

The London School of Economics and Political Science

Balance of Favour: The emergence of territorial boundaries around Japan, 1861-1875

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Declaration

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Abstract

The existing scholarship has typically explained the emergence of modern Japan as a territorial sovereign in the late-nineteenth century to be a result of its response to Western imperialism, which paved the way for it to build its own empire. Scholars have found Japan's motivation for drawing territorial boundaries either in the pursuit of the maintenance of independence or its entry into the international society. However their narratives do not fully explain why the process led to the establishment of Japan's sovereignty over border zones with ambiguous territorial status, such as the Kuril Islands and the Ryukyu Kingdom. Approaching the question by investigating local developments, this thesis presents a twofold explanation for the emergence of territorial boundaries around Japan: that the rise of sovereignty had origins in the long-term decline of the border zones' political institutions; and that Japan's expansion into these zones was enabled by a diplomatic equilibrium (which the thesis calls the balance of favour) among the Western powers. The rise of trans-Pacific commercial activities, the decline of tributary trade in East Asia, and Russia's strategic shift to the Far East prompted fundamental changes in the political landscape for the border zones. The Western imperialists in the 1860s and the 1870s saw it as best that Japan control these areas, because one imperial power's territorial gain would have unleashed a scramble that none of them saw as worth fighting.

The above argument provides an alternative to the conventional Japan-centred narratives of interactions between Western imperialism and the East Asians. It also adds to the historical study of the border zones by providing a comparative analysis and connecting them with a broader context. It thus bridges the historiographical gap between the diplomatic history of bakumatsu and Meiji Japan and the local histories around the archipelago.

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List of Abbreviations

ACC	Alaska Commercial Company
AH	Archives of Hokkaido, Sapporo, Japan
BDFA	<i>British Documents on Foreign Affairs</i>
BGKM	<i>Bakumatsu Gaikoku Kankei Monjo</i>
CJ	<i>Chōsen Jimusho</i>
DAJP	The Diplomatic Archives of Japan, Tokyo, Japan
DNGM	<i>Dai Nihon Gaikō Monjo</i>
ETKM	Enomoto Takeaki Kankei Monjo
FRUS	<i>Foreign Relations of the United States</i>
GTKM	Godai Tomoatsu Kankei Monjo
HKC	Hutchinson, Kohl and Company
HULNSC	Hokkaido University Library Northern Studies Collection
HYKM	Hanabusa Yoshimoto Kankei Monjo
IHAA	Archive of Imperial Household Agency (Kunai Kōbunshokan), Tokyo, Japan
ISK	<i>Ishin Shiryo Kōyō</i>
ITKM	Iwakura Tomomi Kankei Monjo
KCKJ	<i>Karafuto Chishima Kōkan Jijō</i>
KKKM	Kuroda Kiyotaka Kankei Monjo
MFN	Most-favoured nations
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan)
NMHC	Nagasaki Museum of History and Culture, Nagasaki, Japan
NAJP	The National Archives, Tokyo, Japan
NDL	National Diet Library (Kensei Shiryōshitsu), Tokyo, Japan
NMM	National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, United Kingdom

OK	<i>Ogasawaratō Kiji</i>
OSM	Ōkuma Shigenobu Monjo
OY	<i>Ogasawaratō Yōroku</i>
PCL	Pusan Citizen's Library, Pusan, South Korea
RAC	Russian American Company
RGS	Royal Geographical Society, London, United Kingdom
TMKM	Terashima Munenori Kankei Monjo
TNA	The National Archive, Kew, United Kingdom
UKKM	Ueno Kagenori Kankei Monjo
UTHI	Historiographical Institute, The University of Tokyo
WUL	Waseda University Library, Tokyo, Japan
ZTZ	<i>Zoku Tsūshin Zenran</i>

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Notes on conventions

In this dissertation, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese names are written with Family names first, except when they appear as a part of reference to an English publication. Japanese long vowels are expressed with macrons (ū and ö), except for Tokyo, Osaka, Hokkaido, Kyushu and Ryukyu, which may be already familiar to readers without macrons.

All dates, unless noted otherwise, are given in the Gregorian calendar.

Introduction

On 7 April 2015, the headlines of the Japanese media were dominated by the latest outcome of textbook screening by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, which convened for the first time in four years to approve or ask for modifications of various Japanese publishers' textbooks to be used in public schools across the country. With regards to history textbooks, the observers' attention was fixed on one conspicuous change - the increased reference to the 'clearly stated' governmental view on Japan's territorial disputes with China and South Korea. The new textbooks, many of which 'nearly doubled' the length of the relevant sections, came closely to follow the latest government guidelines adopted in January. The local English-language newspaper *Japan Times* reported that some versions of the approved textbooks gave 'detailed information about the disputed islands, including their precise location, the history of Japan's administration and what kinds of fish can be caught in waters nearby'.¹

Polemics on territorial disputes in East Asian waters have a long and complicated history. They have attracted attention from many historians and political scientists, while each contending government shows no signs of yielding its claims to its territorial sovereignty.² The debate is not limited to academia or officialdom. Journalists, amateur historians, and activists of all stripes have gone back to historical records in an attempt to vindicate their view that the piece of land in question has always been theirs (or, on rare occasions, someone else's).³ Some scholars have gone into the minutest details of the wording of the relevant

¹ 'History in Japan's textbooks gets government makeover', *Japan Times* 7 April 2015. Accessed at www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/04/07/national/history-in-japans-textbooks-gets-government-makeover/ on 8 April 2015.

² Alexander Bukh has examined the ideologies behind Japan's foreign policy through the study of the Russo-Japanese dispute over the southern Kuril Islands. Bukh, 'Constructing Japan's "Northern Territories": Domestic Actors, Interests, and the Symbolism of the Disputed Islands', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 12:3 (2012), 483-509.

³ One example is a newspaper story reporting the discovery of a historical map that allegedly shows the status of an island. 'Shimane confirms 1760s maps showing Takeshima as part of Japan,' *Japan Times*, 1 August 2013. Accessed at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/01/national/shimane-confirms-1760s-maps-showing-takeshima-as-part-of-japan/> on 8 April 2015.

international treaty clauses in order to 'disentangle' the origins of the territorial disputes.⁴

What is striking about the plethora of studies on the territorial disputes in East Asia is the degree to which the concept of territorial sovereignty has taken root in the discourse of the researchers and the readers alike. The principle that every piece of land has to belong to not more or less than one government that exercises sovereignty is entrenched in the people's worldview today.

This has led some observers to retrospectively apply the principle of territorial sovereignty to historical texts. They see territorial sovereignty as the norm from time immortal. This is far from the truth. Historians of modern Japan generally note that territorial sovereignty began to take root around the Japanese archipelago only in the late-nineteenth century.⁵ This was marked by a series of agreements and declarations made in the 1870s, such as the Treaty of St. Petersburg; Japan's declaration of sovereignty over the Bonin Islands; and annexation of the Ryukyu kingdom, that clarified the territorial ownership of each borderland area.

Prior to this period, the areas around Japan were places where the mode of political control was different from the modern state and its principle of territorial sovereignty. In the parlance of Ronald Toby, they were 'border zones', where no clear boundaries existed and 'Japan' gradually faded away, while others' rule became thicker.⁶ The border zones were not only distinct political entities in their own right, but also comprised indispensable elements within the complex regional political structure of the north-western Pacific and facilitated interactions between states, empires and kingdoms – for example, Tokugawa Japan kept in contact with Korea through Tsushima. The border zones were political, military, and

⁴ Hiroshi Kimura, *The Kurillian knot: A history of Japanese-Russian border negotiations*. Stanford University Press, 2008.

⁵ See, for instance, Kawashima Shin, 'Higashi Ajia sekai no kindai', in Wada Haruki et al (eds.), *Higashi Ajia Kingendai Tsūshi vol.1 Higashi Ajia Sekai no Kindai 19 Seiki* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2010), 36-7.

⁶ Ronald Toby, 'Henbō suru "sakoku" gainen', in Nagatsumi Yōko (ed.), *Sakoku Wo Minaosu* (Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Koryū Suisin Kyōkai, 1999), 216.

intellectual buffers that prevented collision between the larger states by facilitating commercial and cultural interactions.⁷

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the rise of the principle of territorial sovereignty in East Asia and the incorporation of these border zones into the state of Japan in the late-nineteenth century. It attempts to show how the conditions for this transformation were created by local developments in each border zone, and how these then influenced multilateral negotiations. In doing so, it highlights the role played by border station officers; provincial rulers trying to safeguard their polities; and non-state actors who traversed the area without minding who exercised territorial sovereignty. Ultimately it is concerned with the complex interaction between state-level diplomacy and local-level contingencies.

Historiography

In the late-nineteenth century the political structure around the Japanese archipelago underwent a drastic change. A typical explanation is that the expansion of the sovereign state system, originating in Western Europe, induced political change in the Japanese state.⁸ Although there is no question that Tokugawa Japan faced domestic challenges, the argument made is that the particular way in which modern statehood emerged in the last third of the nineteenth century was contingent on the external threat. As Daniel Botsman has written, ‘modernity in Japan was ultimately *not* homegrown and must be understood, at least in the first instance, as a product of the mid-nineteenth-century encounter with Western imperialism’.⁹ If we accept that the encounter with the West was vital for the birth of modern Japan, we can move on to the next, more specific question: how did the transition from a

⁷ Kawashima Shin and Hattori Ryūji (ed.), *Higashi Ajia Kokusai Kankeishi* (Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2007), 6.

⁸ Gerrit W. Gong, *The Standard of “Civilization” in International Society* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Shogo Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire: China and Japan’s encounter with European international society* (London: Routledge, 2009).

⁹ Daniel Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 9. Original emphasis.

patchwork of border zones to a territorial sovereign state take place around the Japanese archipelago, and what was the role played by Western imperialism in that process?

Even though many diplomatic historians – as will be seen below – have dealt with the various boundary negotiations around the Japanese archipelago or mentioned them in passing, few have taken up the question directly. One rare exception is Bruce Batten whose book covers the subject of Japan’s borders from antiquity to the present. He is concerned primarily with where the limit of Japanese power can be found over time, and does not develop any observations based on primary sources. He concludes that Japan had political and cultural boundaries that were divergent but evolved in tandem, but he does not fully explain why that was the case. Moreover, his discussion specifically on the territorial frontier dwells more on the pre-modern rather than modern borders. He acknowledges that he is more interested in what the border tells us about Japan than the border itself, and thus his study is ‘unapologetically centered in Japan’.¹⁰ All that makes Batten’s work unique, but it does not directly address the issue of Japan’s border as a phenomenon in international history. Aside from Batten’s monograph, a book chapter by Fumoto Shinichi and an article by Nagashima Shunsuke, historians have not provided a comprehensive picture of the emergence of borders around Japan in the late-nineteenth century.¹¹

Thus we need to turn to a wider historiography on the beginning of the modern Japanese state. This can be categorised into two historiographical contexts: metropole and periphery. The discussion below presents the two contexts and their limitations. Then the contribution of this thesis is explained as bridging the gap between the two, thereby pushing the historiography one step further.

Metropole historiography: Japan’s encounter with the West

¹⁰ Bruce Batten, *To the Ends of Japan: Premodern Frontiers, Boundaries, and Interactions* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2003), 11.

¹¹ See Fumoto, ‘Kakutei sareru kokkyō’. Nagashima Shunsuke has rightly argued that ‘contradictions of the boundaries of the island nation that is Japan have appeared above all as the question of islands’, but his following accounts go no further than the regurgitation of conventional historiography. See Nagashima Shunsuke, ‘Tōsho to kyōkai: Nihon kokkyō keiseishi shiron’, *Kokusai Seiji* 162 (December 2010), 114-129, here 114.

The orthodox narrative has focused on the contacts between the Western heads of states and the Tokugawa shogunate and later the Meiji government, and how the issue of boundary has been discussed in their diplomatic communication. Some say that the Russian approach from the early-nineteenth century paved the way, while others find the turning point in a more general context of Japan's signing of treaty with Matthew Perry of the United States in 1854.¹² Either way, the existing studies commonly note that the Japanese in the mid-nineteenth century felt that the future of their country had been thrown into question, due to the fact that they were faced with imperialist powers far superior to Japan both in military and economic terms. One of the measures the Japanese leaders took in the 1860s and the 1870s to ensure the nation's survival was to clarify the borders in the areas in which no single territorial sovereign was specified.

Thus far their account seems straightforward. Yet their interpretations on the way in which the Japanese tried to set the borders need close scrutiny. Why did the Japanese set the boundary in such a way that included the border zones (barring Sakhalin, which it lost to Russia)? If establishing a boundary in itself was sufficient for ensuring independence, Japan could have simply defined its territory with what was under the Tokugawa's authority with no ambiguity: the three islands of Honshū, Shikoku and Kyushu and adjoining islets. Why did it want to include Ezo, Tsushima, Ryukyu, Sakhalin, the Kuriles, eastern Taiwan, and the Bonins? How did a weaker state in the face of imperialist powers end up expanding its realm?

Several explanations have been offered. Ishii Takashi, in his pioneering work on Japanese diplomacy from bakumatsu to the Meiji Restoration, argued that Japan's fall into a semi-colonial status was aborted because of the British foreign policy of the time.¹³ Since then historians' focus has moved on to analysis of Japan's motivations. One recurring argument is that it adapted a preemptive defence policy. Kim Key-Hiuk argued that by the

¹² For those emphasising the Russian advance, see George Lensen, *The Russian Push toward Japan: Russo-Japanese Relations, 1697-1875* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959); Marius B Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000); Katō Yūzō, *Kurohune Zengo no Sekai* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1985).

¹³ Ishii Takashi, *Meiji Ishin No Kokusaiteki Kankyo* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1957), 25-6.

mid-nineteenth century Japan developed ‘nascent expansionism’ as a result of this fear of ‘an aggressive West’ in East Asia. With regards to Korea, Kim suggested that even before the Meiji Restoration the Japanese leading policymakers saw it imperative to ‘establish influence in or control over the [Korean] peninsula’ in order to prevent a Western power from seizing it.¹⁴ As for the 1879 annexation of the Ryukyu Kingdom, Kim, Richard Sims, and others have likewise claimed that Tokyo feared foreign occupation unless they acted first.¹⁵ On Tsushima, Michael Auslin has noted that, although the British and the American negotiators in Japan in the 1850s had made clear that they had no territorial ambitions, Japan’s response to the Russians during the Tsushima Incident in 1861 was to ‘play foreigners off against each other wherever feasible’ and preserve the physical boundary that encompassed the border zones. His interpretation differs from the earlier scholarship such as Kim in that he acknowledges that Japan worked with Britain to face Russia, thereby complicating the West-Japan dichotomy.¹⁶

Others have argued that it was a matter of Japan’s national pride. Peter Duus has claimed that Japanese expansion in this period was a manifestation of the Meiji government’s aspiration for the restoration of national honour.¹⁷ Akira Iriye similarly has pointed out that preserving control over the islands where they already had had some influence was necessary because the failure to do so ‘would imply a retreat and damage the new regime’s domestic and external prestige’.¹⁸ Arano Yasunori concurs by emphasising the slogan ‘facing up to the world (*bankoku taiji*)’ that appeared as an important goal of the new regime.¹⁹ The implication was that the government needed to redress the inequality in the treaties to bring Japan back to its proper place in the world. This was a necessary rhetoric for the nascent

¹⁴ Kim, *The Last Phase*, 78, 97.

