, was anxious about the reaction of China, which possessed half of Taiwan.

The Soejima Mission of 1873

In Mid-December, the Meiji government singled out Soejima Taneomi to lead a mission to China. On December 18 (Meiji 5/11/18), he received an imperial edict which ordered him to go to China. Another imperial edict the day after stated that the purposes of his mission were to congratulate the Qing emperor, Tongzhi, on his marriage and the commencement of his direct administration and to complete the pending ratification of the 1871 treaty. Soejima was granted the status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary on February 28,

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158 Ibid., 476-478; Seinan kiden, 549.
159 Ibid., 478.
160 Seinan kiden, 549.
161 Soejima-ke monjo.
162 JN-R34-F44859; DNGB, vol. 5, no. 89.
As Chancellor Sanjō Sanetomi stated, the audience with the Chinese emperor and the ratification of the treaty were, however, only the ostensible objectives of his mission to China. The true objective was to negotiate on the Taiwan issue. When the members of the Soejima mission were summoned to the imperial palace on March 9, the Emperor Meiji promulgated an edict, stating, “I have heard that the aborigines of the Island of Taiwan have massacred my subjects several times. Why wouldn’t these calamities become worse in the future if [we] were to renounce the investigation [of the cases]? Now [I have] granted carte blanche to you, Taneomi. You, Taneomi, are to go [to China], and to discuss this issue with justice, with the intention of protecting my subjects.”

It was indeed Soejima himself who sought the appointment. Soejima, whose ambition for an immediate expedition had been frustrated, did not conceal that he still intended not to clarify the status of the aboriginal territories but to obtain them. Possibly before he was appointed ambassador, in a written statement to the emperor, he stated, “No one except me is able to prevent foreign powers aiming at Taiwan from impeding our imperial undertaking, to convince Qing China to cede the aboriginal territories to us, to bring the land under civilization, and to gain the confidence of the inhabitants. I entreat your Imperial Majesty to send me to China to ratify the treaty, and to proceed to Beijing to convince foreign delegations not to

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163 DNGB, vol. 6, no. 39.
164 Iwakura Tomomi kankei monjo, vol. 5, 210; Tei, 75.
165 JR-N34-F44855-44858; Meiji Tennō ki, vol. 3, 38.
question the treaty with China, to confer with the Qing government on the Audience Question, and to give prior notice to the government of a punitive expedition to Taiwan. And, with the expedition, we should clarify the demarcation of Taiwan and develop half of the island.”

On February 17, he also stated in a letter to his fellow clansman Ōkuma Shigenobu, “I am fairly confident of obtaining half of the island through negotiations. Resort to arms may be unnecessary even if the entire island is desired. I believe that this opportunity must not be missed in order to obtain half of the island now and to acquire the entire land through negotiations in four or five years.”

The Meiji government did not, in fact, entirely trust Soejima. Soejima had been confident of the absence of Chinese sovereignty over the aboriginal territories before he began diplomatic talks with China. On the other hand, the government was afraid that his firm attitude might lose Chinese amity. Ōhara Shigezane even suspected that Soejima would not even hesitate to wage war on China, though Soejima also hoped that Japan would stay on friendly terms with China. Inoue Kaoru continued to be apprehensive that Soejima might maneuver to

166 Tei, 65.

167 Ōkuma Shigenobu kankei monjo, vol. 2, 33.

168 Yasuoka Akio, “Nihon ni okeru bankoku kōhō no juyō to tekiyō,” Higashi Ajia kindaiishi 2 (March 1999): 51-52. His belief would not have resulted only from the encouragement from DeLong and LeGendre He had claimed that the aboriginal territories belonged to no one before he had begun meeting with the Americans. He was in fact familiar with international law; as a Saga clansman, he had been taught international law by the American missionary Verveck in Nagasaki in the 1860s. He was also one of the drafters of “Seitai (Polity)” which referred to a Chinese translation, titled Wángguó gōngfǎ (bankoku kōho), of the Elements of International Law published in London in 1855.

169 DNGB, vol. 7, no. 3.
manipulate the mission and was still proposing an official of the Finance Ministry, Mutsu Munemitsu of Kishū, for the ambassadorship until shortly before the Soejima mission left Japan.\footnote{Ōkuma Shigenobu kankei monjo, vol. 2, 36-38.} This kind of apprehension within the government, which Kabayama felt keenly, might have been the reason it took the government so long to make a final decision on the dispatch of the mission to China and its departure.\footnote{Taiwan kiji, 189-190. Kabayama seemed to be vexed at the delay of the appointment of the mission to China. Soejima’s departure was also delayed; although he won Sanjō’s agreement to his dispatch to China in late January, 1873, Soejima actually had to wait until early March.} Why did the government eventually choose Soejima? Ōhara mentioned that no one could control Soejima after Saigō Takamori had returned to his hometown, Kagoshima in December 1872\footnote{Iwakura Tomomi kankei monjo, vol. 5, 219. Ōhara mentioned this in a letter to Iwakura Tomomi on December 10, 1872 (Meiji 5/11/10).}

Before the Soejima mission left Japan, the government, fearing Soejima’s manipulation of the mission, took some measures to keep him under control. It issued several instructions to Soejima regarding negotiations. On February 27, 1873, the Council of State rejected Soejima’s intention to use the mission to acquire the aboriginal territories and also rejected action in accordance with the five memoranda which LeGendre had submitted, having advocated seizing the aboriginal territories.\footnote{JN-R34-F4490; Shibusawa Eiichi denki shiryō, vol. 3, 638.} On March 9, following the imperial edict promulgated the same day, Chancellor Sanjō gave Soejima more specific instructions consisting of four clauses. The instructions stated that if the Qing government claimed territorial
sovereignty over the entire land of Taiwan, agreed to negotiate on the shipwreck incident, and accepted the responsibility for taking appropriate measures, the Soejima mission would request that the Chinese take sufficient compensatory measures – the punishment of the criminals, relief money for the victims’ families, and a crackdown on atrocities – for those who were massacred. If the Qing government either admitted or denied territorial sovereignty over Taiwan and refused to negotiate, the decision would be left to the emperor. If the Qing government answered in other ways, negotiations were to be carefully carried out in accordance with international law, without forfeiting any national rights. The Council of State subsequently instructed Soejima to carry out negotiations as a duty to Japanese citizens and to avoid friction with China in compliance with the principle of peace.

On March 8, shortly before Soejima left Japan for China on the 13th of the month, another shipwreck incident occurred, and it was later cited as another pretext for the expedition. According to the records of the Council of State, the Japanese legation in Shanghai reported that four Japanese sailors of Bitchū Oda prefecture (part of present-day Kurashiki, Okayama prefecture), who had left their native port in January 1873, encountered a storm coming back home from Kishū. They were cast ashore and robbed by Taiwanese aborigines though

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175 DNGB, vol. 7, no.44.
fortunately none of them were murdered. The sailors were rescued by Chinese officials of Fujian province, delivered to Japanese officials in Shanghai, and returned to Kobe on July 20.176

The Soejima mission reached Shanghai on two military vessels, the Ryujō and the Tsukuba, on April 1, 1873. Although this was the first time a Japanese diplomatic envoy had used gunboats, the intent was perhaps to exalt national prestige in a dignified manner rather than to intimidate China.177 After reaching China, Soejima completed the ratification of the 1871 Sino-Japanese Treaty with Li Hongzhang in Tianjin on April 30, and reached Beijing on May 7.178 After the Soejima mission arrived in the Chinese capital, the members spent most of their time on the so-called Audience Question. The Qing dynasty and foreign representatives were engaged in antagonistic negotiations over foreign demands for an audience with Emperor Tongzhi. Although the Chinese compromised with the foreign representatives including Soejima on the audience itself, the dispute still continued over the form of the audience. The Chinese government was finally forced to surrender to foreign demands once again, and the audience, without the kowtow, eventually took place on June 29. The settlement of this issue significantly contributed to Soejima’s vigorous and adamant negotiations with the Zongli Yamen.179


177 DNGB, vol. No. 60. However, this was not the first time that the Meiji government had used a steamer for a diplomatic purpose. See Chapter 4.

178 Ibid., vol. 6, no. 61.

179 Ibid., 140-154, 161-186. See also McWilliams.
Although he stayed in China for nearly four months, Soejima attempted to negotiate with the Qing government on the Taiwan issue only once. On June 21, Soejima’s deputy-ambassador Yanagiwara Sakimitsu and Tei Nagayasu visited the Zongli Yamen and conferred with the Yamen ministers, but Soejima himself did not attend. Wayne C. McWilliams conjectures that Soejima’s absence might have been an intentional “tactical retreat” to protest against the Chinese attitude toward the Audience Question. However this still does not explain why he attempted a negotiation only once. *Nisshin kōshōshi teiyō* (A summary of Sino-Japanese relations) and Mōri Toshihiko conjecture that Soejima did not want to spend much time on the Taiwan issue, which would inevitably bring up the issue of the status of the Ryukyus, after spending so much time on the Audience Question. Sharply opposed to the Qing dynasty over the form of the audience, Soejima had notified the Chinese that the Japanese envoy was to terminate the negotiations and leave China one day before the meeting took place. Another speculation would be possible: Soejima never gave up carrying out an expedition to the aboriginal territories, despite his remarks before that he was confident in setting the Taiwan issue through diplomatic negotiations. He was probably thought that negotiations with China, whose territorial sovereignty, he believed, did not exist on the aboriginal territories, would be

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180 *Taiwan kiji*, 214. According to Kabayama, their visit to the Zongli Yamen was decided on June 20, as a result of the breakdown of the negotiations on the Audience Question.

181 McWilliams, 269.

182 *Nisshin kōshōshi teiyō*, in DNGB: Meji nenkan tsuiho, vol. 1, 97; Mori, *Taiwan shuppei: Dai Nihon Teikoku no kaimakugeki*, 60-61.

