

MEIJI JAPAN THROUGH CONTEMPORARY SOURCES

Notwithstanding what we have stated, our Lord in no wise fails in respect towards Your Excellencies' Sovereign, but on the contrary deeply appreciates, his sincere loyalty. Hence we his officials make this announcement. We may have inadequately expressed our Lord's real purpose, but we trust Your Excellencies will understand it.

2nd year of Koka, the year of Wood-Serpent, 6th month, 1st day.

(Signed) The *Roku* of Japan:

Abe Ise-no-kami Masahiro.

Makino Bizen-no-kami Tadamasa.

Aoyama Shimotsuke-no-kami Tadanaga.

Toda Yamashiro-no-kami Tadaatsu.

Translated from the Japanese Language in
Greene: "Correspondence," 121-123.

II

COMING OF THE AMERICAN
FLEET, 1853-1854

1. *Coming of the Black Ship*

**A. Letter of Millard Fillmore, President of the
United States of America, to His Imperial Majesty,
the Emperor of Japan,* November 13, 1852.**

GREAT and Good Friend: I send you this public letter by Commodore Matthew C. Perry, an officer of the highest rank in the navy of the United States, and commander of the squadron now visiting your imperial majesty's dominions.

I have directed Commodore Perry to assure your imperial majesty that I entertain the kindest feelings towards your majesty's person and government, and that I have no other object in sending him to Japan but to propose to your imperial majesty that the United States and Japan should live in friendship and have commercial intercourse with each other.

The Constitution and laws of the United States forbid all interference with the religious or political concerns of other nations. I have particularly charged Commodore Perry to abstain from every act which could possibly disturb the tranquility of your imperial majesty's dominions.

* In fact it was addressed to the *Shogun*.

MEIJI JAPAN THROUGH CONTEMPORARY SOURCES

The United States of America reach from ocean to ocean, and our Territory of Oregon and State of California lie directly opposite to the dominions of your imperial majesty. Our steamships can go from California to Japan in eighteen days.

Our great State of California produces about sixty millions of dollars in gold every year, besides silver, quicksilver, precious stones, and many other valuable articles. Japan is also a rich and fertile country, and produces many very valuable articles. Your imperial majesty's subjects are skilled in many of the arts. I am desirous that our two countries should trade with each other, for the benefit both of Japan and the United States.

We know that the ancient laws of your imperial majesty's government do not allow of foreign trade, except with the Chinese and the Dutch; but as the state of the world changes and new governments are formed, it seems to be wise, from time to time, to make new laws. There was a time when the ancient laws of your imperial majesty's government were first made.

About the same time America, which is sometimes called the New World, was first discovered and settled by the Europeans. For a long time there were but a few people, and they were poor. They have now become quite numerous; their commerce is very extensive; and they think that if your imperial majesty were so far to change the ancient laws as to allow a free trade between the two countries it would be extremely beneficial to both.

If your imperial majesty is not satisfied that it would be safe altogether to abrogate the ancient laws which forbid foreign trade, they might be suspended for five or ten years, so as to try the experiment. If it does not prove as beneficial

COMING OF THE AMERICAN FLEET

as was hoped, the ancient laws can be restored. The United States often limit their treaties with foreign states to a few years, and then renew them or not, as they please.

I have directed Commodore Perry to mention another thing to your imperial majesty. Many of our ships pass every year from California to China; and great numbers of our people pursue the whale fishery near the shores of Japan. It sometimes happens, in stormy weather, that one of our ships is wrecked on your imperial majesty's shores. In all such cases we ask, and expect, that our unfortunate people should be treated with kindness, and that their property should be protected, till we can send a vessel and bring them away. We are very much in earnest in this.

Commodore Perry is also directed by me to represent to your imperial majesty that we understand there is a great abundance of coal and provisions in the Empire of Japan. Our steamships, in crossing the great ocean, burn a great deal of coal, and it is not convenient to bring it all the way from America. We wish that our steamships and other vessels should be allowed to stop in Japan and supply themselves with coal, provisions, and water. They will pay for them in money, or anything else your imperial majesty's subjects may prefer; and we request your imperial majesty to appoint a convenient port, in the southern part of the empire, where our vessels may stop for this purpose. We are very desirous of this.