¹⁵ Kim, *The Last Phase*, 280; Oguma Eiji, ‘*Nihonjin’ no Kyōkai: Okinawa, Ainu, Taiwan, Chōsen: Shokuminchi Shihai kara Fukki Made* (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1998), 20-27; Richard Sims, *Japanese Political History since the Meiji Renovation, 1868-2000* (London: Hurst and Company, 2001), 40; Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*, 154.

¹⁶ Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, 29-32, 81.

¹⁷ Peter Duus, *Modern Japan* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 134-6.

¹⁸ Akira Iriye, ‘Japan’s drive to great-power status’, in Marius Jansen (ed.), *Cambridge History of Japan vol. 5 the nineteenth-century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008 [1989]), 740.

¹⁹ See, for instance, Arano Yasunori, Ishii Masatoshi, Murai Shosuke (eds.), *Nippon No Taigai Kansei vol.7 Kindaika Suru Nippon* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 2012), 27.

imperial government to employ with a view to legitimising its rule.²⁰ Overall these scholars have taken a *realpolitik*-based approach. Japan's policy was driven primarily by the security imperative – the survival of the country – due to the increasing presence of the Western imperialists in the region (even though some room for cooperation existed).

The other major cluster of research within the metropole historiography is inspired by theorists in the field of international relations who have pointed to the function of international society.²¹ Scholars in this school assume the prior existence of a 'European International Society' within which member nations share certain norms on their behaviour, and that this society expanded into East Asia in the nineteenth century. During that process, one of the justifications employed by the imperialists for the subjugation and exploitation of non-European peoples was the idea that they, the Western society, represented a higher form of living called 'civilisation' and that the others, the 'backward' societies, would only benefit from being placed under their rule and tutelage.²² In that way the latter would advance towards civilisation. Japanese contemporary political leaders, as they began interactions with imperialist powers, bought into this perspective.

The tone of the narrative is one of learning and adaptation, rather than fear or competition. For instance, Suganami Hidemi has noted that Japan, although initially 'an unwilling pupil', quickly came to accept the precepts of Western diplomacy and that by the time the Iwakura Mission left Japan in 1871, it was 'engaged in an earnest endeavour to adopt the behaviour appropriate to the western-dominated international society in order to be

²⁰ Mitani Hiroshi, '19 seiki ni okeru higashi Ajia kokusai chitsujo no tenkan: jōyaku taiseiwo "hubyōdō" to kukurunowa tekisetsuka', *Higashi Ajia Kindaishi* 13 (March 2010), 1-11.

²¹ A representative work that explores the connection between this theory primarily concerned with Europe and the cases from the rest of the world is Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds.), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

²² This rhetoric was later crystallised in the General Act of the Berlin Conference of 1884-5, which stated the participating sovereign states would 'care for the improvement of the conditions of their [i.e. the Congolese peoples'] moral and material well-being'. Antony Anghie has noted that the attendants to the conference referred to the civilising mission as a justification of their imperial expansion and believed that establishing free trade would ensure the elimination of the slave trade. Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 90-7. Quoted from p.97.

accepted as one of its full members.²³ In a similar vein, Mark Ravina has argued that because the international system required Japan to be a polity similar to the others in the system, its interactions with the Europeans and the Americans led it to reform its institutions to replicate those of its counterparts.²⁴

This narrative works well in explaining the ideological continuation of the Japan-centred worldview in the Tokugawa period and the hierarchical understanding of the nations according to their civilisational advance. Especially after the Meiji Restoration, Japanese political elites and the former samurai class arrived at a view that their role in the world was to turn Japan into a civilised nation and to lead other Asian nations in that direction. The way to do this was, as Shogo Suzuki has described, to behave towards the neighbouring polities as the European powers did towards Japan.²⁵ In short, the self-image acquired as the result of the encounter with the concept of civilisation affected the Japanese attitude towards the neighbouring polities.

The resultant belief in a hierarchical relationship between the Westerners, the Japanese, and the Asian neighbours based on a scale of civilisation is presented today, in terms of the theory of international relations, as Japan's entry into the international society.²⁶ As Tessa Morris-Suzuki has pointed out, the perception developed by Meiji Japan in regard to the regional political order mirrored the Tokugawa shogunate's construction of a Japan-centred worldview.²⁷ In the early Meiji period, Japanese nationalists did not have to abandon their pre-Restoration view of the regional order in which Japan was the dominant centre. All they had to do was to adopt a set of new lexical embellishments such as 'civilisation (*bunmei*)', 'opening (*kaika*)', and 'nurturing (*buiku*)' and apply them to Japan's approach to

²³ Suganami, 'Japan's Entry into the International Society', in Bull and Watson (eds.), *The Expansion of International Society*, 185-200. Here p.192.

²⁴ Mark Ravina, 'State-Making in Global Context: Japan in a World of Nation-States', in Joshua Fogel (ed.), *The Teleology of the Modern Nation-State: Japan and China* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 87-104.

²⁵ Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*.

²⁶ Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*; Gerrit W. Gong, *The Standard of "Civilization" in International Society* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Suganami, 'Japan's Entry into the International Society'.

²⁷ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 24-5.

the neighbouring polities. Morris-Suzuki has argued that Japan's incorporation of the border zones took place through assimilation policies towards the Ainu and the Ryukyuans, in 'an attempt to blend the societies of the periphery into the official image of a unified and centralized nation'.²⁸ By arguing so, she places an emphasis on nation-building as a critical motivation for the Japanese incorporation of the border zones.

Although there is a great deal to be learnt from these two main strands of existing scholarship, there is a shortcoming. Beneath most historical accounts on this subject lies the assumption of a clear Japan-West dichotomy. There has been some recognition of the differences in motivations held by Britain, the United States, and Russia, and on the fact that Japan occasionally worked with one or more Western powers to achieve its policy goal. Yet the way in which this multilateral structure affected diplomatic relations among the countries concerned remains obscure. For example, discussion of Anglo-Russian rivalry has appeared in considerations of Sakhalin and the Tsushima Incident, but has not become part of the larger narrative. Moreover, the majority of accounts regard the border zones as merely the victims of Japanese agency, without paying sufficient attention to the endogenous factors.

Thus both the traditional diplomatic historians and the advocates of 'Japan's entry into the international society' thesis fall into the same trap – namely, taking the existence of a distinct territorial state called Japan for granted. The reality is that it was in no way guaranteed that Japan would survive the nineteenth century as a single polity, let alone become a sovereign state consisting of the set of islands that it ended up possessing. The Japanese archipelago could have hosted more than one government – as it briefly did during the Restoration War of 1868-9. Offlying islands could have come under the colonial rule of a Western imperial power; or persisted as independent states on their own right. Again, in order to account for the way in which the territorial boundary around Japan emerged, it is not sufficient to look at metropole governments and their agents; the histories of the border zones and their failure to 'enter the international society' need to be studied at the local as well as the international level.

²⁸ Ibid., 24.

Periphery historiography: the end of the border zones

What, then, do we know about the histories of the border zones in this period? This thesis divides the border zones around Japan into three categories: the northern border zone, covering Ezo/Hokkaido, Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands; the island of Tsushima; and the southern border zone, encompassing the Ryukyu Kingdom, Taiwan, and the Bonin Islands. A great deal of historical research exists on the histories of these areas in the late-nineteenth century if one includes those that do not explicitly frame their analysis as pertaining to borders.

On the northern border, the primary object of historians' concern has been the island of Sakhalin. Until it became part of the Russian empire through the signing of the Russo-Japanese Treaty of St. Petersburg in 1875, no clear political institutions had emerged on this island. Indigenous peoples, Manchu merchants, Russian settlers, and Japanese fishermen all interacted there. Because the island changed hands between the Russians and the Japanese in the first half of the twentieth century, the post-1945 scholarship first focused on the diplomatic history of the Russo-Japanese relations and especially Russia's southward advance. Historians such as George Lensen, John Stephan, and Akizuki Toshiyuki have accordingly seen Russia in this period as an ambitious power wanting to expand its reach to the south towards Hokkaido, while the Japanese responded with an apprehension that, if mishandled, the situation could lead to a matter of national survival.²⁹

Another group of work has focused on relations between the Japanese settler population and the indigenous peoples, most notably the Ainu in Ezo (later to be renamed Hokkaido by the Meiji government). Inspired by the rise of postcolonial studies, historians have presented 'a view from the frontier' (Tessa Morris-Suzuki); they have challenged what they perceive as a nationalist discourse that portrays the history of Hokkaido through the eyes

²⁹ Lensen, *Russian Push Toward Japan*; John Stephan, *Sakhalin: A History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Akizuki Toshiyuki, *Nichiro Kankei to Saharin Tō* (Sapporo: Hokkaido Daigaku Shuppankai, 1994).

of Japanese settlers and developers, trumpeting its advance towards a modern statehood. This generation of scholars have instead emphasised that Hokkaido was a Japanese colony, where Japan from the early Tokugawa period onwards took over the land and dispossessed the Ainu people, erasing their political, cultural and linguistic heritage. They see a direct link between the colonisation of Hokkaido and the expansion of the Japanese empire in the first half of the twentieth century.³⁰

Historians of imperial Russia have also worked on Sakhalin but it is only within the last two decades that primary sources became available for historical investigation. Andrew Gentes and Sharyl Corrado have both worked on Russia's administration of the penal colony in Sakhalin in the nineteenth century.³¹ Their primary concern has been to revisit the concept and origins of modernity in Russia by looking at Sakhalin as one part of imperial Russia's Great Reform process. Gentes links the genealogy of the penal colony in Sakhalin, known to Russian contemporaries as the most notorious in the world, with the overall Russian penal reforms of the mid-nineteenth century. Russia's exile penal labour system known as *katorga*, under which the state sent its worst offenders to eastern Siberia, had ceased to function and that necessitated, in order for the empire to maintain its criminal justice system, the development of the island as an alternative destination for convict exiles.³² Corrado argues: 'Sakhalin became a place for the negotiation of a Russian modernity distinct from the enlightenment project in Europe'.³³ Their studies derive from the recent trend in questioning Euro-centric understandings of modernity.

As for the Kuril Islands, not a great deal of historical research exists, apart from those dealing with the Russo-Japanese diplomatic negotiations that resulted in the territorial swap

³⁰ Morris-Suzuki, *Henkyō kara Nagameru* (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 2000); Morris-Suzuki, *Re-inventing Japan*; Michele Mason, *Dominant Narratives of Colonial Hokkaido and Imperial Japan: Envisioning the Periphery and the Modern Nation-State* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). Also see David Howell, 'Ainu Ethnicity and the Boundaries of the Early Modern Japanese State', *Past and Present* 142 (1994): 69-93; Richard Siddle, *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996); Brett Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and culture in Japanese expansion, 1590-1800* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

³¹ Andrew Gentes, 'The Institution of Russia's Sakhalin Policy, from 1868 to 1875', *Journal of Asian History* 36, no.1 (2002), 1-31; Sharyl Corrado, *The "end of the earth": Sakhalin Island in the Russian imperial imagination, 1849-1906*. (Ph.D. thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2010).

³² Gentes, 'The Institution of Russia's Sakhalin Policy, from 1868 to 1875'.

³³ Corrado, "The end of the earth", 8.

of 1875.³⁴ Even these works treat the Kuriles only as a secondary factor in the equation. Scholars interested in the contemporary territorial dispute between Moscow and Tokyo over what the Japanese government calls ‘the northern territory’ have written at length on the claims of the respective governments and have traced back its origins to the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, when in August 1945 the Soviet troops occupied the islands, including Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan, and Habomai at the southern end of the group adjoining Hokkaido. The Japanese government regards the Russian presence on these four islands as the unlawful occupation of ‘inherently’ Japanese territory which is not included in the renunciation of ‘the Kurile Islands’ in the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951, and continues to demand their return. The Russian government asserts that Japan renounced these four islands in the San Francisco Peace Treaty and continues to exercise effective rule there.³⁵

In regard to Tsushima, research on the ruling Sō family’s documents during the Tokugawa era has led to a pioneering work by Tashiro Kazui, which caused a major revision of the image of Tokugawa seclusion.³⁶ The amount of research published on Tsushima and Korean-Japanese relations since then has been numerous, but the bakumatsu and early Meiji period still presents a relative gap.³⁷ Historians studying the triangular relations among Korea, Tsushima and Japan in the early modern period tend to stop before the mid-nineteenth century. A large number of studies exist on the *seikanron* debate of 1873, but historians have mostly

³⁴ The representative monographs that deal with the Kurils specifically are John Stephan, *The Kuril Islands: Russo-Japanese Frontier in the Pacific* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), and Akizuki Toshiyuki, *Chishima Rettō wo Meguru Nihon to Roshia* (Sapporo: Hokkaido University Press, 2014). On the Japanese development of the Kuriles after the Treaty of St. Petersburg, the most recent and detailed work is Fumoto Shinichi, ‘Kakutei sareru “kokkyō” to chiiki’. David Howell provides a brief account of the relocation of Kuril Ainu from Shumushu to Shikotan in 1884 and their ‘deculturation’ as a distinct ethnic group. David Howell, *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 189–93.

³⁵ Hasegawa (ed.), *The Northern Territories Dispute*, 2 vols; Kimura, *The Kurillian Knot*. Kimura’s book was first published in Japanese in 1993 under the title *Nichiro Kokkyō Kōshōshi: Ryōdo mondai ni ikani torikumuka*.

³⁶ Tashiro, ‘Foreign Relations During the Edo Period: Sakoku Reexamined’.

³⁷ Representative works in Japanese are Tabohashi Kiyoshi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū* (Seoul: Sōtokufu Chūsūin, 1940); Ishira Tōru, *Kindai Ikōki no Nicchō Kankei* (Hiroshima: Keisūsha, 2013). In English, see Robert Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*; James Lewis, *Frontier Contact between Choson Korea and Tokugawa Japan* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

focused on Meiji Japan's leadership politics.³⁸ Those interested in Japanese imperialism or the Japanese empire rush through this period, with the underlying assumption that it is a prelude to the annexation of Korea in 1910.³⁹ Barring a few recent works, historians have not given enough attention to Tsushima's transformation for its own sake.

In the southern border zones, the standard narratives of the Ryukyu Kingdom have adopted a bilateral framework for Ryukyu-Japan relations and emphasised Meiji Japan's assimilation policies in pursuit of building a Japanese nation.⁴⁰ Recently, however, scholars have begun to utilise Chinese sources in order to place the kingdom in the trilateral context of Ryukyu, Japan, and the Qing Empire. This has drawn attention to Sino-Japanese relations regarding Ryukyu in the 1880s, as well as China's view on this once avid participant in the tributary trade.⁴¹ Detailed studies of the domestic politics within Ryukyu after the annexation and a comparative analysis with the annexation of Korea have also appeared.⁴² Yet there persists a tendency to lump together the 1874 Taiwan expedition and the Ryukyu annexation without investigating the exact Japanese motives behind each action.⁴³ The narrative remains one of Japan's opportunistic expansion to the south, with the idea that this was deliberately framed as the act of a civilised power.