183 DNGB, vol. 6, no. 37.
unnecessary to settle the Ryukyu-Taiwan issue. He therefore did not want to repeat talks with Chinese officials. He might have furthermore been afraid that his own presence would make the meeting more official. That is to say, Soejima might have ignored the instruction from the government and manipulated his mission to do what he wanted.

In his meeting with the two Yamen ministers, Donxun and Mao Changxi, Yanagiwara stated that the Chinese had no jurisdiction over the aboriginal territories of Taiwan, notifying them that the Japanese government intended to send an expeditionary force to chastise the hostile aborigines who had massacred Japanese subjects (Ryukyuans). Yanagawara’s reference to the Ryukyu shipwreck incident was unavoidable within the context of informing the Chinese about the expedition; it necessarily brought up the issue of the status of the Ryukyus, which Soejima, perhaps as well as other Japanese leaders, did not want to discuss with the Chinese. The Yamen ministers replied that they had been informed of the massacre of the Ryukyuans but not of the Japanese and stated that the Ryukyus were subordinated to China. Yanagiwara probably anticipated this Chinese reaction from the beginning. He did not continue the debate over the status of the Ryukyus. After stating that the Ryukyus belonged to Japan, which was under an obligation to protect the Ryukyuans as Japanese subjects, he shifted the topic to the Taiwan issue.\footnote{Ibid., no. 38.}

Yanagiwara asked the Yamen ministers how they would deal with the “savage” aborigines. The ministers replied, “There are two kinds of aborigines on this island (Taiwan).
The aborigines who have been subjugated are called *shufan* (j. *jukuban*) (barbarians inside the Qing jurisdiction); we have set up prefectures and administered them. The other aborigines who have not yet been subjugated by us are called *shengfan* (j. *seiban*) (barbarians outside the Qing jurisdiction). They are beyond the Chinese influence (*huawai*) and also beyond our jurisdiction.

Yanagiwara urged on the Chinese the importance of the Taiwanese aboriginal territories, “If foreign powers occupied the aboriginal territories under the pretext of a massacre the aborigines had committed, and if these aboriginal territories became like the French territories in Vietnam, Macao, Hong Kong, and Russia’s expanding sphere of influence from the Amur River basin to our northern frontier, we would be confronted with a menace on our southern shores, which would threaten the islands in that area.” He continued, “The Japanese government, therefore, intends to conquer the aborigines (the barbarians outside the Chinese jurisdiction) immediately. However, our minister (Soejima) restrained the popular call for a punitive expedition in order to promote amity between the two countries. If we, therefore, notify you through this mission that we are to launch an expedition and avoid your suspicion, and then chastise the aboriginal territories, there will be no suspicion that we might intervene in your territories.”

The Chinese officials failed to notice the gravity of their own statement; Sun Shida, a Yamen official attending the meeting, believed mistakenly that Yanagiwara had brought up the

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185 DNGB., vol. 6, no. 101.  
186 Ibid.
Taiwan issue to force them to submit to foreign demands over the Audience Question.\textsuperscript{187} Although they instead mentioned that they were willing to have further talks after investigating the report from Fujian Province on the Ryukyu ship wreck incident, Yanagiwara rejected further talks on the issue by stating that the Japanese were already familiar with the report published in the \textit{Jingbao}.\textsuperscript{188}

Meanwhile, the result of the conversation with the Yamen ministers caused rejoicing among the pro-expedition Japanese. Kabayama Sukenori, who was in Beijing with Soejima, noted in a diary entry dated June 21 that all the members of the mission felt like jumping for joy (\textit{jakuyaku sōkai}) at the result.\textsuperscript{189} Soejima also did not seem to anticipate that he would be able to gain what he had wanted so easily, though he probably predicted that the Chinese would make such a statement since before coming to China because of his talks with DeLong and LeGendre. He stated in a report to Tokyo on June 29, “Negotiations over the Taiwan issue had fortunately been completed.”\textsuperscript{190} From the Chinese statement, the Japanese understood that Qing China acknowledged its absence of sovereignty over the aboriginal territories and that it was up to Japan to take the next step to solve the Taiwan issue.

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., no. 121.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{189} Taiwan kiji, 215.
\textsuperscript{190} DNGB, vol. 6, no. 66.
When Soejima returned to Tokyo on July 25, 1873, another diplomatic problem had come to overshadow the Taiwan issue inside the Meiji government. As discussed in Chapter 4, in the early summer of 1873 a report from Pusan in late May touched off a clamor for firm measures against Korea (sei-Kan ron). The protagonist of this moment was Saigō Takamori. In response to a report on the Korean affront, he proposed to go to Korea, as a formal envoy, in a final diplomatic effort to convince Korea to open its tightly closed doors to Japan, as well as to other foreign countries, before taking military measures. The popular interpretation states that Saigō was not, however, at all optimistic about his own mission, which he anticipated would provoke Korean violence and give Japan justification for punitive action.\(^{191}\) Some historians have challenged this interpretation; they submit a sort of “pacifist” theory that Saigo was confident of succeeding in settling negotiations with Korea peacefully.\(^{192}\) Mōri Toshihiko for example argues that Saigō’s jingoistic words were merely a maneuver to mislead the true jingoist, Itagaki Taisuke. Examining Saigō’s letters, I do not find anything other than speculation to support this revisionist theory. Although he was not proposing an immediate military action against Korea, Saigō anticipated that the use of military measures would be inevitable after his

\(^{191}\) See *Dai Saigō Zenshū*, vol. 2, 720-793. Ōkubo Toshimichi kankei monjo, vol., 338-229.

diplomatic effort failed, as the popular interpretation states. His proposal encountered objections primarily from the leaders who had participated in the Iwakura Mission and had returned from Europe in mid-September – Ōkubo Toshimichi, Kido Takayoshi, and Iwakura Tomomi – and caused a grave rupture in the leadership of the government; this schism resulted in the defeat of Saigō and his supporters and their leaving the government in late October.

Saigō’s preoccupation with the Korea issue in the summer and autumn of the same year did not mean that he was indifferent to the Taiwan issue. As mentioned above, he approved of Kabayama’s proposal for an inspection mission to Taiwan in 1872 and actually dispatched some agents like Kabayama to China with the Soejima mission for inspections. He ordered military and civilian officers who had experience studying in China since 1871, like Kodama Toshikuni and Narutomi Seišū, to inspect Taiwan and southern China.\textsuperscript{193} He also appointed Major Fukushima Tadashige (Reisuke) to serve as Consul in Amoy.\textsuperscript{194} On June 23, two days after Yanagiwara’s conversation with the Zongli Yamen regarding the Taiwan issue, Kabayama and others left Beijing for their destinations.\textsuperscript{195}

Saigō even indicated that the expedition to Taiwan should be carried out before the one to Korea. He seemed to see the expedition to Taiwan as more feasible, perhaps because he believed that the war against Korea would have to wait for the result of his mission, while the

\textsuperscript{193} Seinan kiden, vol. 1, 313.

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{195} DNGB, vol. 6, no. 75.
expedition to Taiwan had obtained sufficient justification through the conversation between the Soejima mission and the Zongli Yamen in June, 1873.  

In a letter dated April 6, 1874, to Ōkubo Toshimichi, Iwakura Tomomi mentioned that in case Korea responded [to his mission] with discourtesy, Saigō had considered chastising Korea, but only after several years of military preparations.  

On the other hand, while he was still trying to obtain government approval for his mission to Korea, Saigō was simultaneously moving forward the realization of an expedition to Taiwan. On August 3, he asked Chancellor Sanjō Sanetomi to grant final authorization for the expedition.  

Saigō saw the two overseas military actions as outlets for domestic discontent including issues in which he believed that the Meiji regime had to prevail. Japanese leaders, including Saigō, were aware of the disaffection and resentment among ex-samurai toward the defeudalization and modernization policies which stripped away their hereditary privileges and undermined their livelihoods. Saigō’s home, Satsuma (Kagoshima), was a particular hot bed of ex-samurai discontentment. Many of the Satsuma clansmen, whose domain had been one of the major forces overthrowing the Tokugawa regime, felt betrayed by the drastic socio-political transformation which had taken place since the Restoration. In a letter sent to his fellow clansman Ōkubo the year before, Saigō acknowledged the anguish caused by the rancor and 

196Ibid., vol. 7, no. 66.  

197 Ōkubo Toshimichi kankei monjo, vol. 1, 337.  