These are the only objects for which I have sent Commodore Perry, with a powerful squadron, to pay a visit to your imperial majesty's renowned city of Edo: friendship, commerce, a supply of coal and provisions, and protection for our shipwrecked people.

We have directed Commodore Perry to beg your imperial

MEIJI JAPAN THROUGH CONTEMPORARY SOURCES

majesty's acceptance of a few presents. They are of no great value in themselves; but some of them may serve as specimens of the articles manufactured in the United States, and they are intended as tokens of our sincere and respectful friendship.

May the Almighty have your imperial majesty in His great and holy keeping!

In witness whereof, I have caused the great seal of the United States to be hereunto affixed, and have subscribed the same with my name, at the city of Washington, in America, the seat of my government, on the thirteenth day of the month of November, in the year one thousand eight hundred and fifty-two.

[Seal attached.]

Your good friend,

Millard Fillmore.

By the President:

Edward Everett, Secretary of State.

Hawks: *Narrative*, I, 256-257.

**B. Letter of Commodore Perry to the Emperor,
July 7, 1853.**

*United States Steam Frigate Susquehanna,
Off the Coast of Japan.*

THE undersigned, commander-in-chief of all the naval forces of the United States of America stationed in the East India, China and Japan seas, has been sent by his government of this country, on a friendly mission, with ample powers to negotiate with the government of Japan, touching certain matters which have been fully set forth in the letter

COMING OF THE AMERICAN FLEET

of the President of the United States, copies of which, together with copies of the letter of credence of the undersigned, in the English, Dutch, and Chinese languages, are herewith transmitted.

The original of the President's letter, and of the letter of credence, prepared in a manner suited to the exalted station of your imperial majesty, will be presented by the undersigned in person, when it may please your majesty to appoint a day for his reception.

The undersigned has been commanded to state that the President entertains the most friendly feelings towards Japan, but has been surprised and grieved to learn that when any of the people of the United States go, of their own accord, or are thrown by the perils of the sea, within the dominations of your imperial majesty, they are treated as if they were your worst enemies.

The undersigned refers to the cases of the American ships *Morrison*, *Lagoda*, and *Lawrence*.

With the Americans, as indeed with all Christian people, it is considered a sacred duty to receive with kindness, and to succour and protect all, of whatever nation, who may be cast upon their shores, and such has been the course of the Americans with respect to all Japanese subjects who have fallen under their protection.

The government of the United States desires to obtain from that of Japan some positive assurance that persons who may hereafter be shipwrecked on the coast of Japan, or driven by stress of weather into her ports, shall be treated with humanity.

The undersigned is commanded to explain to the Japanese that the United States are connected with no government in Europe, and that their laws do not interfere with the

MEIJI JAPAN THROUGH CONTEMPORARY SOURCES

religion of their own citizens, much less with that of other nations.

That they inhabit a great country which lies directly between Japan and Europe, and which was discovered by the nations of Europe about the same time that Japan herself was first visited by Europeans; that the portion of the American continent lying nearest to Europe was first settled by emigrants from that part of the world; that its population has rapidly spread through the country, until it has reached the shores of the Pacific Ocean; that we have now large cities, from which, with the aid of steamvessels, we can reach Japan in eighteen or twenty days; that our commerce with all this region of the globe is rapidly increasing, and the Japan seas will soon be covered with our vessels.

Therefore, as the United States and Japan are becoming every day nearer and nearer to each other, the President desires to live in peace and friendship with your imperial majesty, but no friendship can long exist, unless Japan ceases to act towards Americans as if they were her enemies.

However wise this policy may originally have been, it is unwise and impracticable now that the intercourse between the two countries is so much more easy and rapid than it formerly was.