On the Bonin (Ogasawara) Islands, earlier scholarship has clustered around the issue of the legal justification for the territorial claim. In explaining what the Meiji government called the 'recollement of the Ogasawara Islands (*Ogasawara Tō kaishū*)', Japanese history works have tended to rely heavily on official sources whose purpose to begin with was to

³⁸ Takahashi Hidenao, 'Seikanron Jihen to Chōsen Seisaku', *Shirin* 75 no.2 (1992), 218-247; Kim, *The Last Phase of East Asian World Order*, 169-87.

³⁹ For instance, see Jun Uchida, *Brokers of Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), especially pp.36-54.

⁴⁰ Oguma Eiji, "Nihonjin" no Kyōkai: Okinawa, Ainu, Taiwan, Chōsen: Shokuminchi Shihai kara Fukki Made (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1998). Also See Luke Franks, *The Last Prefecture: Okinawa and the Problem of Local Governance in Imperial Japan* (PhD dissertation, UC Berkeley, 2009).

⁴¹ Nishizato Kikō, *Shinmatsu Chū Ryū Nichi kankeishi no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Kyōto Daigaku Gakujutsu Shuppankai, 2005).

⁴² Franks, *The Last Prefecture*; Namihira Tsuneo, *Kindai Higashi Ajia shi no naka no Ryukyu heigō: Chūka sekai chitsujo kara shokuminchi teikoku Nihon e* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2014).

⁴³ Eskildsen, 'Of Civilizations and Savages'; Mizuno Norihito, 'Early Meiji Policies Toward the Ryukyus and the Taiwanese Aboriginal Territories'. *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no.3 (2009): 683-739; Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*.

demonstrate the legitimacy of Japan's territorial claim.⁴⁴ The basic line of argument has remained unaltered in the post-1945 historiography. While the most recent work by Fumoto Shinichi has pointed out that the Japanese territorial claim was weak, the question as to why the Japanese did not meet stronger resistance from other powers remains unexplored.⁴⁵ In a rare exception Ishihara Shun has argued that rule by the Japanese Empire was only partially applied to the Bonins by local officials who often resorted to ad hoc measures.⁴⁶ Ishihara has characterised the islands as 'one of the first frontier spaces where Japan as a civilised power carried out colonisation under the name of sovereignty'.⁴⁷ Yet he does not explain why this did not meet opposition from the foreign powers or how the Japanese decision to claim Ogasawara was affected by its experience of border negotiations elsewhere.

Some English-language works on nineteenth-century Japanese diplomatic history touch upon the Bonins but only in passing. William Beasley noted that Britain never seriously entertained occupation of the Bonins because they could never be 'a strategic centre of the same value as Aden, Ceylon or Singapore'.⁴⁸ *The Cambridge History of Japan* simply follows Beasley's argument in the relevant section.⁴⁹ Some of the primary sources produced by the sailors who visited the Bonins have been edited and published, but they come without any substantial analysis.⁵⁰ Maritime history, especially the history of whaling, has occasionally

⁴⁴ For instance Tabohashi Kiyoshi noted that the reports on the 1675 mission to Ogasawara by the Tokugawa shogunate reached Europe and 'gave Japan an undeniable priority for the Ogasawara Islands to be a Japanese territory'. Tabohashi Kiyoshi, 'Ogasawara shoto no kaishu,' *Rekishi Chiri* 39(5), 1922, 362. Yasuoka Akio has similarly argued that the two Japanese official visits to the island in the seventeenth and the nineteenth century 'both had sufficient significance in that they played a role as a basis for the Meiji government's incorporation and rule of the Ogasawara islands...'. Yasuoka Akio, 'Ogasawarato to Edo bakufu no sesaku,' in Seiichi Iwao (ed.), *Kinsei no Yogaku to Kaigai Koshō* (Tokyo: Gen'andō shoten, 1979), 325. Also see Kajima Morinosuke, *Kinrin Shokoku Oyobi Ryōdo Mondai*, Nihon Gaikōshi 3 (Tokyo: Kajima Kenkyūjo Shuppankai, 1970), 362. Tanaka Hiroyuki has noted that the landing of castaways and the following investigation by the Nagasaki Magistrate provided Japan with the justification for territorial possession. Tanaka Hiroyuki, *Bakumatsu no Ogasawara* (Tokyo: Chūkō Shinsho, 1997).

⁴⁵ Fumoto, 'Kakutei sareru kokkyō', 156-7.

⁴⁶ Ishihara Shun, *Kindai Nihon to Ogasawara Shotō: idōmin no shimajima to Teikoku*. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2007).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁴⁸ William G. Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan, 1834-1858* (Routledge, 1995 [1951]), 29.

⁴⁹ Marius Jansen (ed.), *Cambridge History of Japan vol.5 The Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 125.

⁵⁰ Examples include Alan B. Cole (ed.), *Yankee surveyors in the Shogun's seas: records of the United States Surveying Expedition to the North Pacific Ocean, 1853-1856* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton

mentioned the Bonins. Yet this literature focuses more on the 1850s and the earlier period when whaling gave some importance to these well-positioned islands.⁵¹ This leaves the beginning of the history of the Bonins in modern international relations dominated by the decades-old, Japan-centred narrative.

Gap in the historiography

In sum, the metropole-focused historiography described above has not paid enough attention to the complexity of the nineteenth-century world beyond the familiar framework of the sovereign states that we know have survived to the present. The periphery historiography, on the other hand, has been slow to adopt any comparative analysis across the border zones and has not done enough to contribute to a larger picture of the nineteenth-century history of the north-western Pacific. In order to explain the way in which territorial borders emerged around Japan in the late-nineteenth century, it is necessary to bridge this gap. This thesis attempts to do so by introducing a two-layered argument: that the necessity for sovereign rule around the Japanese archipelago often had local, as opposed to international, origins, and that there was a ‘balance of favour’ that prevented the treaty powers from obtaining territorial concessions in Japan’s border zones. Throughout the rest of the thesis, the term ‘balance of favour’ is defined as a multilateral diplomatic equilibrium among the imperialist powers in the nineteenth century in possession of most-favoured-nation status vis-a-vis the target

University Press, 1947); Matthew C. Perry, William Gerald Beasley, and Roger Pineau. *The Japan expedition, 1852-1854: the personal journal of Commodore Matthew C. Perry* (Richmond: Japan Library, 2002); Lionel Berners Cholmondeley, *The History of the Bonin Islands from the Year 1827 to the Year 1876, and of Nathaniel Savory, One of the Original Settlers* (London: Constable & Co., 1915).

⁵¹ For instance, see John Curtis Perry, *Facing West: Americans and the Opening of the Pacific* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994); Walter S. Tower, *A History of the American Whale Fishery* (Philadelphia, PA.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1907); Robert Langdon (ed.), *Where the Whalers Went: An index to the Pacific Ports and Islands visited by American whalers and some other ships in the 19th century* (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1984); Margaret Creighton, *Rites and Passages: The experience of American whaling, 1830-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

country (in this case Japan), under which no member wants to force a territorial secession from the latter for fear of starting a territorial scramble.⁵²

In order to explain the working of the balance of favour in more detail, a brief overview of the history of the treaty-port system and the MFN in the nineteenth-century East Asia is in order.

Genealogy of the treaty-port system and the impact of the MFN

The treaty-port system first emerged in China after its defeat to Britain in the Opium War and the conclusion of the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842. The British gained access to five treaty ports – Guangzhou, Xiamen, Shanghai, Ningpo, and Fuzhou – to conduct trade, with a fixed tariff on both exports and imports and under the protection of extraterritoriality.⁵³ With the conclusion of the Treaty of Tianjin in 1858 and the Treaty of Beijing in 1860, China conceded a more extensive list of privileges to foreign citizens in China, including the right to travel to the interior and to purchase property.⁵⁴ In addition to Britain, France, the United States, China concluded new commercial treaties on similar terms with twelve states.⁵⁵ The Qing also agreed on additional terms with the United States (Burlingame Treaty, 1868) and Britain (Alcock Convention, 1869). Furthermore, it signed treaties concerning migrants (with

⁵² With the exception of Russia, which granted Japan bilateral MFN treatment, all MFN clauses in Japan's treaties were unilateral. In other words, whilst the Western treaty signatories were entitled to all the benefits Japan gave other countries, such was not the case for Japan.

⁵³ John Fairbank, 'The Creation of the Treaty Port System', in Fairbank (ed.), *The Cambridge History of China: Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, pt.2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 213-263. Here 224; Beasley, 'The foreign threat and the opening of the ports', in Marius B. Jansen (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Japan vol.5 The Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 259-307. Here p.259.

⁵⁴ Fairbank, 'The Creation of the Treaty Port System', 251, 256-7.

⁵⁵ The twelve countries were Sweden, Norway (1847), Prussia (1861), Portugal (1862), Denmark, Holland (1863), Spain (1864), Belgium (1865), Italy (1866), Austria-Hungary (1869), Japan (1871), and Peru (1874). Banno Masataka, *Kindai Chūgoku Gaikōshi Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970), 219-20.

Spain and Peru) and border demarcation (with Russia).⁵⁶ The Tongzhi era (1861-1875) therefore saw China's continuous and increasing participation in treaty relations.

The resulting web of treaty relations across China proved to be one of the foundational features of diplomatic relations in East Asia in the coming decades. By the time the First World War broke out in Europe, there were forty-eight treaty ports in China.⁵⁷ Treaty ports on similar terms opened up in Korea, but their commercial significance was no match for those in China and they disappeared into the Japanese empire in 1910.⁵⁸

Given that its main stage was China, how should we understand the significance of the treaty-port system for the history of modern Japan? It has been a standard view to find the origins of the system in Britain's commercial policy, which in turn 'reflected a shift from the eighteenth-century doctrines of mercantilism to those of laissez faire, linked with the coming of the Industrial Revolution'.⁵⁹ In other words, from the viewpoint of the British and other Western merchants, the opening of treaty ports in China represented the expansion of their own trade scheme into extra-European terrain. Thus the opening of treaty ports in Japan was seen as merely an extension of that system.⁶⁰ It was only natural that Western diplomats, naval officers and consuls went back and forth between the two countries as they climbed up the career ladder. In the Westerners' mind, China was the target of the system, while Japan was a corollary.

This may not be completely true, though, from an East Asian perspective. For one thing, some historians have opposed the view that the treaty ports comprised a coherent and coordinated system which the Western powers used to coerce the Qing.⁶¹ Moreover, at least

⁵⁶ Ibid., 221.

⁵⁷ Odd Arne Westad, *Restless Empire: China and the World since 1750* (London: Vintage Books, 2012), 60; James Hoare, 'The Era of Unequal Treaties', in Ian Nish and Yoichi Kibata (eds.), *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000 vol. I, The Political-Diplomatic dimension, 1600-1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2000), 107-130.

⁵⁸ Hoare, *Japan's Treaty Ports and Foreign Settlements: The uninvited guests, 1858-1899* (Folkestone, Kent: Japan Library, 1994), 173.

⁵⁹ Beasley, 'The foreign threat and the opening of the ports', 259.

⁶⁰ James Hoare, for instance, clearly regards the treaty-port system in China and Japan as emanating from a single East Asian policy of Britain and other Western powers. Hoare, 'The Era of Unequal Treaties', 108.

⁶¹ Westad has noted that 'the so-called treaty port system was an unwieldy, composite, and often unsuccessful' scheme and stressed its 'hybridity and fluidity'. Westad, *Restless Empire*, 60-1.

in the first few decades of the treaty ports' existence, the Qing understood the arrangement with the West to be an extension and modification of the *hushi* system that had stood in parallel with the tributary system since the late Ming period. Countries that belonged to this category of *hushi*, literally meaning 'mutual trade', were deemed as posing no military threat and therefore allowed to send merchants to conduct purely commercial interactions at designated ports.⁶² Importantly, Japan did not fit into either of the two categories. It was certainly not a tributary state, but Chinese merchants had long been trading in Nagasaki. As Kawashima Shin has noted, this ambiguity came up in the early 1860s when Tokugawa Japan probed into the possibility of starting official trade with China.⁶³ When the two countries signed a covenant in 1871, they acknowledged each other as equals, granting MFN status to each other. Japan's position in China came to match the Western states only in 1895, with the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki that was as 'unequal' as those that the Westerners had imposed on the Qing. Thus there is a good reason to be careful about looking at Japan's treaty relations only from the Westerners' perspective.

This, of course, is not to underestimate the impact of the treaty-port system on Japan, as is amply shown by existing scholarship. In particular, the inclusion of MFN status turned out to be of great consequence. MFN clauses had originally developed in the treaties signed between the mercantilist states in Europe in the eighteenth century. In East Asia the first instance of MFN status appeared in the 1843 Treaty of the Bogue signed between Britain and China. Following the example of Britain, France and the United States soon afterwards gained the same right. Initially a vehicle for promotion of trade between equal trading partners within the Western world, MFN thus metamorphosed into a tool for free-trade imperialism in East Asia. The study of the history of MFN in East Asia has developed far less

⁶² Kawashima and Hattori (eds.), *Higashi Ajia Kokusai Kankeishi*, 9-13; Iwai Shigeki, 'Chōkō to Goshi', 135; Kim, *The Last Phase*, 69; Pamela Crossley, *The Wobbling Pivot, China since 1800: An Interpretive History* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

⁶³ Kawashima Shin, *Chūgoku Kindai Gaikō no Keisei* (Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2004), 213-26.

compared to that of extraterritoriality.⁶⁴ The existing studies tend only to point out the importance of MFN status in the Western expansion of trade in China in the mid-nineteenth century.⁶⁵ However, MFN's impact was at least comparable to that of extraterritoriality, as far as Japan was concerned.

Japan gave unilateral MFN in its first ever treaty with the United States in 1854. This was because S. Wells Williams, who translated for Matthew Perry, had first-hand knowledge of the Treaty of Wanghia and recommended the United States insert the MFN clause in the treaty with Japan as well. Since the Tokugawa negotiators did not envisage the Japanese travelling to the United States, they declined to make the MFN mutual in spite of the American offer to do so.⁶⁶ After the Ansei Treaties in 1858, six more states signed similar treaties with Tokugawa Japan. Four more countries followed after the Meiji Restoration in 1868. By the time Austria-Hungary became the sixteenth country to sign a treaty with Japan on 18 October 1869, Western powers had managed to press for various measures to promote uninterrupted trade in the treaty ports.⁶⁷ This stream of new treaties gave the Powers an opportunity to gain more privileges for the entire Western merchant community in Japanese ports. Because of MFN status, the imperialist powers had incentives to cooperate with each other. In this sense the dichotomy between the Japanese and the Westerners has some relevance.

This Japan-West dichotomy based on treaty relations with unilateral MFN has the negative images of the clause among Japanese historians, who almost unanimously condemn it for blocking the path of treaty revision. Murase Shinya, for instance, wrote that the

⁶⁴ There does not seem to be a monograph focused on the issue of MFN in the nineteenth-century East Asia. For extraterritoriality, two recent volumes are Tulan Kayaoglu, *Legal Imperialism: Sovereignty and Extraterritoriality in Japan, the Ottoman Empire, and China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Par Kristoffer Cassel, *Grounds of Judgment: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁶⁵ Jonathan Spence, *Search for Modern China* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001), 162; Crossley, *The Wobbling Pivot, China since 1800: an interpretive history*, 81.