198 Ibid., 742-748.
condemnation of Shimazu Hisamitsu, the father of the domainal lord Shimazu Tadayoshi and the domain’s de facto power holder.\footnote{Ibid, 663.} The great southwestern domain, in addition, was unique in that the samurai population – more than twenty-six percent of the entire local population – was about four times as large as the national average (about six to seven percent).\footnote{Haraguchi Torao, Kagoshima-ken no rekishi (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1986), 159-160.} Government leaders called it a “powder keg.”\footnote{Dai Saigō zenshū, vol. 2, 734-735.} On July 21, 1873, he asked his younger brother, Major General Saigō Tsugumichi, to give permission to Kagoshima ex-samurai to participate in the expected expedition to Taiwan.\footnote{Iwakura Tomomi kankei monjo, vol. 5, 235-242.}

Ex-samurai discontent was especially obvious inside the military. The Imperial Guard was Saigō’s greatest headache. It was originally organized as “goshinpei,” consisting of the ex-retainers of the three major Restoration forces of Satsuma, Chōshū, and Tosa, for the purpose of smoothly executing the abolition of domains in 1871, and was renamed “konoehei (imperial guard)” in the following year.\footnote{Ochiai Hiroki, Meiji kokka to shizoku (Tokyo: Yoshikaewa Kōbunkan), 106.} Proud of their own contribution to this revolutionary event, ex-samurai were upset when conscription, which would undermine their hereditary monopoly of arms, was announced in December 1872.\footnote{Matsushita Yoshio, Katei Meiji gunseishi ron, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1978), 265; idem., Chōheiirei seteishi (Tokyo: Satsuki Shobō, 1981), 101-192.} Satsuma clansmen formed the largest faction in the
Imperial Guard, and their regionalist sentiment had caused friction and trouble inside the military.²⁰⁵ Saigō, as head of the military and also as the leader of the Satsuma oligarchs, found dealing with his clansmen quite difficult. He called them “Kagoshima’s troublemakers (Kagoshima no nanbutsu)” and described his position as “napping in the midst of explosives (haretsudan no naka nite hirune).”²⁰⁶ He said to Itagaki Taisuke on August 17 that military action against Korea would force the motives behind internal disturbances (nairan o koinegau kokoro) to be directed outward.²⁰⁷ In his letter dated August 3 noted above, Saigō confessed to Sanjō that he was under pressure from the demands of the Imperial Guard for immediate approval for an expedition to the Taiwanese aboriginal territories.²⁰⁸

Saigō also seemed to hope that overseas campaigns would improve the confusing, depressed, and unstable domestic socio-political atmosphere which had descended since the Restoration. He believed that Japan had been exhausting its national power and losing its mettle since the Restoration.²⁰⁹ He also lamented the corruption among government officials. Jiyūtōshi (History of the Liberal Party) notes that Saigō had become disgusted with the corruption and confessed to Itagaki his hope to retreat to Hokkaido.²¹⁰ The two leaders then agreed to

²⁰⁵ Matsushita, Kaitei Meiji gunseishiron, vol. 1, 74-79, 264-266.


²⁰⁷ Ibid., 736-738.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 742-748.

²⁰⁹ Dai Saig zenshū, vol. 2, 703.

reinvigorate the declining public morals through an expedition to Korea. Saigō was also displeased with the decline of samurai morale, seen especially in scandals involving high government officials like Inoue Kaoru and Yamagata Aritomo such as the Osarizawa Mine and Mitani Sankurō Cases of 1872.211 Chancellor Sanjō and Grand Councilor Ōkuma Shigenobu abandoned themselves to frequenting the amusement quarters (*chaya*).212 Demanding a stoic morality for government officials, Saigō must have been disgusted with these lapses in official discipline.213 He also believed that the encroachment of Western civilization had caused social demoralization.214 Torio Koyata, an army officer of the time, recalled that when he insisted that it would definitely be necessary to enact military rule, to wipe out frivolity, and to be determined to wage war against foreign countries in order to secure the independence of Japan, Saigō agreed with him.215

211 See *Hogohiroi: Sasaki Takayuki nikki*, vol. 5, 299; *Dai Saigō zenshū*, vol. 2, 674-677. While Saigō spared the able military bureaucrat Yamagata, he seemed to detest Inoue especially because of his intimacy with merchants. It is said that he called Inoue “the clerk of the Merchant House of Mitsui (*Mitsui no bantō-sān*)” at a send-off party for the Iwakura Mission in 1872.

212 *Dai Saigō zenshū*, vol. 2, 683-684.

213 Ōkuma monjo, vol. 1, 3-7.

214 *Dai Saigō zenshū*, vol. 2, 785-786.

Saigō’s interest in overseas military actions was further evidence of his concern over his country’s national prestige and security, as was the case with other government leaders. Like them, he regarded Russia as a menace to both Korea and Japan. In a letter dated March 23, 1872, to Ōkubo, who was in the United States, he reported the movements of the Russian military in Northeast Asia. One of his objectives in dispatching emissaries to China and Korea in August of 1872 was to reconnoiter the Russian military deployment near the Manchu-Korean border.216 Fumoto Shin’ichi mentions that Japanese fear of Russia was increasing when the government leaders struggled over Saigō’s sei-Kan ron.217 Sakai Genba, an ex-retainer of Shōnai-han, noted on January 9, 1874, that Saigo had said in Kagoshima that the settlement of the Korea issue, along with the defense of Hokkaido, would be a first step in preparations for a coming war with Russia, suggesting that Japan should exploit the Anglo-Russian confrontation by allying with Great Britain.218

Furthermore, Saigō did not see these domestic issues – ex-samurai discontent and the decline of public mettle and morals after the restoration – as mere domestic problems. For him, an overseas military campaign as a solution for those problems was a “farsighted measure to help the country flourish (kuni o okosu no enryaku).”219 He was afraid that those domestic

217 Fumoto Shin’ichi, “Karafuto, Chishima kōkan jōyaku no teiketsu to kokusai jōsei,” in Meiji ishin to Ajia, 138.
219 Ibid., 754-755.
problems would be impediments to Meiji Japan’s primary concern, evident in the imperial edicts and government leaders’ missives, namely a safer and stronger position in the Western-dominated international environment. He was afraid that the declining mettle would lead Japan into the loss of independence.

The Expedition to the Taiwanese Aboriginal Territories

While Saigō believed that a military action in Korea would contribute to raising his country out of difficult internal and external conditions, in addition to settling a long-pending diplomatic issue, his opponents were against him for the same reasons. Also concerned over the Russian presence, they believed that priority should be given to the dispute with Russia over Sakhalin. Also eager to strengthen the county and enhance its national prestige, they were convinced that domestic development (modernization), including the “rich nation and strong army (fukoku kyōhei)” policy, was more urgent than an overseas military action, especially after

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221 The 1855 Japanese-Russian (Shimoda) Treaty defined Sakhalin as a mixed settlement between Tokugawa Japan and Russia. However, domestic upheavals beginning in the last years of the Tokugawa era in the 1860s were advantageous to Russia, which expanded its sphere of influence southward and overwhelmed the Japanese settlers on the island. By the time Saigo advocated sei-Kan ron, the Meiji government had realized that renouncing Sakhalin, and concentrating on the development and defense of the neighboring island, Hokkaido, would be inevitable for Japan, which did not have enough strength to confront the great power. See Nichi-Ro kōshōshi (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1979), 57–58; Seki Shizuo, Nihon gaikō no kijiku to tenkai (Kyoto-shi: Mineruva Shobō, 1990), 105–108; Sugitani Akira argues that Saigō’s opponents like Ōkubo and Iwakura saw the dispute over Sakhalin as a more important diplomatic issue. Fumoto Shin’ichi also argues that the Sakhalin issue was not merely a pretext against Saigō and his supporters and sees that the split of the government leadership over Saigo’s sei-Kan ron was rooted in the different ideas of coping with the Russian menace. See Sugitani Akira, “; Fumoto, 138.
the Iwakura Mission had seen the advanced Western nations with its own eyes. Also desperate to survive in a Western-dominated world, they were afraid that a possible war with Korea as a result of the failure of the Saigō mission would undesirably consume Japan’s energy, invite British intervention, and profit Russia. Also concerned over domestic security, they feared that an overseas military adventure would on the contrary induce ex-samurai revolts and public disturbances rather than pacify the interior.222

Nevertheless, the result of this dispute, called the political crisis of 1873 (Meiji rokumen seihen or sei-Kan ron seihen), fueled anti-government sentiment, especially among those who had looked forward to an overseas venture. Many ex-samurai, including military and police officers, felt disillusioned and angry with the government under its new leadership. In the Imperial Guard, more than six hundred officers and soldiers from Satsuma, and more than forty from Tosa, left their offices, following Saigō and the other pro-sei Kan leaders like Itagaki and Gōtō Shōjirō on October 28, 1873. An imperial edict was issued to the military to calm their disquiet; its ineffectiveness revealed Saigō’s great influence on the military and their antipathy and even hostility toward the anti-sei Kan leaders.223 In January 1874, the increase in ex-samurai discontent became even more obvious to the government. On January 14, Iwakura Tomomi, the Minister of the Right (udaijin), was assaulted and injured in Akasaka, Tokyo, in the dark by a

222 Ōkubo Toshimichi monjo, vol. 5, 53-64. Describing the political split between Saigō and his Ōkubo as a split between an idealist and a realist, it seems to me that the long-time friends disagreed over the way to proceed with “rich nation and strong army.”

group of pro-sei Kan ex-samurai led by former Major Takechi Kumakichi. Takechi had been one of the emissaries dispatched to Manchuria in 1872.\textsuperscript{224} Three days later, the Grand Councilors who had resigned – Itagaki, Gotō Shōjirō, Soejima Taneomi, and Eto Shinpei – established Japan’s first political party, the Patriotic Party (\textit{Aikoku Kōtō}) and submitted a petition to the government, criticizing oligarchic rule and calling for the establishment of a national assembly; this marked the commencement of the Popular Rights Movement (\textit{jiyū minka\-nen undō}). The threatening situation among pro-sei Kan ex-samurai in Saga, reported to Tokyo earlier in January, eventually escalated into the Saga Rebellion on February 1.\textsuperscript{225}

Into this domestic atmosphere, the inspection missions dispatched to the Chinese mainland and Taiwan returned in the late autumn and winter of 1873. Possibly in November or early December, Iwakura Tomomi received a proposal for an expedition to Taiwan from Fukushima Tadashige, who had participated in the inspection mission to Taiwan from February until September 1873.\textsuperscript{226} On December 17, Ōkubo Toshimichi also received reports on Taiwan from Kodama Toshikuni and Narutomi Seifū, who had also been in Taiwan since February and had returned to Japan on December 6.\textsuperscript{227}

Furthermore, while the expedition to Korea, which Saigo believed inevitable, would have had to wait for the results of the final diplomatic effort and for several years of military

\textsuperscript{224} For this incident (\textit{Akasaka kuichigai jiken}), see Ibid., 359-371.

\textsuperscript{225} For this rebellion. see Ibid., 338-358.

\textsuperscript{226} Ōkubo Toshimichi monjo, vol. 5, 234-236; JN-R34-F44980-44512, 45044-45046.