The undersigned holds out all these arguments in the hope that the Japanese government will see the necessity of averting unfriendly collision between the two nations, by responding favourably to the propositions of amity, which are now made in all sincerity.

Many of the large ships-of-war destined to visit Japan have not yet arrived in these seas, though they are hourly expected; and the undersigned, as an evidence of his friendly intentions, has brought but four of the smaller ones, de-

COMING OF THE AMERICAN FLEET

signing, should it become necessary, to return to Edo in the ensuing spring with a much larger force.

But it is expected that the government of your imperial majesty will render such return unnecessary, by acceding at once to the very reasonable and pacific overtures contained in the President's letter, and which will be further explained by the undersigned on the first fitting occasion.

With the most profound respect for your imperial majesty, and entertaining a sincere hope that you may long live to enjoy health and happiness, the undersigned subscribes himself,

M. C. Perry,

*Commander-in-chief of the United States Naval Forces
in the East India, China, and Japan seas.*

To His Imperial Majesty,
the Emperor of Japan.

Hawks: *Narrative*, I, 258-259.

C. Perry's Letter in Connection with the Delivery of a White Flag, [July 14,] 1853.

For years several countries have applied for trade, but you have opposed them on account of a national law. You have thus acted against divine principles and your sin cannot be greater than it is. What we say thus does not necessarily mean, as has already been communicated by the Dutch boat, that we expect mutual trade by all means. If you are still to disagree we would then take up arms and inquire into the sin against the divine principles, and you would also make sure of your law and fight in defence. When one considers such an occasion, however, one will realize the

victory will naturally be ours and you shall by no means overcome us. If in such a situation you seek for a reconciliation, you should put up the white flag that we have recently presented to you, and we would accordingly stop firing and conclude peace with you, turning our battleships aside.

Translated by Masatoshi Konishi.

2. *Debates on the Opening of the Country*

D. *Enquiry from the Bakufu to the Officials and the Daimyo Concerning the Countermeasure for America, August 5, 1853.*

Two copies of translations of letters delivered by the American ship which came to Uraga recently have now reached us. As regards trade, we have our own customs so far and it cannot be decided easily whether or not to permit it. Since this is at present our nation's most important problem, you are requested to read the contents of the above letters most carefully and minutely, and to consider critically the advantages and disadvantages for our nation, while also being fully mindful of future situations. Even what may incur the displeasure [of the *Shogun*] will be excused, and each of you is therefore to fully and unreservedly report your plans and ideas.

Our accepting these letters delivered by the American ship in Uraga is just a political expedient, therefore all should disregard that fact and speak their minds openly.

Translated by Masatoshi Konishi.

E. *Humble Propositions as Regards Maritime Defence, by Tokugawa Nariaki, Lord of the Mito Clan, to Abe Masahiro, Councillor of the Bakufu, August 7, 1853.*

That I believe it is urgently necessary that once the Bakufu determines upon a policy of either peace or war, it should never be changed:

To discuss the advantages and disadvantages of war or of concluding peace: should the former become the main policy, a martial spirit will arise all over the country, and, even were we to be defeated for a while, we would finally expel the foreign brigands; [on the other hand,] should peace become the main policy instead, it may [no doubt] be for a while, but people throughout the country would become demoralized and this may later lead to the downfall of the country. Since the above has been clearly proved in Chinese history, and many men of intelligence, ancient and modern, have argued the point with certainty, I would here also like to discuss the problem, but in a rough outline, without going into details. Hence, there follow ten arguments to show that peace [with the foreign countries] is by no means desirable.

Now, the Divine Country is [certainly] not very large and wide, but as regards the policy against foreign barbarians, Empress Jingu subjugated the three Korean countries in ancient times, while during the Koan Period [1274-81] in the mediaeval times the Mongolian army was defeated, during the Bunroku Period [1592-98] in the modern times Korea was subjugated, and during the Periods of Keicho and Kan'ei [1596-1643] Christians were uprooted—thus the most appropriate decisions and glorious crusades [of