⁶⁶ Shinya Murase, 'The Most-Favored-Nation Treatment in Japan's Treaty Practice During the Period 1854-1905', *The American Journal of International Law* 70, no. 2 (1976), 273-297. Here 279; Mitani, '19 seiki ni okeru higashi Ajia kokusai chitsujo no tenkan'.

⁶⁷ Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, 160-163. For the full text of Japanese-Austrian treaty, see Iokibe Kaoru, *Jōyaku Kaiseishi: Hōken kaifuku eno tenbō to nashonarizumu* (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 2010), 351-7.

Tokugawa officers who negotiated with Harris in 1858 ‘surprisingly and regrettably’ declined to add the MFN treatment for the Japanese in the United States.⁶⁸ Yet looking at Japan’s boundary negotiations provides grounds on which to revisit some of the negative images of the MFN. This is because, although the Westerners in Japan benefited enormously from the tax and administrative point of view, MFN status could not be used to extend one country’s territorial gains to all other signatories.

Under the principles of the sovereign state system, territorial acquisition and MFN were ultimately irreconcilable – in the sense that no territorial benefits can be given equally to more than one country. It was Britain that obtained Hong Kong in 1842; no other countries, despite their MFN clauses vis-à-vis China, received the same territorial rights to the island. The same goes for the Russian possessions in north-eastern China after the Treaty of Beijing in 1860. Thus in so far as territorial secession was concerned, the Western powers found themselves in a zero-sum game, unlike the promotion of free trade. The imperialist powers worried that if one of them acquired an overseas territory around the Japanese archipelago, the only way for others to gain similar privileges and restore the power balance was to possess somewhere else. It would thus set a precedent and start a territorial scramble. The Western powers’ officers in Japan did not see any benefit in such an undertaking. Japan’s market was not big enough, and the strategic benefits from possessing territories around Japan, with the exception of Tsushima, were seen as minor. The least damaging fallback scenario for the imperialist powers, therefore, was to allow Japanese control of the border zones while ensuring free access to the major ports.

Main arguments

⁶⁸ Murase, ‘The Most-Favored-Nation Treatment in Japan’s Treaty Practice During the Period 1854-1905’; Ishii, *Meiji Ishin no Kokusaiteki Kankyo*, 7.

In a recent reappraisal of the narrative of Japan's 'unequal treaties' in the bakumatsu and the early Meiji period, Mitani Hiroshi has pointed out that the labelling of the treaties as 'unequal' had much to do with the early Meiji government's incentive to denigrate the legacy of the Tokugawa shogunate that it had just replaced. He has suggested that the treaty terms may have actually been more damaging to the Westerners than to the Japanese.⁶⁹ In an another attempt at revising the evaluation of these treaties, Kokaze Hidemasa has argued that the nineteenth-century treaty system in fact prevented East Asian states from being colonised, as the signing entailed an underlying recognition of the signatories' sovereignty.⁷⁰ These observations provide an important angle for exploring the impact of the treaties on modern Japan's emergence, because they resist an easy characterisation of modern Japan's beginning as nothing more than a successful march towards modernisation.

Yet Kokaze's revisionist suggestion seems to overlook the obvious: the existence of a treaty did not guarantee territorial integrity and independence of a signing party. The Ryukyu Kingdom had concluded treaties with the United States, Netherlands and France in the 1840s before it was annexed by Meiji Japan in 1879. Nor did Korea's treaties save it from being colonised by Japan a few decades later. Even in the case of Japan, its treaties did not prevent the Westerners from seeking to possess an island or a portion of land, as will be discussed later.

Thus if the weaker party in the treaty system managed to survive as an independent state, the reason needs to be sought not in the existence of the treaty itself, but in the wider international relations of the time. In a similar vein, the emergence of Japan's territorial boundary at any particular location also needs to be explained by factors beyond the treaty system or the MFN. It is appropriate here, therefore, to introduce a two-layered argument consisting of a periphery level, which looks into the local development of events, and a

⁶⁹ Mitani, '19 seiki ni okeru higashi Ajia kokusai chitsujo no tenkan'. For orthodox views of the 'unequal' treaty, see Perez, *Japan Comes of Age*; Kenneth Pyle, "Meiji Conservatism", in Jansen, Marius (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 688–9.

⁷⁰ Kokaze Hidemasa, '19 seiki sekai shisutemu no sabushisutemu to shiten no hubyōdō jōyaku taisei', *Higashi Ajia Kindaishi* 13 (March 2010), 122–142.

metropole level that encompasses the broader international relations but which by no means excludes the treaty-port system.

Argument 1: the periphery level

At the periphery level, or in the border zones around the Japanese archipelago, the political arrangements that maintained inter-state relations varied from one place to another. Tsushima and the Ryukyu Kingdom fit best into the framework of tributary relations, while the Ainu in Ezo faced de facto servitude imposed by Japanese merchants. The Bonin Islands had no political order to speak of until the 1830s.

In these zones, people's attitude towards the Japanese central government also varied, ranging from requests for support, to indifference, to resistance against the latter's interference. What was common, though, was the fact that their survival as independent political entities had become increasingly untenable by the mid-nineteenth century, both politically and economically. The tributary trade no longer provided enough profits to support the local economies across the China Sea, reflecting the confusion in the Qing Empire;⁷¹ the rise of whaling and other commercial activities in the Pacific drew North Americans to the Japanese shore. Imperialism, including that of Japan, hastened their demise, but it is important to note that local factors played a decisive role in each case.

The reason for the emergence of territorial boundaries around the Japanese archipelago, first of all, should be sought in the endogenous environment. As the existing political institutions crumbled, a new order based on the logic of territorial sovereignty began to emerge. The possibility for the treaty powers to expand into this power vacuum was deterred, at least up to the mid-1870s, by what this thesis calls the 'balance of favour' that emerged among Japan and the treaty powers.

⁷¹ Shiraishi Takashi has claimed that for the southeast Asian maritime states, the tributary trade with China 'had long ceased to exist' by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Shiraishi, *Umi no Teikoku* (Tokyo: Chuō Kōron Shinsha, 2000), 33.

Argument 2: the metropole level

Among the treaty powers, Britain, the United States, and Russia played a significant role in the formation of Japan's borders. The Anglo-American approach to its opening induced Japan to enter into the modern international relations based on the principle of territorial sovereignty and free trade. Russia possessed a different set of priorities. Having lost the Crimean War in the Near East, and having begun a strategic retreat from the North American continent by the beginning of the 1860s, its attention turned to East Asia. As Russia's move into the region shows, the cooperative relationship among the treaty powers based on MFN status did not apply to territorial rule.

The Tsushima Incident in 1861 made Britain realise that the real power to contend with around the Japanese archipelago was not Edo/Tokyo but St. Petersburg. Yet Britain did not go so far as to gain territory from Japan for the purpose of fighting this Far Eastern chapter of the Great Game. Britain's preferred method was the neutralisation of strategically important locations by opening a treaty port. It was a measure that went against the exclusive possession of a certain territory, because it allowed access to multiple treaty signatories with the advantages of MFN status.

The emergence of territorial borders around the Japanese archipelago, therefore, took place with the immediate cause being the beginning of the treaty relationship between Japan and the Western powers, but the environment conducive to such a change had been created as the result of local contingencies in the border zones. During that process, while MFN curtailed Japan's internal sovereignty, it did not lead to the treaty powers to engage in a territorial scramble because geopolitical calculations took precedence over the coordinated action based on MFN. The exact reason why it was difficult for the Meiji leaders to revise the treaty – the collective implication of the MFN – made it difficult for the treaty powers to obtain territory from Japan. That was the limitation of MFN. It was useful only so far as the Western powers sought to build an informal empire. As the competition escalated towards the

end of the nineteenth century, the balance of favour gave way to a more aggressive use of force, manifested in such measures as the creation of spheres of influence or annexation.

Notes on the primary sources

Diplomatic historians of Meiji Japan have relied primarily on *Dai Nihon Gaikō Monjo* (DNGM) and FO 46 from the National Archives of the United Kingdom to describe the emergence of the modern Japan. Yet having set the goal in the above-mentioned manner, it is necessary for this thesis to cast a wider net. *DNGM*, compiled and published by Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 1936, cannot completely serve the purpose as it is an official publication on *Japanese* diplomacy. Although FO46 files are unpublished materials, they too have limitations in understanding Britain's perceptions of and activities in the border zones. In order to overcome these limitations, the sources used in the following chapters include the private papers of bakumatsu and Meiji negotiators; letters sent from the border station officers; manuscripts from regional archives, especially Kaitakushi papers in Hokkaido; FO262 to explore the view from the British consulates in Japan's treaty ports; and Admiralty documents for consulting reports from the Royal Navy's China Station. Using these documents the thesis aims at deconstructing the familiar units of sovereign states employed by traditional diplomatic history.

Geographical overview of the Japanese archipelago and the vicinities

The following chapters make reference to many obscure places in East Asia that Japanese history usually leaves out. That is in part the point of the project – to bring into the narrative locations that have not hitherto been considered by historians of Japan and which have therefore been seen as irrelevant to the story of the emergence of the modern Japanese

state, with a view to finding a new place for Japan within the international relations of the late-nineteenth century. It is a necessary process to shake up the fixed image of Japan as consisting of four islands – Hokkaido, Honshū, Shikoku and Kyushu.



Map 1: The Japanese archipelago

In order to do so it will be expedient to introduce these places here.⁷² Starting from the Northeast, the farthest away island from the mainland is Shumushu, facing the southern tip of the Kamchatka Peninsula. Shumushu is the northernmost of the Kuril Islands, but geologically speaking it is part of the Kamchatka basin. The strait between Shumushu and Kamchatka is only a few kilometres wide, and the nearest major town on Kamchatka is Petropavlovsk, a Russian outpost for its Pacific Fleet and the fur-animal hunting business. This port suffered severely from the British and French navy's attacks during the Crimean

⁷² The following description is based on the international territorial boundaries that existed at the end of 1875.

War in 1853-56. Petropavlovsk is on the western side of the Bering Strait, and across these frosty waters used to be Russian America until 1867, after which it became the territory of Alaska belonging to the United States.

Going southwest from Shumushu, the Kuril Island chain consists of about thirty volcanic islands and rocks that collectively look like a dotted line on a map between the northeastern edge of Hokkaido and the Kamchatka Peninsula. It spreads over about 1,200 kilometers, approximately the same distance between Taiwan and the southern end of Kyushu. Although the land totals only one-seventh of Sakhalin, or just over 10,000 square kilometers, it is far from negligible. The largest island, Etorofu, is 2.6 times larger than Okinawa Island, the largest of the Ryukyu Islands.⁷³ Climatically difficult for humans and barren in most parts, the Kuriles hosted a tiny local population and remained a backwater of human activity. The surrounding sea is rough. Seaborne access is marred by frequent thick fog in the summer and floating ice in the winter, coupled with the fact that in the nineteenth century few sites along the archipelago provided safe anchoring. For sailors, even with steamships, getting there was dangerous, especially in the winter months.

West from the Kuriles at the opposite end of the Okhotsk Sea is Sakhalin, a dagger-shaped island of 948 kilometers north to south. In 1875 the Russo-Japanese treaty signed in St. Petersburg confirmed that the entire island belonged to Russia, but it had seldom been a

⁷³ There are three different views on where the southern end of the Kuril Islands lies. This question is a political one because of the territorial dispute between Russia and Japan over the four islands, namely Etorofu, Kunashiri, Habomai, and Shikotan, that the Soviet troops occupied at the end of the World War II and have since remained in the Russian hands. The San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951 stated that Japan renounced ‘all right, title and claim to the Kurile Islands, and to that portion of Sakhalin and the islands adjacent to it over which Japan acquired sovereignty as a consequence of the Treaty of Portsmouth of 5 Sept. 1905’ (Quoted in Tsuyoshi Hasegawa (ed.), *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), vol.1, 93). Here the definition of ‘the Kurile Islands’ remained vague. The Japanese foreign ministry has taken the view that it means the islands beginning from Urup northwards; some experts on international law include Etorofu and Kunashiri but not Habomai and Shikotan, which they regard as part of Hokkaido; The Soviet and the following Russian government as well as some Japanese scholars such as Wada Haruki include all four islands into the definition. See Hiroshi Kimura, *The Kurillian Knot: A History of Japanese-Russian Border Negotiations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 65-9. Kimura himself agrees with the Japanese foreign ministry. On the other hand, scholars on the history of the Kuril Islands tend to include all four islands in their accounts, not least because it makes no sense to exclude them when writing on the pre-1951 period. This thesis takes the same approach, though it should not be read as a statement on the author’s interpretation of the wording in the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty.

serious area of dispute for political leaders anywhere until the mid-nineteenth century. Accurate knowledge of its geography had not been available partly because of the harsh weather conditions that again made access difficult. It was Mamiya Rinzō, the Tokugawa shogunate's explorer, who in 1808 first completed a survey and confirmed that it was an island, not a peninsula.⁷⁴ Nevertheless the Japanese activities in Sakhalin were largely limited to fishery and trade with the Ainu. A small number of indigenous peoples – Nivkh (Gilyak), Orok, and Ainu – were scattered around the island. From the thirteenth century the islanders were subject to tributary relations with the Chinese dynasties, but by the nineteenth century the Qing Empire had lost its grip on Sakhalin. Instead Russia increased its activity as part of its effort to develop its far eastern possessions along the Amur River. In 1853 a Russian expedition established a commune on the southern coast, naming it Korsakov. Although the Russians evacuated this place after the outbreak of the Crimean War, by 1875 several hundred people lived there (mostly exile convicts sent from various places of the Russian empire, accompanied by soldier guards). Standing in Korsakov facing south, one can see, on a fine day, the cape of Sōya – the northern tip of Hokkaido (called Ezo by the Japanese until 1869).

The coast of Honshū, Japan's mainland, has numerous off-lying islands. This thesis focuses on the island that sits in the middle of the strait between the Korean Peninsula and Kyushu: Tsushima. Tsushima, some 700 square kilometres in size, is an island just fifty kilometres away from Pusan on the south-eastern coast of the Korean Peninsula, and about twice that distance northeast from the northern coast of Kyūshū. From Nagasaki it took two days on a boat to get there, but one could get to Pusan from Tsushima within the same day.

Sailing south from Kyushu, the dotted line of islands that leads to Taiwan are called the Nansei Islands, at the centre of which lie the Ryukyu Islands. The largest in the Ryukyu Islands is Okinawa, around 1,200 square kilometres and the home to the Ryukyu Kingdom since 1429. At the south-western end of the Ryukyu Islands are the Sakishima Islands or

⁷⁴ Brett Walker, 'Mamiya Rinzō and the Japanese exploration of Sakhalin Island: cartography and empire', *Journal of Historical Geography* 33 (2007), 283-313.