\textsuperscript{227} Ōkubo Toshimichi monjo, vol. 6, 224-229.
preparations, the expedition to Taiwan had been deemed virtually a fixed policy line after the
Soejima mission heard the Chinese statement that the aboriginal territories were beyond Chinese
jurisdiction. The only matter left at the time was when the government would officially sanction
the expedition. The anti-sei Kan leaders might have been aware of this point, though those who
opposed Saigō’s proposal would not have intended to carry out an expedition immediately after
the dispute was over. On October 28, just days after Saigō and such other Grand Councilors as
Soejima had left the government, Ōkubo sent a letter to Iwakura, asking him to dispatch Army
and Navy officers to China and Sakhalin for an inspection.228 On November 11, a military vessel,
the Kasuga, sailed for Taiwan to inspect the coast and the aboriginal territories of Taiwan.229 In
the same month, the Army also dispatched eight officers to Beijing and Tianjin under the pretext
of language study.230 On December 20, in a letter to Iwakura, Ōkubo, who was not sure that his
regime – historians have often called it the “Ōkubo regime (Ōkubo seiken)” – could survive
February, mentioned that the Taiwan issue could no longer be left as it was.

Historians, especially Japanese historians, have overwhelmingly argued that mounting
ex-samurai unrest motivated the anti-sei Kan leaders to carry out the expedition to the aboriginal
territories as a solution to the problem; Saigō was not the only leader who understood ex-
samurai unrest as more than a domestic problem.231 Since the very beginning of the restoration,

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228 Ibid., vol. 6, 233-236.

229 Matsunaga, 9; Mōri, Taiwan shuppei: Dai Nihon Teikoku no kaimakugeki, 122.

230 Satō Saburō, 131; Mōri, Taiwan shuppei, 122.

231 Matsunaga has pointed out this historiographical tendency. See Matsunaga, 10. One of the most recent
the Meiji government understood rather that domestic pacification and stability were consistently among the most important objectives along with the enhancement of national power and the exaltation of national prestige.\textsuperscript{232} As the “rich country and strong army” policy exemplifies, however, domestic objectives stemmed from external objectives which the Japanese found in the international setting of the time. That is to say, the pursuit of external objectives necessitated the attainment of domestic objectives. The imperial edict calling for the abolition of feudal domains in 1871 manifested the official vision that domestic stability under the rule of the new regime would be the basis of “bankoku taiji (parity and competition with the Western powers).”\textsuperscript{233} When he repeatedly advocated the military chastisement of Korea early in 1869, Kido Takayoshi saw the overseas military action as a means to facilitate the new regime’s consolidation of power and then the rise of Japan within the international community.\textsuperscript{234} As noted above, Saigō expected that the resolution of domestic unrest would lead the country to prosperity. Also, Ōkubo and the other leaders needed to reduce the hostility directed at themselves and to overcome the obstacles to domestic stability and development in order to pursue the political agenda which they considered crucial to a safer and stronger international

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{232} Nagai Hideo, \textit{Meiji kokka keiseiki no gaisei to naisei} (Sapporo, Hokkaidō Daigaku Tosho Kankōkai, 1990), 159.
\item\textsuperscript{233} \textit{Meiji Tenmō-ki}.
\item\textsuperscript{234} \textit{Kido Takayoshi niki}, vol. 1, 159-160; \textit{Kido Takayoshi monjo}, vol. 3, 230-234; DNGB, vol. 2, pt. 1, no. 89.
\end{itemize}
position for Japan. The expedition to the Taiwanese aboriginal territories to deal with those domestic problems was meant to remove the obstacles to their pursuit of modernization, the development of the country, and the exaltation of national prestige.

The Meiji government began to wrestle seriously with the Taiwan issue beginning in January 1874. Iwakura said later, “The expedition to the aboriginal territories was at my suggestion.” Some time after early January, Ōkubo and Ōkuma Shigenobu received an order from Chancellor Sanjō Sanetomi to investigate the issues regarding the aboriginal territories in Taiwan. Ōkubo’s diary shows that after receiving the order, he frequently met and communicated with other leaders such as Sanjo, Iwakura, Ōkuma, and LeGendre on the Taiwan issue. He met even Soejima, who had left the government after the sei-Kan ron debate in October 1873, and heard the details of the 1873 talks with the Chinese government. By January 29, Yanagiwara Sakimitsu and Tei Nagayasu, who had received an order from Ōkuma, drafted a proposal entitled Taiwan shobun yoryaku (Outline of the disposition of Taiwan). Ōkubo and Ōkuma then revised and submitted it, renamed Taiwan banchi shobun yōryaku (The outline of the disposition of the Taiwanese aboriginal territories), to the Cabinet on February 6. This proposal was approved by the Cabinet on the same day and became the guidelines for the Japanese expedition to Taiwan.

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235 Ōkubo Toshimichi monjo, vol. 3, 229, 249.

236 Iwakura Tomomi kankei monjo, vol. 1, 374.
These guidelines for the punitive expedition, consisting of nine clauses, showed three characteristics. First, the expedition meant to demonstrate Japan’s territorial sovereignty over the Ryukyus and its protection of their subjects by subduing the savage aborigines and preventing them from repeating atrocities. Second, the Meiji government did not want the expedition to the aboriginal territories to cause friction with Qing China. The pretext for military action was the Ryukyu and Oda shipwreck incidents; it was based on the claim of territorial sovereignty over the Ryukyus, and on an understanding of the legal status of the aboriginal territories which the Japanese believed was unquestionable. This belief was based on remarks, statement, and attitudes of Westerners like DeLong and LeGendre, and of the ministers of the Zongli Yamen. However, the Japanese seemed to have two remaining concerns: a punitive expedition over the shipwreck incident could possibly raise questions about the status of the Ryukyus. The second, third, and fourth clauses suggest that the minister would have to make efforts to maintain friendship with China; if the Chinese referred to the status of the Ryukyus, he should merely restate the Japanese position but must not argue with them; and Ryukyu House in Fuzhou would be left intact during the expedition.237 The third clause of the guidelines also states, “condemnation of the Ryukyus for their impolite dispatch of a tributary mission to China will be the focus after the settlement of the Taiwan issue.”238 It is probable that Ōkubo and Ōkuma were also aware of the sensitive nature of military operations in the aboriginal territories, which shared

237 DNGB, vol. 7, no. 143.

238 Ōkubo Toshimichi monjo, vol. 5, 344.
a fuzzy border with the China-ruled territories on the island. The Meiji government was to 
dispatch a minister to Beijing, in parallel with undertaking the expedition.  

Third, the conquest and colonization of the aboriginal territories, which had attracted 
Soejima, was mentioned nowhere in the guidelines. The original draft which Yanagiwara and 
Tei had drawn up gave voice to territorial ambition and stipulated that it was the duty of the 
Japanese government to take possession of the land. The guidelines did not, however, include 
that part of the Yanagiwara-Tei draft. Ōkubo and Ōkuma, who had originally wanted to 
concentrate national resources on domestic reform and modernization, perhaps wanted to restrict 
overseas military action to the chastisement of the Taiwanese aborigines, which they probably 
hoped would ease the resentment and frustration of the ex-samurai. 

However, this did not mean that Japanese leaders totally renounced their interest in 
seizing the masterless land. Iwakura’s letter to Ōkubo dated February 6, when the Cabinet 
approved the guidelines, indicates that Iwakura had not necessarily given up his territorial 
ambitions; he mentioned that the issue of the seizure of the aboriginal territories should be 
discussed later. Since mid-February, Ōkubo, the Home Minister, had been in Saga to quell the 
Saga Rebellion, led by the former Grand Councilor, Etō Shinpei, and did not return to Tokyo

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239 Ibid. 
240 JN-R34-F44973-44979. 
241 Ōkuma Shigenobu kankei monjo, vol. 2, 283-284. Among historians, there are different point of views over 
whether the Meiji government abandoned a territorial ambition. See Katsuta, 149; Ichinose, 30-3; Eskildsen, 
396-398. 
242 Iwakura Tomomi kankei monjo, vol. 5, 496-497.
until late April. During his absence from Tokyo, Ōkuma, Iwakura, and Kuroda Kiyotaka of Satsuma were primarily in charge of the Taiwan issue.\textsuperscript{243} Shortly after the government decided on March 18 to launch an expeditionary force, Major General Saigō Tsugumichi began to lobby for an appointment as commander of the expeditionary force.\textsuperscript{244} Iwakura’s letter to Ōkubo dated March 28 states that Saigō asked Iwakura to appoint him to the position and proposed seizing the aboriginal territories.\textsuperscript{245} Considering that chastisement would not satisfy the participants in the expedition, especially those who were from Kagoshima, Saigō planned to transfer the discontented Satsuma ex-samurai to the seized aboriginal land.\textsuperscript{246} It should be remembered here that the Japanese leaders, including his elder brother Takamori, saw the problem of the ex-samurai discontentment as a possible obstacle to Japan’s survival in the Western-dominated international environment. Tsugumichi probably also understood that the seizure of the aboriginal land for the ex-samurai was not merely a solution for the domestic issue.

Saigō’s zeal won both an appointment to the commandership and modification of the expedition plan. Urged by LeGendre’s fifth memorandum submitted on March 13, Ōkuma also seemed to favor the active take-over of the aboriginal territories.\textsuperscript{247} On April 4, an imperial edict


\textsuperscript{244} Ōkuma shigenobu kankei monjo, vol. 2, 275, 285-287.

\textsuperscript{245} Ōkubo Toshimichi monjo, vol. 5, 464-469; Ōkubo Toshimichi kankei monjo, vol. 1, 335-337.

\textsuperscript{246} Ochiai, 127; Ōkubo Toshimichi monjo, vol. 5, 464-469; Ōkubo Toshimichi kankei monjo, vol. 1, 335-337. Eskildsen does not mention that colonization of the aboriginal territories was considered a solution for the domestic issue.