Miyako-Yaeyama Group, consisting of Miyako, Ishigaki, Iriomote and several tiny islets.

From here it is only 150 kilometres to the north-eastern coast of Taiwan.

Lastly, some 1,200 kilometres east of the Okinawa Island and 1,000 kilometres south of Tokyo, one finds an isolated island group in the southern Pacific: The Bonin Islands. The largest island is called Chichijima, with its main port named Futami (also called Port Lloyd by Western sailors). Isolated from any large-scale human habitation, the territorial status of this island group was undetermined (and unimportant as well) until the nineteenth century. It was only in 1830 that people started settling here, after which its ownership became a diplomatic question. It took roughly four decades after that first settlement for the islands to be formally included in a territorial sovereign state - Japan, rather a newcomer to the whole system of territorial sovereign states.

Chapter Outline

The thesis discusses three border zones – the north, Tsushima, the south – in roughly chronological order. It starts with two chapters discussing Tsushima, starting from an incident in 1861 that drew close attention from the naval powers in the north-western Pacific. The six-month-long intrusion of the Russian corvette the *Posadnik* signified the change that was about to happen around the Japanese archipelago: the border zones were no longer compatible with the Western international relations system that was increasingly defined by territorial sovereignty. Chapter 2 goes on to discuss Tsushima in the early 1870s, when the financial as well as political collapse of the Tsushima domain and the closure of the *waegwan*, Japan's trading house in Pusan, marked the end of Tsushima as a border zone. The next three chapters deal with the northern border zone. Chapters 3 and 4 describe the transformation that occurred in Sakhalin between 1867 and 1875, placing it in the context of the North Pacific rather than simply the Russo-Japanese axis that the conventional narrative has tended to adopt. The two chapters are divided at the end of 1871, after which, the thesis argues, the best-

informed Japanese political leaders gradually realised Russia's threat to Hokkaido had been overstated. Thus in Chapter 4 the main course of Japan's action was to use diplomatic channels to settle the conflict with Russia in southern Sakhalin and conclude a treaty that confirmed the Russo-Japanese border in Japan's north. The story of the Kuril Islands is the subject of Chapter 5. Unlike in most existing studies, it forms a separate chapter from Sakhalin because the formation of territorial boundary around the Kuril Islands has a distinct feature that needs to be understood in terms of the movement of people between the United States and Japan. Lastly Chapter 6 discusses three cases from Japan's southern border zone: Taiwan, the Bonin Islands, and the Ryukyu Kingdom. It argues that having recognised that the balance of favour maintained Japan's security in the northern edge, Meiji leaders' attention turned to dealing with domestic problems by taking up opportunistic projects in Taiwan and claiming sovereignty over the Bonin Islands. The situation for the Ryukyu Kingdom resembled Tsushima in that its financial destitution by the 1870s left it with little chance of maintaining independence or autonomy. The chapter also points out the common understanding about the Meiji government's handling of the southern border zones, which led them to fill in the vacuum of sovereignty.

Chapter 1 The Tsushima Incident

As developments in navigational techniques began to overcome the distance across the Pacific and its economic integration deepened by way of exploration, trade and migration, the lives of Pacific sailors and the inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago became more intertwined than ever. Most historians open the narrative of the beginnings of modern Japan with the 1853 visit by an American fleet led by Matthew Perry to Uraga, near Edo Bay, and the resulting signing of the Treaty of Amity.¹ The problem with this is that it runs the risk of unconsciously limiting the perspective to state-to-state diplomacy, in particular the negotiations that took place in Edo (later Tokyo). A better place to start this thesis which addresses the question of modern Japan's boundary making is not Uraga in 1853, but Tsushima in 1861. In this year a Russian naval corvette, the *Posadnik*, came to the island and stayed for six months while the ship's captain, Nikolai Birilev, demanded an exclusive and permanent lease of the island's main port, causing turmoil among the Tsushima domain officials and residents. Tsushima and the shogunate demanded the departure of the *Posadnik*, but the ship withdrew only after British intervention following upon a request from Edo.

This incident is significant in regard to the question about modern Japan's territorial boundary for the following reasons. To begin with, it was the first incident in the *bakumatsu* era in which the Western powers tried to obtain more substantial privileges than those they had gained in the treaty ports under the Ansei treaties signed in 1858. Just a few years after the opening of three ports, the future of the Tokugawa regime was anything but certain. If this

¹ To Michael Auslin, the Perry visit sparked the shogunate's transition towards increased interactions with the Western nations, leading it to be enrolled into the international treaty structure of the mid-nineteenth century. Mitani Hiroshi, although denying the interpretation that Perry caught the shogunate by surprise, still focuses on 1853-4 as the pivotal moment that capped the Western nations' overture to the Japanese since the opening of the century. Martha Chaiklin has emphasised the role of the Dutch as a mediator in the U.S.-Japanese negotiations. Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, 18; Mitani, *Escape from Impasse*, xiii; Martha Chaiklin, 'Monopolists to Middlemen: Dutch Liberalism and American Imperialism in the Opening of Japan', *Journal of World History* 21:2 (2010), 249-269. For a recent attempt to challenge this tendency, see David Howell, 'Foreign Encounters and Informal Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan', *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 40:2 (2014), 295-327.

attempt by the Russian navy had succeeded, it would have opened a path for other non-Tokugawa domains to deal directly with foreign powers. They could have engaged in trade or given up part of their lands or ports.² Without the power to regulate foreign affairs throughout the archipelago, the Tokugawa's authority would have taken a serious blow.³ However, in reality, the Tokugawa shogunate staved off the Russian intrusion and as a result strengthened its control over Tsushima. During the Boshin War of 1868-9, despite the fluid political power balance in the archipelago, no territorial secession to a foreign power came to fruition.⁴ Then Meiji Japan too held the country together. Tsushima, in this sense, was the first domino block that just remained standing.

Another reason for the significance of the *Posadnik* incident is that the eventual success in repelling Russia increased Edo's influence over the island domain and contributed to the general trend towards centralisation. It needs to be noted that, throughout the Tokugawa era, Tsushima's status possessed a certain degree of ambivalence. After the Japanese invasions of Korea in the 1590s, the two countries restored diplomatic ties in 1607, with Tsushima as intermediary. They adopted mutually contradicting ideological frameworks and interpretations of the renewed relationship. From Edo's perspective, Tsushima was one of the *tozama* domains, or 'outside' domains that had never been conquered by the Tokugawa but whose *daimyō* (feudal lord) had agreed to peace and had continued to rule the same territory with a significant degree of autonomy. At the same time Tsushima received designation as a vassal of Choson Korea.⁵ James Lewis has noted that from Korea's point of view Tsushima

² Britain for instance briefly entertained the idea of occupying Hikoshima, an island near the Shimonoseki Strait, in 1864. See Ishizuka Hiromichi, 'Yokohama Ei-futsu chūton gun no 12 nenkan', in Yokohama Taigai Kankei Kenkyūshi Kai and Yokohama Kaikō Shiryōkan (eds.), *Yokohama Ei-futsu chūton gun to gaikokujin kyoryūchi* (Tokyo: Tokyodō shuppan, 1999).

³ The argument that the *bakumatsu* Japan was facing the crisis of being colonised was once popular among Japanese Marxist historians. Shibahara Takuji, for instance, has noted that by 1868 economic confusion had stirred popular uprisings across the country and deepening reliance of the imperial forces and the Tokugawa shogunate on British and French capital during the Boshin War could have led Japan to a semi-colonial status effectively divided among several imperialist powers. Shibahara, *Sekaishi No Nakano Meiji Ishin* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho, 1977), 97-102.

⁴ In 1875 the Meiji government gave up southern Sakhalin to Russia, but the Japanese claim there had not been fully established. See chapter 3 and 4 for more detailed discussion on Sakhalin.

⁵ Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, 39.

was a Korean land under Japanese occupation.⁶ This ambiguity in the exact status of Tsushima ultimately makes it futile to speak of a linear border between the two in this period. The Korean-Japanese diplomatic ties resumed as a result of a careful political manoeuvre, including the forgery of official letters between the Tokugawa shogunate and the Choson Court by Tsushima, with a view to satisfying the pride and worldview of both Seoul and Edo. Their views were ultimately impossible to reconcile, because both claimed itself to be superior to the other, yet diplomatic relations were restored between the two capitals on an essentially equal standing.⁷

The communications across the Tsushima strait were maintained thanks to the double status that Tsushima adopted. It came with certain costs for all parties. On the Korean side, the existence of official trade with Tsushima as a tributary meant that it had to give a large amount of rice to Tsushima's envoys and accompanying merchants every time they visited Pusan. This was an immense burden on Korea's relatively small economy. Lewis has noted that Choson Korea allocated about thirty percent of Kyongsang province's tax collection to be spent on trade with Tsushima.⁸ Although the exact amount is difficult to reconstruct, he notes that Korean literatis typically reckoned (and complained) that about half of Kyongsang province's production went to Tsushima.⁹

This did not make Tsushima a rich domain, however. This island's agricultural capacity was so small that the shipment of rice from Korea as well as from the Sō's fief in Kyushu was indispensable for the survival of the domain. One could argue, therefore, that Korea and Japan from the seventeenth century onwards dealt with each other by creating a buffer called Tsushima in order to maintain peace without infringing either regime's worldview. Tokugawa assumed Korea was a junior partner that sent envoys to the enthronement of the shogun, while Korea treated Tsushima as a vassal. Tsushima existed as an independent actor in between because of the need to facilitate the volatile relations across

⁶ James Lewis, *Frontier Contact between Choson Korea and Tokugawa Japan* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 18-27.

⁷ Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan*, 31-42.

⁸ Lewis, *Frontier Contact*, 119-20.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 137-45.

the strait. This trilateral framework went into decline from the early nineteenth century, and the arrival of the *Posadnik* served as a catalyst to place the island under a different geopolitical context.

The historiography of the Tsushima incident has evolved in line with the overall narratives of modern Japanese history. Since the early-twentieth century nationalist accounts of the Japanese struggle against Western imperialism have received much emphasis,¹⁰ while from the 1950s onwards the influence of Marxist history directed some scholars to portray the incident as the Tsushima people's successful resistance against imperialism.¹¹ Since the 1980s the re-examination of the *sakoku* thesis has led historians of the Tokugawa era to reframe Tsushima as a border zone between Korea and Japan, although in this narrative the Tsushima Incident itself has receded into the background.

Meanwhile specialists on the history of Russo-Japanese relations have tended to argue that Russia was a friendly nation to Japan in the early years of treaty relations. They have thus downplayed Russia's imperialistic motives towards Tsushima and argued that the Tsushima Incident was merely an opportunistic move by naval officers that did not represent the will of the government.¹² This, in turn, has been denied by Fumoto Shinichi and Itō Kazuya who have shown that the tsar gave his personal approval to the plan.¹³ However Fumoto and Itō still emphasise the fundamentally friendly, good-hearted nature of Russian diplomacy

¹⁰ Nezu Masashi, while emphasising the danger that the occupation of Tsushima could have led to the collapse of the Japanese economy and ultimately to colonisation, argued that Japan narrowly managed to maintain independence in the midst of an equilibrium among the capitalist countries. Hino Seizaburō's monograph, based on his research notes from the late 1930s and published posthumously in 1979, emphasised this Anglo-Russian dimension but relied mostly on Japanese language sources in Tsushima. A recent monograph by Robert Hellyer follows Hino's framework while benefitting from a wider range of English and Japanese sources. Nezu Masashi, "Bunkyū gannen rokan Posadonikku no senkyo ni tsuite," in Yokoyama Yoshinori (ed.), *Bakumatsu Ishin to Gaikō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2001 [1934]), 155. Hino Seizaburō, *Bakumatsu ni Okeru Tsushima to Ei-Ro* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1979), 1; Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*.

¹¹ See, for instance, Inoue Kiyoshi, 'Futatsuno aikokushugi to kokusaishugi: bakumatsu gaikō no kihon mondai', *Rekishigaku Kenkyū* 137 (January 1949), 1-14.

¹² Hiroshi Kimura has noted that the Russian move towards Tsushima 'has been treated as not only completely unrepresentative of any grand design on the tsarist government's part, but also as merely the reckless and unauthorised action of some Russian naval forces'. Hiroshi Kimura, *The Kurillian Knot: A History of Japanese-Russian Border Negotiations* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008), 30.

¹³ Fumoto Shinichi, 'Posadonikku go jiken ni tsuite', *Tokyo Daigaku Shiryō Hensansho Kenkyū Kiyō* 15 (March 2005), 189-197; Itō Kazuya, *Roshiajin No Mita Bakumatsu Nihon* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2009).

towards Japan in this period. Kim Key-Hiuk's account emphasises the fear of aggression that the Tokugawa shogunate allegedly felt and stresses that this led Japan to pursue an expansionist policy.¹⁴ Michael Auslin has argued that the Japanese strategy in Tsushima was to 'preserve its territorial boundaries' and gives a positive assessment to the Japanese response as an example of its adapting itself to regional geopolitics.¹⁵ Yet he has not sufficiently addressed the structural shift that the incident represented. In this regard Robert Hellyer has given a detailed account of the local politics within the Tsushima domain and uses it as evidence to ultimately argue against the notion of *sakoku* as the defining ideology of Japan's foreign relations in this period.¹⁶

As Korea's significance receded into the background for the moment, Tsushima increasingly bore the appearance of a border zone connecting the Russian Far East and the East China Sea. At the macroscopic level the increased attention on the Tsushima strait reflected the post-Crimean War strategic consideration in St. Petersburg that Russian America would eventually have to be given up and that instead the focus of development in the Far East should rest on the Maritime Province and the Amur River region.¹⁷ Moreover, the conclusion of the Aigun Treaty in 1858 by the Governor-General of the eastern Siberia, Nikolay Muraviev, with the Qing had enabled Russian ships to sail down the Amur River to reach the Pacific. Then, in 1860, Nicolai Ignatieff, the director of the Asian department of the foreign ministry, arbitrated the Treaty of Beijing between the Qing and Britain and France that concluded the Arrow War. This led Russia to conclude its own Treaty of Beijing with the Qing in which it annexed the coastal region south of the Amur River down to the root of the Korean Peninsula. The opening of Vladivostok in 1860, close to the Russo-Korean border facing the Sea of Japan, was a case in point for this long-term vision.

The strategic shift away from the Pacific to the Far East put St. Petersburg in increasing competition with Britain, which maintained a dominant position in the China trade.

¹⁴ Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, 91.

¹⁵ Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, 77-82.

¹⁶ Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, 207-34.

¹⁷ Fumoto, 'Posadonikku go jiken ni tsuite', 191-2.

Likhachev, the commander of Russia's China Seas Fleet, discussed the importance of three 'choke points' for his fleet—between Sakhalin and Ezo, Ezo and Honshū, and the Korean peninsula and Kyushu—and emphasised Tsushima's vital importance in order to maintain access to the China Sea. Likhachev worried that, if Britain occupied Tsushima, Russia's navy would face the same containment strategy that it did in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. He also argued that the neutralization of Tsushima would not be faithfully observed by rival nations and therefore proposed to Admiral Constantine of the Russian imperial navy a decisive action by his fleet to avoid this possible predicament.¹⁸

The more immediate motivation for the Russians to attempt the occupation of Tsushima was British surveying activity, the first of its kind by a Western navy in the area. On 19 May 1859, HMS *Actaeon* entered a port on Tsushima. In the next seven months two British ships surveyed around the Tsushima strait, occasionally stopping at Tsushima and Pusan on the southern coast of the Korean Peninsula. The Tsushima officials complained that the Anglo-Japanese treaty forbade the landing of British persons at a closed port. John Ward, the captain of the *Actaeon*, asserted that the treaty only bound commercial ships.¹⁹

Britain's enhanced understanding of the local geography and its war against Qing China led to a dispatch by the British minister to Japan, Rutherford Alcock, on 21 February 1860 in which he observed to the foreign secretary, Lord John Russell, that the occupation of Tsushima was an option for Britain to consider. He noted that the possibility existed that Russia would take Ezo under the excuse of providing protection for the local feudal lord. He reckoned that other European countries would not find a compelling reason to fight a war with Russia over this issue. If this Russian takeover of Ezo came to fruition, it would mean that the port of Hakodate on the southern tip of Ezo would be 'Russia's Gibraltar' and Britain

¹⁸ Likhachev to Constantine, June 2, 1860. In BNGM 48, 9-16.

¹⁹ Hino Seisaburō, *Bakumatsu Ni Okeru Tsushima to Ei-Ro*, ed. Masanori Osa (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1968), 23. For a chronological summary of British activities around Tsushima, see Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, 213; William Beasley, 'From Conflict to Co-operation: British Naval Surveying in Japanese Waters, 1845–1882', in Ian Nish and Yoichi Kibata (eds.), *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, Volume 1: The Political-Diplomatic Dimension, 1600-1930* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 87-106.

would therefore need Tsushima ‘as its Malta’.²⁰ He argued that securing Tsushima as a naval base would enable Britain to contain Russia, protect its trade in China and could provide a deterrent to future problems with the Chinese court.²¹ Alcock’s argument shows the understanding of imperialists at the beginning of the 1860s that foreign occupation of islands around Japan was a real possibility. It also hints at the potential chain reaction. The decentralised nature of the Tokugawa shogunate’s feudal system would have only accelerated that scramble once it started.

By 1860 the shogunate had become vaguely aware, through communication with foreign visitors to Nagasaki, of the increasing attention being paid to Tsushima by Western vessels. In August 1860 a group of Russian naval officers who arrived from Beijing informed the Nagasaki magistrate, Okabe Nagatsune, of the possible occupation of Tsushima by Britain or France as a naval station from which it could launch campaigns against China. Philipp Franz von Siebold, a doctor at the Dejima in Nagasaki who was acting as an unofficial adviser on foreign affairs, brought back the same information from Beijing and even made a recommendation that Japan cede one port and one district within Tsushima to Britain and France, telling Okabe that it would be a small price to pay for avoiding a full confrontation with these countries.²² This report was immediately forwarded to Edo, where it caused fear among the shogunate’s senior officials in charge of foreign relations.²³ The shogunate held the same view as Alcock that a scramble against Japan was possible and rejected Siebold’s proposal as setting a dangerous precedent as well as strengthening the domestic opposition against the regime.²⁴

On 14 February 1861 Likhachev ordered Nikolai Birilev, the captain of the *Posadnik*, to go to Tsushima and ask for permission to conduct a coastal survey and build a naval base

²⁰ Alcock to Russell, 21 February 1860. TNA FO46/7 no15. Also see Hōya Tōru, ‘Ōrukokku ha Tsushima senryō wo iwanakattaka’, *Rekishigaku Kenkyū* 796 (2004), 16-21.

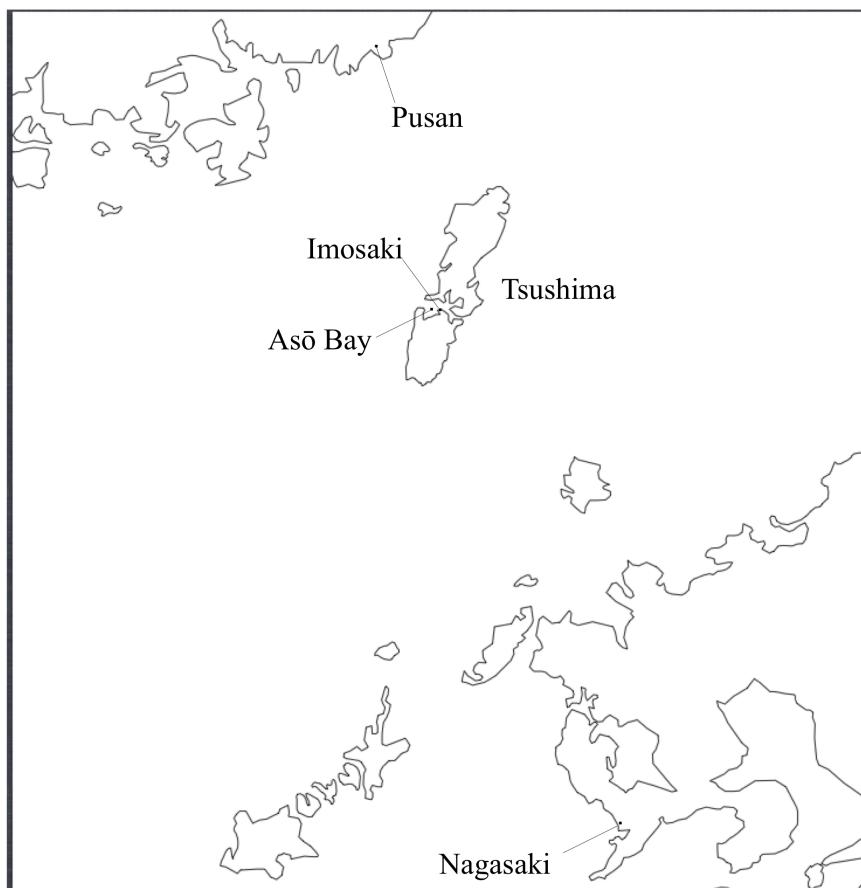
²¹ Alcock to Russell, 21 February 1860. TNA FO46/7 no15.

²² Siebold to Okabe. September 20, 1860. BGKM 42, 257.

²³ Okabe to Matsudaira Shikibu Shōyu. 24 September 1860. BGKM 42, 245-246.

²⁴ ‘Tsushima Taikan’. UTHI *Gaimusho Hikitsugi Hensan Shorui* 117.

on the island.²⁵ However his real intention was, as Constantine wrote privately to Likhachev in the previous summer, that the permanent lease of Tsushima's port should be agreed between the navy and Tsushima's ruler, or better yet that negotiation be avoided altogether and their presence made a simple *fait accompli*.²⁶ Lacking any knowledge of Tsushima's political institutions other than that it was a part of Japan's feudal system, Constantine left open the details of the terms to be sought and entrusted Likhachev to carve out the best deal for Russia.²⁷ Likhachev saw Tsushima as the future 'bulwark of the development of our navy', providing better access as a warm-water port in the Far East than recently opened Vladivostok.²⁸



Map 2: The Tsushima Strait

²⁵ Likhachev to Birilev, 14 February 1861. BGKM 48: 22-23.

²⁶ Constantine to Likhachev, 7 August 1860. Cited in Itō, *Roshia Jin no Mita Bakumatsu Nihon*, 158-60.

²⁷ Ibid..

²⁸ Likhachev to Constantine, 4 May 1861, Novgorod port. BGKM 52: doc 66.

The *Posadnik*'s arrival in Tsushima

Around 4 p.m. on 13 March 1861, Birilev sailed the *Posadnik* into Asō Bay on the western coast of Tsushima. He declared to the island's officials that his ship was in need of repair and would stay in the port until it was ready to sail again. He then made various requests to the local officials: provision of food and water; permission to build a hospital on the shore, so as to treat sick crew, and to conduct a survey of the coast; and a meeting with the lord of Tsushima.²⁹ The domain permitted the repair of the ship, provided food and water, but denied the audience with the lord. On the 18th Hirata Mozaemon, the envoy of the Tsushima lord, Sō Yoshiyori, met with Birilev and told him that the shogunate's law prohibited any private meetings between domain lords and foreigners. It took a while before Birilev understood Hirata's explanation, but when he did, the former demanded a secret meeting with the high-ranking officials of the domain.³⁰ Birilev's initial strategy was that of a charm offensive: on the 25th he offered to provide cannon to the domain as a show of gratitude for allowing his ship to stay in Tsushima while repairing. Although the introduction of cannon with Russian help had already been seen in Hakodate and Nagasaki, the Tsushima officials declined.³¹

Soon after the initial contact the Russians learnt the flaw in their adoption of stealth tactics. Firstly they had overestimated the degree of autonomy possessed by Sō Yoshiyori. With the knowledge before them of Japan's feudal political structure and the example of the Ryukyu Kingdom signing treaties with the United States, France and the Netherlands, they had assumed that the 'semi-independent' lord of Tsushima would be disposed to do the same with Russia.³² In reality, Sō showed no interest in handling the negotiations on his own. Secondly they were overly optimistic about the possibility of persuading the Tsushima

²⁹ BGKM 50: doc105.

³⁰ BGKM 52: doc 15.

³¹ BGKM 53: docs 63, 69. In the winter of 1860 in Hakodate, the shogunate installed Russian cannons that used to belong to the *Diana*, the ship that had wrecked on the shore of Shimoda in 1855. Hakodate Magistrate to Senior Councillors, the eleventh month of the first year of Ban'en (12 December 1860 to 10 January 1861). BGKM45: doc 36.

³² Likhachev to Constantine, 4 May 1861. Cited in Itō, *Roshia-jin no Mita Bakumatsu nihon*, 185. My translation.

islanders of the British and French threat. The Tsushima domain saw the Russians as intruders threatening the domain's survival in the same way that they had seen the previous visits by the British navy.

Tsushima reported the incident to Edo immediately after learning the Russian demands and requested the dispatch of a foreign affairs official. Edo's initial response, especially that of the top policy-makers, is difficult to discern from the surviving sources. What is noticeable, however, is the shogunate's attempt to conceal the incident from the other domains and the general public. Suzuki Hajime, who served in Mito domain's residence in Edo, was writing regular reports to Mito and took a clear interest in the rumoured incident. But he was only partially successful in discerning what exactly was happening in Tsushima.³³ Shiga Kurōsuke, a wealthy merchant in Nagasaki who personally knew Birilev as well as Okabe, the Nagasaki Magistrate, wrote to his son in Hakodate that the shogunate's officials told him not to speak of the incident.³⁴

The fact that Edo's response remained a mystery to many outside observers such as Suzuki for the next several months was partly due to the inevitably slow progress of the negotiations.³⁵ It took about three months before Oguri Tadamasa, one of the foreign magistrates based in Edo, arrived at Tsushima.³⁶ Meanwhile the Russian crew availed themselves of local timber without permission from Tsushima authorities and started to build what appeared to be a permanent settlement in Imosaki, facing Asō Bay.³⁷ Birilev wooed, coerced, and begged to meet Sō, but the latter made various excuses to deny him an audience.³⁸ Five weeks after his arrival, feeling increasingly desperate, Birilev bluffed that he possessed an official letter from the tsar addressed to the local ruler that warned of the danger

³³ Matsudaira Satoshi, 'Suzuki Hajime no jōhō tansaku katsudō', *Ritsumeikan Gengo Bunka Kenkyū* 23:3 (2010), 149-150; Suzuki's diary entry of 22 September 1861, reprinted in Shiseki Kenkyūkai, *Suzuki Hajime Nikki* (Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 1981), 412.

³⁴ Shiga Kurōsuke to Shiga Chikatomo, 19 September 1861. NMHC 13-67.

³⁵ It was only in early October the shogunate notified Western representatives of the incident and told them that the shogunate had sent official complaint to St. Petersburg. See, for instance, Kuze and Andō to Harris, 4 October 1861.

NAJP B13090015200 ZTZ Hennen no bu, 'Beikoku Ofuku Shokan San'.

³⁶ ISK3: 423.

³⁷ Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, 209.

³⁸ 'Gaikō Kiji Honmatsu Teihon Tsushima Taikan', UTHI Gaimushō Hikitsugi Shorui 512.

of a British armed occupation of the island in the near future. He then offered to provide defence for the island in the mutual interest of Russia and Japan, if the domain would give a permanent lease of the port and adjacent areas to the Russian navy.³⁹

No known evidence points to the existence of such a letter. In fact the correspondence between Constantine, Likhachev and Birilev suggests that such a letter could not have existed, as it would have contradicted the Russian government's intention to keep the matter out of diplomatic channels. The Tsushima officials themselves thought it was implausible and in reality it was only Birilev's tactical gambit for securing a meeting with Sō Nii Magoichirō, retainer (*karō*) of the domain, announced to his colleagues that the request for the meeting would be rejected.⁴⁰

By any standard this was an existential crisis for the Tsushima domain that had been struggling to sustain its economy after trading relations with Korea had declined in the early nineteenth century. Almost every month after the arrival of the *Posadnik* one or two Russian ships visited Asō Bay to replenish supplies and check on the progress of the occupation.⁴¹ The hydrographical survey of the island by the Russians was also underway, which led to a clash between local residents and the death of at least one peasant.⁴² The incident aggravated the Tsushima samurai class and commoners alike. Sō Yoshiyori saw the risk of an escalation that could lead to a fatal clash with Russia. He wrote to his subjects later on the day of the skirmish:

I understand the foreigners' prolonged humiliation of us has been challenging our patience. But we have restrained ourselves to this day in order to avoid opening a conflict. Now yet another event that we cannot tolerate has occurred. Nevertheless, we cannot but first report the incident to the shogunate. [And we] have already communicated this. It is my hope that the whole domain comes together, throws in

³⁹ ISK 3: 413.

⁴⁰ BGKM 52: doc 64.

⁴¹ Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, 213.

⁴² Hino, *Bakumatsu Ni Okeru Tsushima to Ei-Ro*, 102.

their lives and lives up to the reputation of our domain.⁴³

On the same day when Sō's statement was released a British ship, HMS *Raven*, coincidentally stopped at Tsushima to escape a storm. Consequently James Hope, the vice admiral of the China Station, reported the discovery of the Russian ship after reaching Nagasaki. Hope duly sent another ship, HMS *Actaeon*, led by John Ward, to Tsushima to inquire into Russia's intentions. Ward met with Birilev on the *Posadnik* on 4 June.⁴⁴ A Tsushima official who happened to be on board recorded a telling scene from their meeting. Ward and Birilev conversed amicably in Birilev's room, but as soon as Ward excused himself to another room Birilev, apparently a short-tempered man, showed his frustration by kicking the hat that Ward had left in his room.⁴⁵ Meanwhile Ward was convinced that Birilev had come to Tsushima with the intention of appropriating the island as a naval station by instigating a conflict with the local lord.⁴⁶

When Birilev met Oguri on 17 June following the latter's arrival three days before, his strategy had changed from seeking tacit approval for the stationing of Russian ships to direct negotiations based on the logic of power politics. He emphasized to Oguri that Russia had no interest in territorial gain. What he was asking, rather, was for a lease of a port on Tsushima so that the island would be safe from the British or French plots to take it over. Oguri was in favour of opening Tsushima for trade, but could not agree to any territorial secession. Oguri suggested that Birilev travel to Edo and negotiate directly with the senior councillors, but Birilev refused.⁴⁷

It was Oguri who then left for Edo, having spent just two weeks in Tsushima, with a view to obtaining the shogunate's approval for opening Tsushima to trade with Westerners. According to a report written by Suzuki, the Mito samurai in Edo, upon his return Oguri

⁴³ 'Gaikō Kiji Honmatsu Teihon Tsushima Taikan', UTHI Gaimushō Hikitsugi Shorui 512.