\textsuperscript{247} Ōkuma Shigenobu kankei monjo, vol. 2, 283-284.
was issued, appointing Saigō commander of the expeditionary forces (totoku). A separate edict (tokuyu) concurrently issued to him showed that the colonization of the aboriginal territories had been approved as government policy. The second clause of the second edict instructed, “the purpose is gradually to induce the aborigines to become civilized after subduing them and finally promote salutary enterprises between them and the Japanese government.” On the same day, Ōkuma was appointed Director (chōkan) of the Bureau of Aboriginal Affairs on Taiwan (Taiwan Banchi Jimukyoku) established within the Central Board. Charles W. LeGendre was also named an advisor to the expedition.

Modification of the expedition plan did not mean that the Japanese were also changing their treatment of China, which had been set in the earlier guidelines. On April 8, Yanagiwara Sakimatsu, prospective Minister Plenipotentiary to Beijing, received an imperial edict. It emphasized the maintenance of amicable relations with China even if China questioned the Japanese expedition to Taiwan. It also instructed him not to discuss the matter of the dual subordination of the Ryukyus, which would prolong negotiations, though Japanese sovereignty over the Ryukyus must be claimed.

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249 Ibid.
250 Ibid., no. 4.
251 Ibid.
Unexpected Western questions and objections, however, undermined the underlying rationale for the expedition. Since April 2, the British Minister to Japan, Sir Harry Parkes, had repeatedly inquired of Foreign Minister Terashima Munenori regarding the involvement of British citizens and ships in the expedition, the scale of the expedition, and whether prior negotiations with Qing China had taken place. On April 13, Parkes even threatened the Japanese, stating that if the Chinese government regarded the Japanese expedition as hostile to China, all British citizens involved in the expedition would be recalled. Parkes was concerned that the Japanese expedition would possibly bring about a Sino-Japanese war, in which British ships might be involved. He also sought other countries’ alignment, and Russia and Spain followed the most powerful country of the time, declaring neutrality. He furthermore put pressure on the new U.S. Minister to Japan, John A. Bingham, who had replaced DeLong in October 1873. Under Parkes’ strong influence, an editorial appeared in the English language newspaper, the Japan Daily Herald, of April 17, criticizing Bingham for his tacit approval of the commitment of U.S. citizens and vessels to the Japanese expedition to territories under Chinese sovereignty. The new U.S. minister had in fact cooperated with the Japanese Taiwan policy in

252 See Ishii, 48-54.
253 DNGB, vol. 7, no. 9.
256 DNGB, vol. 7, no. 11.
the same way as his predecessor.\textsuperscript{257} The criticism of the newspaper, under the influence of the minister of the most prominent power of the time, seemed to convince Bingham to abandon his previous attitude toward the Japanese expedition. He announced that since the involvement of U.S. citizens and vessels in the expedition to Taiwan which the United States had recognized as a part of Chinese territory would violate the 1858 Sino-U.S. Treaty (Tianjin Treaty) and international law, the Japanese use of U.S. citizens and vessels could not be approved.\textsuperscript{258}

The British and American responses shocked the Japanese because they had previously found no foreign objection. The Taiwan policy had been encouraged by the two Americans – DeLong and LeGendre – regarding the legal status of the aboriginal territories. When he met with Soejima on August 7, 1873, Parkes had knowledge of LeGendre’s influence on the Japanese Taiwan policy and the Japanese ambition to seize the aboriginal territories, but did not express his objection to the Japanese plan.\textsuperscript{259} When Soejima referred to the expedition plan, the British Minister to China, Thomas Francis Wade, also did not express objections.\textsuperscript{260} As mentioned above, Bingham had even been cooperative, just as DeLong had been. Foreign advisors serving the Meiji government made the same prediction as did DeLong and LeGendre.\textsuperscript{261} In such circumstances, the Meiji government was confident of the legality of the

\textsuperscript{257} Mōri, \textit{Taiwan shuppei}, 135.

\textsuperscript{258} DNGB, vol. 7, no. 15.

\textsuperscript{259} F. O. 46. 167, Incl. 1 in Parkes’ No. 67, Memo. of Parkes 20 Aug. 1873.

\textsuperscript{260} F. O. 17. 654, Wade’s No. 143, 4, 4 June 1873.

expedition, and believed firmly that it would not cause foreign objections or bring about foreign intervention. Parkes’ reaction was typical: whether or not the Japanese action was legal was not the primary concern of the Westerners. Though aware of the hypocritical aspects of international law, the Japanese leaders were forced to reconfirm the reality of international politics, in which international law could be trifled with by the intentions of great powers but was helpless to defend lesser powers like Japan. The members of the Iwakura Mission, like Iwakura himself, might have recalled the speech of Bismarck, who said in a speech given during their stay in Berlin in 1873 that not international law but wealth and strength were the only things lesser powers could count on.262 On April 19, frustrated in its optimistic expectation by the Western objections, the Meiji government finally decided to postpone the expedition.263

Saigō Tsugumichi, the Commander in Chief of the expeditionary forces, defied the government decision on the grounds of the imperial edict of April 4. Saigō was indeed in a difficult position. Kanai Yukiyasu, who delivered the government order to Saigō, was sympathetic to him.264 Saigō probably feared that the postponement would enrage his soldiers

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263 Kuzuu Yoshihisa, *Nisshō kōshō gaishi* (Tokyo: Kokuryūkai Shuppanbu, 1938), 82-83. Besides the foreign objection, there were domestic objections, which did not seem to contribute to the postponement. Kido Takayoshi, Minister of Education and Grand Councilor, Itō Hirobumi, the Minister of Civil Engineering and Grand Councilor, and some military officers like Yamagata Aritomo, the War Minister, were against the expedition. Since Kido had once agreed to the expedition plan proposed by Ōkubo and Ōkuma in February, it is probable that he was against the plan as it had been modified after Ōkubo left Tokyo for Saga. See *Kido Takayoshi nikki*, vol. 2, 11-13, 151-155; idem., vol. 3, 11-13; *Kido Takayoshi monjo*, vol. 8, 237-238.

and drive them to riot. There were 3658 soldiers, including 295 Satsuma volunteers who had been recruited by Saigo’s elder brother and were led by a former police officer, Sakamoto Sumihiro, in Nagasaki, standing for departure to Taiwan. On April 27, Saigō dispatched Fukushima Tadashige, Council to Amoy, along with about two hundred soldiers. Fukushima reached Amoy on May 3 and delivered notification of the expedition to Li Honian, the Viceroy of Fujian and Zhejiang.

In this pitch between the volte-face of Western attitudes and Saigō’s refusal to obey the government’s order, the Meiji government chose to confirm that the expedition should be carried out on a restricted scale, probably knowing that without international support, the overseas campaign could be regarded as encroachment on Chinese territory. As soon as he returned from Saga to Tokyo on April 24, Ōkubo was informed of the foreign objections and the postponement of the expedition. In a diary, he describes those events as “surprises (igai no koto).” Considering the situation to be a national crisis (kokunan), Ōkubo again left Tokyo on April 29 to suspend the dispatch of the expeditionary forces and reached Nagasaki on May 3. He judged however that it would be too late to cancel the expedition, when he discovered that

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265 Sakamoto was one of most active supporter of the military actions against Korea and Taiwan.


267 Ōkubo Toshimichi nikki, vol. 2, 262.

268 Ibid.

Saigō had dispatched the secondary forces one day earlier.270 He then concluded a compromise arrangement with Saigō and Ōkuma on May 4: instead of permitting Saigō to pursue a punitive expedition, they agreed to abandon the colonization plan and not to employ British and U.S. citizens and ships, and to dispatch Yanagiwara Sakimitsu, appointed minister to China, to negotiate with the Qing government; Ōkubo accepted full responsibility for the expedition.271 On May 17, Saigō left Nagasaki, leading the rest of the expeditionary forces.

Although the military chastisement launched against the aboriginal tribes (Mudanshe) was completed quickly by early June, the diplomatic negotiations with Qing China faced rough going and were protracted.272 After Yanagiwara left Yokohama the day after Saigō left for Taiwan, nearly five months were spent on negotiations between Japan and China. The first phase of the Sino-Japanese negotiations lasted from early June until the end of August 1874, in Shanghai, Tianjin, and Beijing. The primary issues were the legitimacy of the expedition in terms of international law and the 1871 Sino-Japanese Treaty and the presence (or absence) of Chinese jurisdiction over the aboriginal territories in Taiwan. The negotiation routes were fragmented and as a result confused the talks between the two sides; Chinese officials approached, deliberately or not, both Yanagiwara and Saigō in parallel. In the negotiations, the Japanese never renounced their claim of the righteousness of the punitive expedition according

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270 Koh, 43; Yen, 208.