⁴⁴ Ward to Hope, HMS *Actaeon*, Asō Bay, 17 July 1861. TNA FO881/1009 no6 incl.4.

⁴⁵ Tsushima Fuchū Han Rokan Jijō Tōshin Tome, UTHI Ho-265-8.

⁴⁶ Ward to Hope, HMS *Actaeon* in Asō Bay, 17 July 1861. TNA ADM125/116 no168.

⁴⁷ 'Tsushima Goyōdome', UTHI Gaimusho Hensan Shorui 117.

proposed direct control of the island by the shogunate and the opening of a treaty port.⁴⁸ The senior councillors of the shogunate, however, disapproved of the plan, causing Oguri to resign.⁴⁹

In Tsushima, Birilev finally managed to meet the lord of Tsushima, Sō Yoshiyori, on 3 July. Five days later he escalated his demand to a permanent lease of the port and its adjacent area for the Russian navy, arguing that such measures would provide a defence against an allegedly imminent plot by Britain or France to occupy the island. But this did not change the domain's position on rejecting any lease or even negotiating on the subject.⁵⁰

All the while the Russian crew developed an entrepôt around Imosaki, near their initial place of anchorage. In fact, the construction was not limited to hospital quarters as initially requested; by August it had expanded to:

... a very complete establishment consisting of a Hospital, officer's quarters, chartroom, cook-house, blacksmiths and carpenters' shop and ward store - enclosure for live stock, a watering place with a Russian bath, and a pier, the whole connected by good paths and surrounded by the Russian Flag flying from a flag-staff erected on the hill above.⁵¹

In Edo, Alcock, who had initially leaned towards advocating the British occupation of Tsushima, retracted the idea after a meeting in mid-August between the two senior officials of the Tokugawa shogunate, accompanied by vice admiral Hope.⁵² In the meeting the shogunate officials had suggested the opening of a treaty port in Tsushima.⁵³ Although Alcock did not

⁴⁸ Nara Katsuji, 'Kōki Mitogaku to kokusai chitsujo', *Ritsumeikan Gengo Bunka Kenkyū* 23:3 (2010), 93.

⁴⁹ Nara, 'Kōki Mitogaku to kokusai chitsujo'; Hino, *Bakumatsu ni Okeru Tsushima to Ei-Ro*, 163-72; Wert, *Meiji Restoration Losers* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 17.

⁵⁰ Hino, *Bakumatsu ni Okeru Tsushima to Ei-Ro*, 191-8.

⁵¹ Hope to Paget, HMS *Encounter*, Tsushima. 29 Aug 1861. TNA ADM 1/5762 No 266.

⁵² Hōya, 'Ōrkokoku ha Tsushima senryō wo iwanakattaka', *Rekishigaku Kenkyū* 796 (2004), 16-21.

⁵³ This is a rather strange development since Oguri, who proposed the idea, had resigned after facing the disapproval of the senior councillors. According to his letter he sent shortly after resignation, Oguri

agree with this on the spot, the willingness of the shogunate to take a liberalising measure to counter Russia resulted in British intervention in the affair. Hope agreed to go to Tsushima immediately, arriving on 28 August. From this point onwards, it was the Anglo-Russian negotiations that determined the fate of Tsushima and the *Posadnik*. Hope asked Birilev whether the latter's ship was ready to leave upon any Japanese request and whether he had received an order to create a permanent base from the Russian government.⁵⁴ Birilev dodged the questions by stating that he was merely following his orders from Likhachev and surveying the coast. Hope then decided to meet with Likhachev in Olga Bay in the Russian Maritime Province. Failing to find him on the spot, Hope left a note for Likhachev in which he asserted that Russia had no right to erect buildings or enter into non-treaty ports unless absolutely necessary, and asked if it was trying to retain a permanent establishment or, if not, when it would leave.⁵⁵

The next day after his meeting with Hope, Birilev made his last attempt to strike a deal with the Tsushima officials. He told them that Britain had demanded control over Tsushima as compensation for the attack against its legation in Edo in July 1861. He further claimed that Hope had suggested to him that Russia and Britain split Tsushima in half because 'Russia came in first'.⁵⁶ This was no doubt Birilev's fabrication. Not only is any record to that effect absent in the British sources, but neither Hope nor Lawrence Oliphant, the secretary of the British legation who accompanied the admiral, was in favour of the British occupation of Tsushima.⁵⁷ The Tsushima officials refused to respond to Birilev's desperate blackmail and said that they would not believe it unless there was written evidence.⁵⁸ Meanwhile Likhachev received the letter that Hope had left at Olga Bay on 23 September. In his reply, Likhachev justified the *Posadnik*'s action by referring to the survey

said his resignation was partly due to his illness. Oguri to Mizuno, 6 August 1861. Reprinted in Jūbishi Yoshihiko, *Oguri Kōzuke no Shi* (Tokyo: Daiichi Shuppansha, 1929), 160.

⁵⁴ Hope to Birilev, HMS *Encounter*, Tsushima, 28 August 1861, TNA FO 410/2 no10 incl.3.

⁵⁵ Hope to Likatchov, HMS *Encounter*, Olga Bay, 5 September 1861, TNA FO 410/2 no10 incl.6.

⁵⁶ Hino, *Bakumatsu Ni Okeru Tsushima to Ei-Ro*, 238.

⁵⁷ Hope to Russell, August 2, 1861. BDFA I.E.1. doc.39. 86; Oliphant to Hammond, September 2, 1861. BDFA I.E.1. doc.30. 71.

⁵⁸ Hino, *Bakumatsu Ni Okeru Tsushima to Ei-Ro*, 238.

conducted by the *Actaeon* around Tsushima in 1859, but he nonetheless agreed to direct the *Posadnik* to leave.⁵⁹ Once its mission had been discovered and faced British intervention, it was impossible for the Russian navy to keep the matter off the diplomatic table. Likhachev had no choice but to step back.

Searching for a balance

The new political landscape for Tsushima required a new modus operandi in the language of modern international relations, not the ‘neighbourly friendship’ on which the Korean-Tsushima-Japanese relationship was built. The arrangements brought up by the Japanese, Russians, and British between 1861 and 1862 can be categorised into three groups. One is permanent lease or occupation, proposed by Alcock for Britain and tried by Birilev for Russia. The obvious disadvantage of this was the high risk of triggering countermeasures by rival powers, not to mention local resistance. That was why Constantine stressed that his navy should act outside the diplomatic channel in Edo. The whole idea was based on the hopeful assumption that Tsushima might deal with the Russians on its own.

The second option was neutralisation. When in the fall of 1861 Francis Napier, the British ambassador to St. Petersburg, asked Gorchakov, the Russian foreign minister, about Tsushima, the latter denied having any territorial aspiration towards the island (‘we want no occupation, no possession; do not speak of it so; the affair is settled’). He then suggested neutralisation of the island.⁶⁰ In December Gorchakov further demanded that Napier declare that Britain would not occupy Tsushima. Napier rejected this demand and pointed out that Britain had made an offer to sign a neutralisation pact regarding Tsushima among the treaty powers but that Russia had declined.⁶¹ But at the same time he made a similar proposal, suggesting to London that ‘officers of all nations desiring to make sovereign of the islands

⁵⁹ Likatchof to Hope, Hakodate, 23 September 1861, TNA FO410/2 no18 incl.2.

⁶⁰ Napier to Russell, St. Petersburg, 18 November 1861. TNA ADM125/116 no389.

⁶¹ Napier to Russell, St. Petersburg, 27 December 1861, TNA FO410/2 no24.

should solicit permission from the central govt of Japan[,] a course which is I believe followed under similar circumstances in regard to other governments'.⁶² Signing a multilateral neutralist pact over Tsushima was a cheap option requiring no military or financial commitment, but just because of that, its credibility had limitations. Yet it was not until a decade later that European states learnt of the weakness of neutralisation arrangements, when Gorchakov declared Russia was no longer bound by the Treaty of Paris of 1856 in which the Black Sea had been declared neutral.

The third option was to open a treaty port in Tsushima. This would prevent occupation by any one country. However on the treaty signatories' part, they had to station a consul, build a warehouse, and potentially station troops or at least a keep a vessel in the harbour in order to protect national interests and property. Given the scale of Tsushima's economy, the cost was deemed too high. On the Japanese side, opening a port meant that the shogunate would take over the rule of the port, if not the entire island, for the shogunate's policy was to maintain a monopoly over trade with the Western countries. Under the leadership of Andō Nobumasa the shogunate briefly pursued this option, and the local politics of Tsushima worked in its favour. Exacerbated by the burden of policing activities and the building of a cannon platform after the arrival of the *Posadnik*, the domain was destitute.⁶³ Facing this crisis, a group of domain officials led by Sasu Iori, who represented the domain in Edo, convinced the leadership that the only viable solution for their economic predicament was the domain's transfer out of the island into another fiefdom in mainland Japan.

The transfer of a feudal lord from one place to another in itself was a common practice for the ruling Tokugawa's affiliates. It was a method by which the shogunate promoted or demoted its officers. But it was rare for this to apply to *tozama daimyō*. The Sō family was *tozama* and had ruled Tsushima for over six centuries. Therefore asking for a transfer was not an easy decision for them and shows the degree of desperation they felt. The official plea by the lord of Tsushima to the shogunate was sent on 20 July and formally

⁶² Napier to Russell, St. Petersburg, 27 December 1861. TNA ADM125/116 no26 incl.

⁶³ ISK3: 417.

received on 5 September.⁶⁴ The request was denied, but the domain's increasing dependence on Edo for financial support had a long-lasting impact on the course of local politics and its relationship with Korea. The issue of a transfer was linked with the domain's factional politics and led to a series of coup attempts in the mid-1860s, claiming the lives of hundreds of the samurai class.⁶⁵

Another reason that the shogunate sought to open Tsushima was international. Having signed the Ansei treaties in 1858, the shogunate opened Nagasaki, Yokohama, and Hakodate to Western trade. The treaty also stipulated that the two cities (Edo and Osaka) and two ports (Niigata and Hyōgo) would be open from 1 January 1863. Yet the introduction of foreign trade had caused prices to escalate especially in the cities. An immense amount of gold drained out of the country due to foreign speculators who exploited the difference between the gold-silver conversion rate in and outside Japan. This inflation induced Japanese hostility against foreigners, as well as the shogunate, which people saw as incapable of resisting foreign pressure. Fearing that further exposure to trade would drive the public opinion out of its control, the shogunate called for the slower introduction of foreign commerce.⁶⁶ On 2 May 1861 the shogun Tokugawa Iemochi officially wrote to the ministers of the five treaty powers and requested that the opening of the two cities and the two ports be postponed.

This request irked the foreigners in Japan who were frustrated by the constant neglect, obstruction and sometimes overt attacks against their business. They did not see why they had to compromise first. Japanese xenophobic sentiment had been most brutally expressed by the armed assault against the British Legation in Edo on 7 July 1861. Laurence Oliphant, secretary at the Legation, was wounded in this attack and several Japanese guards were killed. The attack infuriated Alcock, who held the view that the attacks against foreigners were orchestrated by the shogunate. Moreover the shogunate's response to his

⁶⁴ Katsu Yasunori, *Kaikoku Kigen: Kakkoku jōyaku* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Hanshichi, 1893), 1765-1767.

⁶⁵ *Nagasaki Kenshi*, 1103-8; Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, 216-8.

⁶⁶ Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, 87.

demand for reparations and the arrest of the perpetrators was sluggish at best.⁶⁷ Alcock furiously wrote on 2 August in his dispatch to London that he was in favour of occupying Tsushima either as reparation for the legation attack or as a guarantee for uninterrupted trade in the future. With the knowledge of the *Posadnik*'s prolonged stay in Tsushima, he further justified his proposal by noting that a Russian seizure of Tsushima, if it materialised, would pose a serious threat to Japanese independence.⁶⁸

This was the situation at the time when the Sō transfer request arrived in Edo. The shogunate therefore had an incredibly difficult task before it. It had to soothe Alcock's anger by promising to answer his demand, but at the same time still pushed for postponement, which meant the suspension of Britain's treaty rights. The only card they could potentially play to meet these both goals was to open a treaty port in Tsushima. In normal circumstances, the remoteness of and lack of commercial opportunity on the island would have prohibited any possibility that the treaty powers would accept it as a substitute for the major ports and the cities. However, the Russian intrusion added a strategic dimension to the opening of Tsushima. Opening a port for access by any country's vessels could serve to secure it under shogunal rule. Yet the shogunate had to solve one question before playing the Tsushima card, and that was the issue of the shogunate's trade monopoly. All the treaty ports opened so far were under the shogunate's direct control, therefore it had a monopoly over trade with the Western (and Chinese, in the case of Nagasaki) merchants. But Tsushima was in the hands of the Sō family. If the shogunate allowed Tsushima to trade, that would undoubtedly invite other non-Tokugawa lords to demand permission for similar rights. Senior councillor Kuze Hirochika expressed his concern about the opening of Tsushima for this reason in the following spring.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, conveniently enough for the shogunate, the Sō family had just requested a transfer to another fiefdom. Thus if the shogunate wanted, it could put the island under its direct control and start trade there. Andō thus proposed opening a port in

⁶⁷ Alcock to Russell, 31 January 1861, TNA FO46/11 no8 incl1-1.

⁶⁸ Alcock to Russell, 2 August, 1861. BDFA I.E.1. doc.10.

⁶⁹ Alcock to Russell, 17 March 1862, Yeddo. Incl. Reprinted in *Parliamentary Papers, Correspondence respecting Affairs in Japan 1863*, 20.

Tsushima to Alcock in August 1861, with a view to killing two birds in one stone. The shogunate then dispatched another magistrate, Nonoyama Kanehiro, to Tsushima in order to investigate the general situation of the island and assess the feasibility of the transfer.

Upon his return to Edo in early 1862 after studying the island's situation for three months, Nonoyama suggested a plan that fell between neutralisation and opening of a treaty port. Instead of the transfer or the opening of a treaty port, Nonoyama proposed the establishment of a naval station where foreign battleships could stay and replenish essential supplies but not occupy any land. He reckoned that this could be done without the shogunate's direct control of the whole island, but by putting a few villages adjacent to the port under the administration of the Nagasaki Magistrate, whose office was only a few days' sail from the island.⁷⁰ In essence, it was an attempt to neutralise the island and to reduce the risk of a foreign takeover or an international conflict over Tsushima without incurring large spending by the shogunate. Nonoyama said this new plan should be overall 'along the lines of the [Russo-Japanese] Shimoda Treaty' of 1855.⁷¹ The Shimoda Treaty was an agreement that allowed Russian ships in distress on the Japanese coast to receive humane treatment and to buy food, water and coal only to the extent that it was absolutely necessary. The choice of the reference to this treaty over the 1858 commercial treaties was an indication that the new arrangement would be a continuation of the policy of limited modification of the shogunate's monopoly of foreign trade. At the same time it aimed at removing the risk of a similar incident in the future.