272 For the details of the military preparations and operations, see Yasuoka, Meiji shoki Nisshin kōshōshi kenkyū, 99-117.
to international law. However, they had a sore spot in that they had no effective diplomatic weapon to make the Chinese surrender to their assertion that China lacked sovereignty over the aboriginal territories. The Japanese had neither international support nor written evidence of the Chinese statement of June 21, 1873. Moreover, the Chinese refused to comply with Western international law, though neither could they, blaming the Japanese for an encroachment onto their own territory, find any effective measures, either peaceful or forcible, to evict Japanese troops from the aboriginal territories. 273

The second phase lasted from September until the last day of October 1874. When the negotiations between Yanagiwara and the Zongli Yamen came to a deadlock in late August, Ōkubo Toshimichi arrived in China, and his arrival opened a new phase of the negotiations. In Beijing, Ōkubo’s stealthy strategy was to settle the prolonged negotiations by acquiring the Chinese recognition of the punitive action as a righteous action and also an indemnity from China, in exchange for a withdrawal of the expeditionary forces from the territories. This implied that he would not persist in the claim that the aboriginal territories were beyond Chinese sovereignty, and that he understood that it would be the only way to settle the crisis, without a loss of dignity or national prestige, if the Chinese refused to drop their claim on the territories. Although the negotiations continued to be difficult and almost broke down, they were finally concluded when the Beijing Agreement was signed on October 31, 1874, with the mediation of

273 The lack of documentation of the June 21 conversation was later lamented by Japanese leaders. See Ōkuma-haku sekajitsu tan, 644; Nisshin kōshōshi teiyō, 120. For the details of the negotiations of this period. See DNGB, R34, and Chuban Yīwu shimo.
the British Minister to China, Thomas Wade, who was concerned that a war between the two East Asian countries would harm British interests in the area.274

There were three characteristics found in the Japanese attitude in the negotiations. First, the Japanese negotiators – Ōkubo, Yanagiwara, and Saigō – never abandoned the claims that the expedition was a righteous action according to the notion of government’s obligation to protect the people under its jurisdiction. They, including Ōkubo despite his stealthy negotiation strategy, also never stopped claiming the absence of Chinese sovereignty over the aboriginal territories until the Qing government finally agreed on concluding the prolonged diplomatic dispute with monetary settlement. For the Japanese, it was the Western-introduced notion of territorial sovereignty that urged them to secure the Ryukyus and the “masterless” aboriginal territories for the sake of national prestige and security. On the other hand, the Japanese held firmly to the line of maintaining amity with China. When the negotiations appeared futile, the Meiji government had deemed a war with China to be inevitable; it had even started military preparations before Ōkubo’s departure for China.275 However, in the end, the government did not take up arms because of concerns over domestic fiscal difficulties and a lack of confidence in military readiness to wage war on the neighboring great power.276 Granted full responsibility for peace

274 For the details of the negotiations of this period, see DNGB, JN34, and Chuban yiwu shimo.

275 Ōkubo Toshimichi niki, vol. 2, 286; Ōkuma Shigenobu kankei monjo, vol. 2, 413-418; Taiwan seitō kankei ikken, (MS copy, collection Kokuritsy Kōbunshōkan Naikaku Bunko).

and war, Ōkubo himself did not want a break with China.277 Denying Chinese jurisdiction over the aboriginal territories, Ōkubo noticed that the Japanese would have no justification for declaring war against China over the “non-Chinese” land.278 Furthermore, the Japanese were also consistent in not bringing the Ryukyu issue to the negotiating table. Claiming that the expedition was a righteous action to protect their subjects, the Japanese negotiators could not keep the Chinese blind to their claim on the Ryukyus, but never went beyond merely repeating the claim that the Ryukyus belonged to Japan.

The Beijing Agreement certainly saved the two countries from a fatal rupture; it was a compromise for both sides. Although some previous studies have argued that China recognized Japan’s action in the territories as a righteous one to protect its “subjects”, as Ōkubo demanded, the first clause of the agreement shows that China did so merely in an euphemistic way. It states, “The present enterprise of Japan is a just and rightful proceeding to protect her own subjects, and China does not designate it as a wrong action.”279 China agreed to pay 500,000 taels (750,000 dollars) – 100,000 taels as compensatory money for the victims of the shipwreck incidents and 400,000 taels for China’s purchase of Japanese-built facilities in Taiwan, though Ōkubo sansaku,” as his determination to resort to arms with China, Banno Junji and Yasuoka Akio argue that his true intention was to oppose a war with China. According to the context of the proposal, I support the position of the two latter historians. See Xu Jielin, 405-406; Banno Junji, 33; Yasuoka, Meiji shoki Nisshin kōshōshi kenkyu, 108. For the objections of other military officers to a war with China, see Ōkuma monjo, vol. 1, 76-77


278 Ōkubo Toshimichi monjo, vol. 6, 146-149; Ōkubo Toshimichi nikki, vol. 2, 328-332.

originally demanded 2 million taels (3 million dollars) for Japanese military expenditures.\textsuperscript{280} The promise stipulated by the Chinese in the agreement to adopt measures to prevent the recurrence of atrocities by the aboriginal tribes also implied the tacit Japanese recognition of Chinese sovereignty over the aboriginal territories.

The ambiguous meaning of the term, “Japanese subjects (c. \textit{Riben shuming}; j. \textit{Nihon zokumin})” in the Agreement may be further evidence of compromise and became a cause of debate between the two sides. The Japanese interpreted the term as suggesting both the Ryukyuans and the residents of Oda prefecture. The popular interpretation is also that China, definitely, virtually, or indirectly, recognized the Japanese claim on the Ryukyus.\textsuperscript{281} On the other hand, China interpreted it merely as referring to the residents of Oda prefecture. Two Chinese historians also challenge the popular interpretation, maintaining that after signing the agreement, Meiji Japan distorted the meaning of “Japanese subjects,” which originally meant no more than the Chinese understood. This distortion theory is not, however, valid because of those historians’ misinterpretation of primary source materials and their blind following of the Qing Chinese interpretation.\textsuperscript{282} Furthermore, it fails to notice the fact that some Westerners, including the

\textsuperscript{280} DNGB, vol. 7, no. 219.


mediator, Wade, also understood the term to include the Ryukyuans.\textsuperscript{283} This makes it possible for us to offer some speculations: China simply failed to understand the term in the same way as the Japanese and the British; not the Japanese but the Chinese distorted the interpretation of the term; all of three wanted to settle the prolonged dispute as soon as possible, though they were aware that the ambiguity of the term could cause a discrepancy in interpretation.

After the crisis was over, the Meiji government began to work on consolidating its claim on the Ryukus. Ōkubo submitted a proposal after returning to Japan in December and stated that the Beijing Agreement clarified Japanese sovereignty over the Ryukus to some extent (\textit{ikubun}), but not completely. He thought that the Ryukus were still under dual subordination.\textsuperscript{284} He then insisted that the government implement measures to consolidate Japanese control over the Ryukus.\textsuperscript{285} As mentioned above, Foreign Minister Soejima Taneomi had previously promised the Ryukyuans that their polity would not be changed. Beginning in the spring of 1875, the Meiji government, however, following Ōkubo’s proposal began to take measures to reinforce its claim. It suspended the Ryukyu mission, which Shō Tai, the domainal king of Ryukyu-han, had dispatched to celebrate the coronation of the new Chinese emperor,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[283] \textit{British and Foreign State Papers, 1874-1875}, vol. 46, no. 5-Mr. Wade to the Earl of Derby, November 16, 1874 (London: Foreign Office, 1882), 426-430. \textit{Papers Related to the Foreign Relations to the United States}, vol. 1, Mr. Avery to Mr. Fish, Peking, November 12, 1874 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1875), 221-222.
\item[284] \textit{Taiwan Ryūkyū shimatsu} (MS copy, collection Kokuritsu Kōbunshokan Naikaku Bunko).
\item[285] Ōkubo continued to understand that the Ryukus were still under dual subordination until the very eve of the replacement of the Ryukyu-han with Okinawa Prefecture. \textit{Taiwan Ryūkyū shimatsu} (MS copy, collection Kokuritsu Kōbunshokan Naikaku Bunko).
\end{footnotes}
Guangxu (r. 1875-1908) and stationed troops on the islands.\footnote{Ibid.} It finally replaced Ryukyu-han with Okinawa prefecture in 1879.

This chapter has demonstrated that the early Meiji policy toward China indicated that Japanese attitudes toward China cannot be understood simply in the context of alteration and aberration from past tradition. The Japanese adoption of Western civilization, including Western-style diplomatic notions and practices, certainly showed changes in Japanese attitudes toward China as the Meiji government introduced a treaty-based diplomatic relationship to Sino-Japanese relations. However, despite China’s declining international status in the face of superior Western military power, and despite Japan’s adoption of Western civilization, traditional notions continued to be influential in Meiji Japan’s relations with China. The notion of Sino-Japanese parity did not come from the Western diplomatic principle of equality between sovereign nations. It came out of the traditional notion of not becoming a Chinese tributary, namely equal status relations between the two countries based on parity between the two emperors. Having the ideological and religious perception of Japanese superiority over China as well as the Tokugawa bakufu, the Meiji government did not also attempt to spell the perception in the actual diplomatic relations. Another coincidence of the China policy of the Tokugawa bakufu and the Meiji government was that the Japanese tried to avoid antagonizing China as the old and new regimes compromised over Ryukyus despite their common belief of virtual Japanese domination over
the archipelago. This compromising with and yielding to China, in other words the avoidance of conflict with that great neighboring country, seemed to remain a consistent stance of Meiji Japan until the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894.\(^{287}\)

This chapter has also raised the question: Were the Japanese annexation of the Ryukyus and the invasion of the Taiwanese aboriginal territories designed as a part of (or prelude to) an invasion of China? Soon after China and Japan started a new phase in their relationship of several thousand years, the two neighbors endured the disputes over the Ryukyus and the aboriginal territories on Taiwan. From the Chinese point of view, all the trouble between the two neighboring countries was caused by Japanese aggression into their empire and tributary system. This perception has been inherited by recent historians. As the Bakumatsu and early Meiji discourses of some intellectuals and political elites show, the Japanese, fascinated and frightened by Western expansionism and colonialism, wanted to enhance Japan’s national power beyond their small territory toward the East Asian mainland, for the sake of national glory and security. My conclusion here is, however, that such ambition was never spelled out in the actual China policy of the time period covered by this study. From the Japanese point of view, the annexation of the Ryukyus was no more than a modification of the traditional Japanese domination over the Ryukyus in accordance with international law in order to defend the

\(^{287}\) A good example of Meiji Japan’s compromising attitudes toward China was the Japanese choice to give up some southern islands of the Ryukyus as a result of the negations with the Qing dynasty, based upon the meditation of Ulysses Grant in 1879, though the partition of the Ryukyus were not eventually carryout because of China’s its change of mind not to sign the agreement with Japan in. Another example is the incident of the skirmish between Chinese sailors and Japanese police officers and commoners in Nagasaki in 1885. For its details, see Yasuoka Akio, *Meiji shoki Nisshin kōshōshi kenkyū*, 143-191.
archipelago and also Japan proper from possible Western encroachment. The invasion of the aboriginal territories was not also intended to secure a bridgehead to the mainland.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined the Tokugawa bakufu’s and the Meiji government’s perceptions of its East Asian neighbors, China and Korea, and the making of foreign policy and have demonstrated two key points. First, one-sided “change” and “discontinuity” are not the only perspectives appropriate for understanding Japan’s perceptions of and policies toward its East Asian neighbors, from the early modern to the modern periods. Second, although change from the Tokugawa East Asian policy was present in the Meiji East Asian policy as noted repeatedly, the Japanese invasion of China, which many previous studies have seen as one of the changes of Japanese attitudes toward China soon after the Meiji Restoration, did not occur in the first decade of the Meiji period.

The Meiji Restoration brought Japan tremendous change and discontinuity with the Tokugawa past. The change and discontinuity were on one hand the products of Western impact. The Meiji government, replacing the Tokugawa bakufu in 1868, abandoned many of the traditional institutions and launched a series of educational, cultural, economic, military, political,
military, and social reforms, which profoundly changed Japan, by learning from the Western powers. Change and discontinuity were also present in the foreign policy of the new regime. It adopted Western-style diplomacy and international law and intended to apply Western-introduced treaty-based diplomatic relations to relationships with China and Korea. On the other hand, change and discontinuity can be seen in another way. The Meiji Restoration simultaneously attempted to restore parts of Japan’s past which predated the Tokugawa era. The new Meiji regime was founded on the ideology of the restoration of the imperial regime, which had fallen into the hands of warriors in the late twelfth century. As a result of the imperial restoration, the prerogatives of foreign policy were returned from the Tokugawa shogun to the emperor.

Yet, continuity was also present. Without recognizing the influence of continuities, it is difficult to comprehend aspects of Japan’s policy toward its neighbors. Despite the different political objectives and the different international settings in which the Tokugawa bakufu and the Meiji government were situated, and the political antagonism of the 1860s between the pro and anti-Tokugawa forces, the East Asian policies of the new and old regimes shared some common characteristics in their perceptions of China and Korea. Both regimes had the ideological and historical perceptions of Korea as an inferior to Japan and concluded that Japan should have a superior status to Korea in diplomatic relations. While adopting Western-style diplomacy, the Meiji government still tried to spell out Japan’s superior status with the traditional East Asian – Chinese and Japanese-created – diplomatic protocol which the bakufu had also followed. And
failing to achieve their ideal of establishing Japan’s superior status in actual diplomatic relations, both regimes could not but confront the discrepancy between their ideal and reality. Also, because of the ideological and religious perceptions of Japan and the historical perceptions of Japan’s consistent refusal to recognize China’s superiority except for few instances, unlike other Asian countries, the new and old regimes never considered placing Japan as an inferior constituent in the Chinese world order. Despite sharing similar ideological and religious perceptions of Japan’s superiority over China, neither the new nor the old regime ever attempted to give the perceptions entity in actual diplomatic relations with China.

Tokugawa Korea policy began following the death of the unifier of warring states Japan, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, in 1598. Tokugawa Ieyasu and the Tokugawa bakufu tried to restore peace with Korea, which Hideyoshi had invaded in the 1590s, by establishing diplomatic relations between his new unification regime and the Yi dynasty. This peace making was an opportunity for the new regime to claim the legitimacy of its rule by demonstrating its political and diplomatic capability. The bakufu therefore had to achieve peace with Korea by meeting two conditions. First, the bakufu needed to achieve a “victor’s peace,” although the Korea campaign had failed. In order to tame the warriors and preserve its dignity as a warrior regime, it was necessary for the bakufu to avoid humiliating the warriors who had participated in the abortive Korea campaign, and to salvage the warriors’ perception of Japan as a country of superior martial strength. Second, the bakufu also needed to satisfy the traditional Japanese perception of Korea as Japan’s subordinate or tributary, derived from the ancient Japanese myth and
understanding of the history of the relationship with Korea. What the bakufu required from the two conditions was to establish hierarchical relationship on the premise of Japan’s superior status, which would be represented by the shogun.

Tokugawa diplomatic relations with Korea were, however, practiced based upon an equal association between the Tokugawa shogun and the Korean king. Contrary to the Tokugawa ideal of Japan’s superior status over Korea, Korea had a conflicting vision that a restored Japanese-Korean relationship should be on an equal footing. Korea therefore requested that the shogun use the title, King of Japan and the Chinese era name, in communication with King of Korea. The Korean idea was based on the traditional diplomatic practice between Chinese tributaries. Having no intention to be a Chinese tributary and needing to meet the aforementioned two conditions, the bakufu rejected the Korean request but compromised its Korean vision as it failed to find a way to make its view prevail.

The bakufu’s compromise with equal Japanese-Korean relations did not mean its relinquishment of the contemptuous perception of Korea and the ideal of giving Japan a superior status. Despite Korea’s repeated requests, the bakufu adamantly continued to reject the shogun’s use of the title of king and the Chinese era name. The shogunal diplomatic title, Taikun, introduced in the mid-1630s, revealed that the ideal of the shogun’s representation of Japan’s superior status over Korea remained in the thinking of Tokugawa policymakers.

The reality of equal Japanese-Korean relations and the ideal coming out of the contemptuous perception and domestic political necessity created a discrepancy which the

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Tokugawa Korea policy had to live with. No matter what the bakufu imputed to the shogunal diplomatic title, *Taikun*, Japanese-Korean diplomatic relations continued to project parity between the two countries as the shogun and the Korean king continued to style each other with the honorific Highness. The bakufu itself was by no means ignorant of the discrepancy. Yet, the bakufu chose to allow the equal association between the shogun and the Korean king to remain intact rather than try to modify it. As long as the reality was hidden behind the image of Korea’s subordination to Tokugawa Japan rendered at home, maintaining diplomatic relations, sustained by the irregular visits of Korean embassies to Japan, would be a useful political tool for reinforcing the shogunal authority.

Meiji Korea policy began with the Meiji government’s approach to Korea to establish diplomatic relations soon after the imperial restoration in 1868. The policy was based on the new regime’s diplomatic principle of opening Japan to the world, denying the Tokugawa bakufu’s limited foreign contact called “sakoku.” The new regime was also concerned over Korea’s obstinate anti-foreign (Western) expulsion policy in terms of the security of its own country and intended to persuade the neighbor to open its door to the world. Adopting Western civilization, Meiji Japan intended to abolish the Tokugawa shogun’s association with the Korean king and to rearrange diplomatic relations with Korea by introducing a treaty-based relationship and emperor-king association.

Although the Meiji government overthrew and condemned the Tokugawa bakufu for causing Japan’s backwardness in relation to the West, its Korea policy revealed that it inherited
some elements of Tokugawa diplomacy toward Korea. The Meiji government’s adoption of Western-style diplomacy, as part of its effort to modernize and strengthen Japan for survival in the Western-dominated world, did not bring about its complete renunciation of traditional notions and ways of diplomacy. While aware that Western diplomatic principle stressed equality between nations, the Meiji government kept the traditional contemptuous perceptions of Korea, which the bakufu had also had. It sought to spell out Japan’s superior status in diplomatic relations using the traditional diplomatic protocol, though it was not the shogun but the emperor who would represent Japan’s superiority. When the imperial authority, which the new regime counted on, was derived from the ancient Japanese myth and understanding of ancient Japanese history, and when Korea was subordinated to and paid tribute to the imperial ancestors in the ancient memory, for the Meiji government, to achieve a superior status over Korea in the traditional way was a natural choice.

However, when its ideal, similar to the Tokugawa ideal, failed to be realized in actual diplomatic relations, the Meiji government was also forced to inherit the Tokugawa Korea policy. While the new Japanese regime sought to give its own country a superior status in diplomatic relations, Korea persisted in maintaining the traditional form of equal relations during the Tokugawa era. For Koreans, it was unacceptable to recognize Japan’s superior status and the emperor as the shogun’s replacement even as an equal communicator with their king. Failing to prevail over the Korean rejection of its demands, the Meiji government could not free itself completely from the Tokugawa legacy of parity with Korea. It thereby tried to settle the
prolonged negotiations with Korea by introducing the compromising formula of equal intergovernmental association, instead of direct association between the emperor and the king. The Kanghwa Treaty signed in 1876 after Japan’s victory in a minor military clash marked the beginning of modern Japanese-Korean diplomatic relations. The Western-style unequal treaty which gave Japan privileges such as extraterritoriality and unilateral access to the Korean market was, however, still a product of the Japanese compromise. Attempting to spell out Japan’s superiority with the traditional East Asian diplomatic protocol in their original treaty draft, the Japanese, faced with Korean resistance, put priority on concluding a treaty and gave up realizing their ideal. It was not until 1910 via formal annexation that Japan rid itself of the discrepancy between its perceptions and the ideal of the appropriate status relationship with Korea and the actual state of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Tokugawa China policy began almost in parallel with its Korean policy after Hideyoshi’s death for a similar purpose of restoring peace through establishing government-to-government relations and official trade relationships with Ming China. The self-claimed Middle Kingdom, Ming China required all countries which desired diplomatic and commercial relations to recognize its superior status and to participate in its tributary system. On the other hand, from the beginning, unlike other Asian countries such as Korea, the Tokugawa bakufu had no intention of paying tribute to China. Avoiding the role of a Chinese tributary was a reasonable choice for the bakufu, according to the traditional Japanese ideological self-perception as a divine country, Japan’s diplomatic perception of parity with China since the early seventh
century, and early seventeenth century Japan’s domestic political posture, which also influenced its Korea policy.

The absence of diplomatic relations with China throughout the early modern period was the result of the Tokugawa bakufu’s frustration in its rapprochement policy. The distrust and hostility caused by Hideyoshi’s invasion of Korea remained in the Chinese view of Japan even after the Tokugawa bakufu replaced the Toyotomi regime. In addition, the bakufu’s attitude toward the tributary system seemed to make Ming China refuse to accept repeated Japanese requests for restoring diplomatic and commercial relations. By the early 1620s, the bakufu had lost interest in making further efforts to establish official communication with Ming China, probably because it found that the trade with Portuguese and Dutch traders and the private Chinese merchants who came to Japan in violation of the Chinese maritime prohibition policy could be substitutes for establishing an official trade route with China.

While consistent in not participating in the Chinese tributary system from its very beginning, Tokugawa attitudes toward China remained ambiguous in terms of its understanding of the status relationship between the two countries. Tokugawa views were not so well formulated as to suggest a single concrete status relationship with China. Other than not choosing make the country a Chinese tributary, the bakufu never proposed to Ming China explicitly what kind of status relationship it intended to set up otherwise. The Ming dynasty collapsed, and Manchus became the new master of China in the mid-seventeenth century. While dynastic change from the Ming to the Manchu Qing reinforced the ideological claim of Japanese
superiority over China among some intellectuals, this sense of superiority over barbarian-conquered China did not eliminate the ambiguity. Although never thinking about renouncing the Ryukyus which had been under the Japanese ascendancy since Satsuma’s conquest in 1609, the bakufu chose to avoid antagonism with Qing China by tolerating the Manchus’ take over of the previous dynasty’s suzerainty over them. As a result, the Ryukyus remained in dual subordination to China and Japan. The compromise between the Japanese ideological perception of China and the actual policy toward China was also evident in the trade credential which the bakufu implemented in 1715. Tokugawa policymakers originally had a dream of making Chinese merchants accept a bakufu-issued trade credential to come to Port of Nagasaki. According to the precedent of the tally which Ming China issued to its tributaries as trade permissions, Chinese merchants’ acceptance of the Japanese credential would generate an impression that they submitted to Japan’s superior status. Tokugawa policymakers might have wanted to spell out their ideological perception a belief in Japan’s superiority over China. The actual trade credential, called, shinpai, was, however, reduced to taking a mere form of an engagement between Nagasaki interpreters of Chinese language and Chinese merchants so as to avoid causing trouble with Qing China.

It was not until 1871 that China and Japan reestablished a government-to-government relationship; as well as the early Meiji policy toward Korea, the Japanese attitude over the 1871 treaty also showed both continuity and novelty in Meiji Japan’s attitude toward China. The Meiji government’s introduction of treaty-based relationships to Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations
was an example of the change and marked the first case of the establishment of Western-style diplomatic relations between East Asian countries. It was also unprecedented, at least after the time of Prince Shotoku in the early seventh century, that Japan requested China to establish an equal relationship. However, the Japanese pursuit of parity with China was not because the Meiji government intended to introduce the Western notion of equality between nations to Sino-Japanese relations. It came out of the traditional diplomatic perception of Japan’s equality with China and attitude of refusing to recognize China’s superiority. Inheriting the ideological perception of Japan’s supremacy in the universe which depended on the myth of the sacred unbroken imperial lineage, as well as Tokugawa predecessors, the Meiji government also did not consider spelling out Japan’s superior status in its actual diplomatic relations with China.

Many Chinese, Japanese, and Taiwanese historians have argued that Japan started to invade China soon after the Meiji Restoration. Modern Sino-Japanese relations were indeed troublesome from the beginning. The Meiji government unilaterally annexed the Ryukyus, under Sino-Japanese dual subordination for more than two centuries, in 1872 and dispatched expeditionary forces to the Taiwanese aboriginal territories for the pretext of the massacre and maltreatment of shipwrecked Ryukyuans and Japanese mainlanders by the aboriginal tribes in 1873. Those actions disturbed the Sino-Japanese relations established slightly earlier.

The annexation of the Ryukyus and the expedition to the Taiwanese aboriginal territories actually reflected the Japanese concern over national security and prestige in the changing international environment, and in so doing, the Meiji government put Western-style
diplomacy and international law into practice. The annexation of the Ryukyus actually demonstrated both change and continuity in Japanese foreign policy. On the one hand, Meiji policymakers were the inheritors of the perception that the Ryukyus were virtually under the Japanese control. On the other hand, they tried to adjust the traditional claim on the Ryukyus to the reality of the late nineteenth century world by adopting the Western way. They expected that the demonstration of the Western notion of territorial sovereignty would not only secure the Ryukyus but also improve Japan’s international status in the Western-dominated world. Meiji policymakers also saw the expedition as an action necessary to demonstrate Japanese territorial sovereignty over the Ryukyus. They feared that China’s inattention to the repeated atrocities by the aboriginal tribes against shipwrecked foreigners and the questionable Chinese jurisdiction over the entire land of Taiwan might induce Western invasion and occupation of the aboriginal territories, which would pose a menace to Japan’s national security. In addition to the external apprehension, they saw the mounting discontentment, especially among the ex-warriors, whose hereditary privileges were stripped away by the new regime’s defuedalization policies, as another possible threat to national survival and needed an outlet for the domestic unrest.

Expansionist dreams toward China had been in the minds of some Japanese intellectual and political elites’ minds, concerned over Japan’s security vis-à-vis the increasing Western presence in East Asia, since the late Tokugawa period; the Meiji government shaped no policy for the purpose either of invading or of antagonizing China in its inceptive period. In other words, the Ryukyu-Taiwan policies by no means aimed at realizing the expansionist ambition
toward China. As mentioned above, the Ryukyu policy purposed not depriving the Chinese subordinate of China but securing Japan’s rule over the Ryukyus, which the Japanese had believed more substantial than Chinese ceremonial suzerainty, by obtaining international (Western) recognition. In order to avoid friction and maintain peace with China, it was not until confirming the absence of Chinese sovereignty in the aboriginal territories of Western objection to its plan that the Meiji government was determined to carry out the expedition.

The significance of this dissertation is in the following points. First, while previous studies have overwhelmingly focused on the aspect of change of the Meiji East Asian policy from the Tokugawa East Asian policy, it has demonstrated that change and continuity are necessary perspectives to understand the Japan’s policy toward its East Asian neighbors from the early modern period to the modern period. Second, the study, focusing on foreign policy, has also suggested that the two perspectives may be useful for studying other topics in Japanese history and especially indicated the necessity to observe Japanese history by removing the fence of the two separate fields of early modern and modern history. Furthermore, the two perspectives may be applicable to the history of the foreign relations of other countries, especially, which had similar experiences to Japan in the face of Western impact.

The second key point this dissertation has made also has made a kind of significance in the dispute over historical perception (rekishi ninshiki) between Japan and its neighbors. The argument in Chapter 5, challenging the popular interpretation of Japan’s turn to aggression on China in the early Meiji period, will create a stir in the highly politicized dispute. It is easy to
imagine that one might accuse me, a Japanese, of attempting to distort history. Yet, my objective is to rectify the fallacious picture made by the previous studies which have tended to put all the events between Japan and its East Asian neighbors in the modern period into the single category of “Japanese invasion”.

APPENDIX

GROSSARY

Biao (Hyō)  Letters used by monarchs who wanted to become or were the vassals of the Chinese emperor. Senders were required to style themselves the vassals of the Chinese emperor. Ming China had rejected letters from Ashikaga Yoshimitsu until it finally found one of his letters acceptable in 1401. In the series of Japanese letters addressed to Ming China in the early seventeenth century, the Tokugawa rulers never styled themselves Chinese vassals.

Kangō bōeki  The tally trade which Ming China introduced to its trade with tributaries. In the case of the tally trade between Ming China and Ashikaga Japan, every time a new emperor ascended to the throne, the Ming dynasty granted the Ashikaga bakufu one hundred pieces of tally. Only Japanese vessels which had the tally were allowed to come into and trade in China.

Kin’in  Literally, “golden seal”. According to the Chinese diplomatic tradition, the Chinese emperor granted the seal, as well as the court robe and so on, to foreign monarchs whom he recognized as his vassals.
Kokuō  The king of a state. In the Chinese tributary system, it (c. *guowang*) was deemed an emperor and was granted to foreign monarchs whom the Chinese emperor (c. *huangdi*) recognized as his vassals. In Japan, on the other hand, there was the notion that *kokokō* and *tennō* (the Japanese emperor) were synonymous.

Kokusho  The diplomatic letter which a monarch sent to a foreign monarch for such purposes as establishing and maintaining diplomatic relations. In the case of Japan, since the Ashikaga bakufu seized diplomatic prerogatives, successive warrior rulers had sent this kind of letter to foreign monarchs, although they had simultaneously continued to be the subjects of the Japanese emperor at home.

Kōken  Credential issued by the government. In the early eighteenth century, the Tokugawa bakufu considered introducing an official credential issued to Chinese merchants for the purpose of restricting the number of Chinese vessels arriving at the Port of Nagasaki. If the bakufu had put the idea into practice, it would have meant that the bakufu officially proclaimed that they treated the Chinese merchants as inferior foreigners who submitted to the bakufu and Japan. Afraid that *köken* would possibly cause a conflict with China, the bakufu did not, however, instead introduced shinpai.

Shinpai  The trade credential which the bakufu began to issue to the Chinese merchants who visited the Port of Nagasaki in 1715. However, since the bakufu wanted to avoid conflict with China, it took the form of being issued not by the bakufu but by the translators of Chinese employed by the bakufu at Nagasaki for
the Chinese merchants. The bakufu allowed only those Chinese merchants who possessed the credential to come to Japan.

Shuinsen The trade vessels which traveled overseas with a passport issued by the Tokugawa rulers. In the passport, there was the Tokugawa rulers’ red ink (*shuin*).

Taikun The Tokugawa shogun’s diplomatic title which the bakufu began to use in 1635 in its diplomatic relations with Korea.
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