This plan would have made sense to all the parties concerned. The shogunate could minimise its financial burden because it did not need to transfer the Tsushima domain and take over the entire island, while reducing the risk of a foreign occupation. It could also save the trouble of reconfiguring diplomatic relations with Korea, which the Tsushima domain had taken charge of for centuries. For the treaty powers, it would ensure the neutral status of this strategically important island. That the treaty powers did not have to occupy it or open it for

⁷⁰ Katsu, *Kaikoku Kigen*, 1802-1803.

⁷¹ Ibid..

trade and station consuls meant much less military and financial commitment on their part. The Tsushima domain would spare itself from the need to build heavy fortifications that would be necessary were it to provide for its own defence and would stay on the island. In short, the plan aimed at creating a balance in the region at a minimal cost, instead of fighting to preserve the boundary and keeping foreigners away.

Nonoyama's return to Edo was five days after Alcock's departure, however. With the shogunate's mission and Alcock on their way to London for negotiating a condition for the postponement, nothing could be decided in Edo. As the foreign magistrates in Edo waited for the envoys' return, a discussion on Nonoyama's report began on 28 April 1862, and within two months they endorsed the plan for a naval station.⁷² By then, however, Andō and Kuze, the two top officials who had conducted the negotiations with Alcock about Tsushima's opening, had resigned from the post of senior councillor. The political will to change the status quo in Tsushima to strike a delicate balance had waned at the top.⁷³

Consequence

The power balance around Tsushima saw no obvious changes after the departure of the *Posadnik*. The British pushback against Russia maintained the status quo for the time being. Yet it left a lasting impact on the strategic thinking of those watching Russia's moves in this region. Specifically, the incident convinced the British diplomats in Japan of Russia's intention to expand its territory southwards. Russians in Hakodate provocatively told James Enslie, the British consul, that 'the fruit must be allowed to ripen'.⁷⁴ These words did not necessarily match the actual capacity of the Russian navy or reflect the majority view in St. Petersburg, but were sufficient to inculcate in the British mind that the Great Game had been

⁷² 'Gaikō Kiji Honmatsu: Tsushima Taikan', UTHI Gaimushō Hikitsugi Shorui Gaihen 512; Hino, *Bakumatsu ni okeru Tsushima to Ei-Ro*, 334-5.

⁷³ 'Gaikō Kiji Honmatsu: Tsushima Taikan', UTHI Gaimushō Hikitsugi Shorui Gaihen 512.

⁷⁴ Enslie to Neale, 2 September, 1862, Hakodate. TNA FO 410/2 no 5 incl.1.

extended to the Far East. Moreover, rumours spread about Russia's designs on Hokkaido, convincing the concerned Japanese as well as the British that Russia would aim to take the island when the opportunity arose. Enslie was probably the most alarmed among the British diplomats in Japan, since he had the opportunity to speak to the only Russian representative in Japan, Iosif Goshkevich, and witnessed the movements of Russian ships in and out of Hakodate. Enslie reported to Neale, British Charge d'Affaires, in September 1862 that Russia's choice of Hakodate as its base in Japan was 'wise and prudent', because it matched their aim of developing the Maritime Region.⁷⁵

Corea, Tsoosima, Hakodate, a port in the north of Nippon[*sic*; Honshū], and another in the north-west of that island, this is what the Russians require in Japan. Yedo, Osaka, and Kanagawa are not only useless to them, but Russia and its agents own that they wish to bring the centre of commerce nearer to their possessions, and they therefore regret to see the increasing importance of the South.⁷⁶

In order to achieve this, Russia, which did not have enough merchants in the region, needed a partnership with the Japanese. Therefore, Enslie asserted, Goshkevich's strategy was to make the Japanese believe that Russia was their 'protector' against Britain and France:

Russia saved China from the ambitious plans of the English and French, and is willing to act in the same friendly manner towards you, if... You will know," continues the Russian representative, "that we never come to force you to conclude treaties; we merely followed in the rear to keep a watchful eye upon the actions of others.⁷⁷

This rhetoric of Goshkevich as personified by Enslie shows the emerging British perception of Russia in the region. Russia could potentially challenge not only the British China

⁷⁵ Enslie to Neale, Hakodate. 29 September 1862. TNA FO262/44 no50.

⁷⁶ Enslie to Neale, Hakodate. 3 November 1862. TNA FO262/44 no69.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

squadron, but also British trade with China. It was surely aiming at the possession of Hokkaido, Tsushima, and even Korea. In view of this policy Goshkevich seized ‘every opportunity to show the Japanese that the interests of his country are diametrically opposed to those of England and France’.⁷⁸ This pattern resurfaced at the end of the 1860s with regards to Sakhalin, as will be seen in chapter 3.

Conclusion

The uninvited six-month stay of the *Posadnik* signified a change in Tsushima’s political landscape, though certainly the condition for change had already been developing beforehand. Until the early-nineteenth century its role was limited to being an intermediary between Korea and Japan. The decline of the Korean-Japanese trade was apparent by 1861, and the Tsushima economy was suffering to the extent that there was a fear of famine and the report of widespread infanticide.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, Russia’s acquisition of the Maritime Province from the Qing and the opening of Vladivostok right next to the Korean Peninsula, and the increased access by British merchants to China under the Treaty of Beijing drew the attention of the two governments and merchants to the status of Tsushima.

Russia considered the Tsushima Strait to be one of the most important strategic ‘choke points’ in East Asian waters. Assuming that the Tsushima domain could cut a deal with its navy independent of the shogunate, it sent the *Posadnik* to seek the establishment of a naval station for its exclusive use. However the Tsushima lord was not interested in cutting a deal with Birilev by himself, and the British discovered the *Posadnik* before any Russo-Japanese agreement was reached, thus creating the need to devise a balance among the parties concerned. Tsushima shunned the tactic of playing the Westerners against each other, because it had limited its role in the international arena to the traditional Korean-Japanese relations.

⁷⁸ Ibid..

⁷⁹ Hino, *Bakumatsu Ni Okeru Tsushima to Ei-Ro*, 329-35.

Under the new circumstances, the ruling Sō family found it difficult to bear the financial burden of negotiating with the Westerners and providing coastal defence. The domain decided to ask the shogunate for their transfer into a different fief in mainland Japan, leaving the island they ruled for centuries in the hands of Tokugawa. This controversial decision was a fatal blow to the integrity of domain's ruling class and brought about bloody infighting in the mid-1860s which killed ten percent of the island's samurai-class men.⁸⁰

For the Tokugawa shogunate, the Russian attempt to occupy Tsushima was a formidable challenge to its claim to be a sovereign ruler over the Japanese archipelago including Tsushima. Yet on the other hand, the presence of Russia in Tsushima gave the shogunate a diplomatic card that they could play against the British. Realising this, Andō tried to get the British to agree to the postponement of the opening of the two ports and the two cities previously agreed in the Ansei treaties.

Between 1861 and 1862 several proposals were brought up in Tsushima, Edo, London, and St. Petersburg as to the foreign powers' access to Tsushima. The first possibility was a permanent lease to a single naval power, aimed at by Russia, which could have created a dangerous prelude to territorial scramble against Tokugawa Japan. However the Russian navy failed to understand that it had to negotiate with Edo, not Tsushima, which would inevitably create diplomatic repercussions. Another option was to open Tsushima as a treaty port. Oguri, the foreign magistrate who negotiated with Birilev, put forward the idea combined with Tsushima domain's transfer. Alcock had a similar idea, as he was leaning towards accepting the Japanese request for delaying the opening of the previously agreed sites. Hence the London Protocol recommended the opening of Tsushima. The problem for this option was that there was no equal exchange to be found between Tsushima and what the Western treaty signatories were about to give up. Tsushima carried no commercial value and the costs of stationing consuls and developing the port facilities such as warehouses, custom office, residence for merchants and visitors and so forth, were deemed to be far less than the benefits,

⁸⁰ Moriyama Tsuneo, 'Tsushima han', in Nagasakiken (ed.), *Nagasaki Kenshi Hanseihen* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1973), 1122.

even if including the strategic benefit of denying any other naval power exclusive control.

The most astute idea came from Nonoyama, the foreign magistrate who investigated the island after the departure of the *Posadnik*. His idea was to place part of Tsushima under the shogunate's control and to open it to access to naval vessels from any country, while the rest of the island would remain in the Sō's hands. But in order for the three governments to agree on this, it required a global communication network among the three capitals and Tsushima. In practice, communications between Edo and London or St. Petersburg in 1862 took around two months each way. The multilateral diplomatic mechanism needed a modern infrastructure. It was not yet available to the negotiators.

Therefore the balance of favour which the negotiators contemplated – and their ideas sometimes concurred – was never put into practice. The *Posadnik* retreated, and no Russian attempt at Tsushima ensued (until the Russo-Japanese War). Nevertheless, the experience of living side-by-side with the Russian naval officers for six months brought to the Tsushima islanders an acute sense that their geostrategic situation had been altered. As the activities of the Westerners cast a shadow on the minds of the Tsushima islanders, their domain's financial conundrum lingered on. Now that the Western takeover of the island had been aborted, there were two paths that it could take. One was to go back to the old way – the revival of relations with the Koreans. The other was to give up its diplomatic prerogative with regards to the Korea trade and let the shogunate take the wheel. The domain's transfer request and the ensuing plea for financial aid indicated the tentative triumph of the latter course, but this was arrived at only after bloody internal strife. The need to reform the domain's economy continued to play a vital role in the island's politics and the relations with Korea. Ultimately this came to an end with the termination of trade ties with Korea, signified by the closure of the *waegwan*, Tsushima's trading house in Pusan, in the autumn of 1872. That is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 2 Tsushima's struggle for survival

The opening of the era in which Tsushima's geographical location bore a military significance to Britain and Russia, meant that the ambiguous status of the previously held Korean-Japanese relations had to go through fundamental change. The most decisive watershed for the emergence of the boundary in this area came therefore with the demise of the Tsushima domain in the summer of 1871 when Sō Shigemasa, who changed his name from Yoshiakira after the Meiji Restoration, applied for the liquidation of his *han* and the Meiji government took it over along with all the other domains. There was a brief epilogue to this last phase, in which the remaining Tsushima officers in the *waegwan*, the walled-up premise for temporary residence offered to the Tsushima officials and merchants by the Korean court, tried to block the Meiji government's direct approach to Korea bypassing them, but that came to an end with the dispatch of Hanabusa Yoshimoto from the foreign ministry in September 1872. The task of the present chapter is to account for the death of Tsushima as the border zone between Korea and Japan up to 1872.

How did Tsushima, a broker between the Korean and the Japanese authorities with centuries of experience, cope with the challenge of the arrival of the new international system? As was discussed in chapter 1, the *Posadnik* incident marked a fundamental shift in the island's position in the international politics of East Asia, with the more prominent role being played by the Western naval powers, attaching to Tsushima a geopolitical meaning that the Japanese and Korean maritime activities had not. This was a culmination of the increasing attention they paid to the island, following their surveying activities. However, with the withdrawal of the Russians, it became clear to outside observers that one country's attempt to carve out a concession would inevitably face opposition from the others, in addition to the cost of antagonising the Japanese authorities. As a result, there emerged a subtle diplomatic

equilibrium around Tsushima. Thus Tsushima's economic struggle for survival throughout the remainder of the 1860s and the early 1870s involved no intervention from Western governments. Its officials were accordingly able to turn to reviving its relations with Korea as a possible way out of their dilemma. Although historians have acknowledged the role of Tsushima's economic concerns as one factor in Korean-Japanese relations, they have only just begun to examine the impact of Tsushima's local politics to the wider region. Overall the conventional historiography needs to pay more attention to where Tsushima's motivations for reform came from, and fully take into account the variety of views presented within Tsushima itself, as well as the Meiji government. Rather than any long-held Japanese appetite to invade Korea, it was ultimately the economic unsustainability of and the schism within Tsushima, which predated the well-known diplomatic stalemate with Korea in the early 1870s, that brought about the demise of the island's special position within the regional order.

Economic problems and Tsushima's effort for reform

The fundamental problem for Tsushima's finances was that the domain was never deemed to be self-sufficient without performing the intermediary role between Korea and Japan. With mostly hilly terrain and far from fertile soil, it was never going to possess a successful agricultural economy. From 1776 to 1862, Tsushima was the only domain that received an annual cash subsidy from the shogunate amounting to 12,000 *ryō*. In 1790 this accounted for thirty-three per cent of the domain's revenue, while the Korea trade provided thirty-six per cent and rice and barley from the domain's fief comprised thirty-one per cent. Historians generally agree that the trade with Korea was on decline from the mid-eighteenth century, and this pushed Tsushima into a structural debt problem.¹ According to the domain's petition for aid to the Meiji government in 1869, food production in the domain (including its

¹ Nagano Susumu and Chung Surgil, '18 seikimatsu Tsushima-han zaisei ni okeru Chosen bōeki no chii', *Saga Daigaku Keizai Ronshū* 22:6 (March 1990), 99-141.

fief in Kyushu) was just over 18,000 *ku* (of which just one-fifth was produced on the island), while the demand of the domain's samurai class exceeded 47,000 *ku*.² Since the domestic production fell far short of the demand, as Tashiro Kazui has noted, 'any fluctuations in the Korean trade were of crucial importance, for they meant the prosperity or decline of the domain itself'.³ Consequently by the mid-nineteenth century Tsushima had piled up debts to a series of agents, ranging from local wealthy merchants (mostly in fishery), the Korean court in Pusan (as they kept failing to honour the agreement on annual exchanges), and Osaka-based merchants. By 1862 the debt had reached 800,000 *ryō*.⁴ The economic stagnation of the domain was so desperate that at the end of the Tokugawa period all of the domain's rice, produced in its fief in Kyushu, went to service the debt.⁵ This economic predicament was one of the main reasons why the transfer request was made in the wake of the *Posadnik* incident.

The reason why the *Posadnik* incident proved to be a catalyst for change in Tsushima is that it accelerated the existing tensions between the different political factions. The transfer request exacerbated the political chaos that already existed in Tsushima prior to the arrival of the Russians (or for that matter, the British two years before).⁶ The factional feud that started as a race for domain leadership intensified as the result of the transfer request, for the shogunate's denial was seen by many as damaging their honour. The factions increasingly gave the appearance of being pro-Chōshū on the one hand and pro-shogunate on the other. On 29 September 1861 the members of the pro-Chōshū faction travelled to Edo and killed Sasu Iori, the domain's representative in Edo, who had authored the transfer request. One month later the Tsushima and Chōshū domains secretly signed an alliance pact. This meant that the

² Ishikawa Hiroshi, 'Meiji ishin ki no Tsushima hansei to Nicchō Kankei', *Chosen Gakuhō* 183 (2002), 8-9.

³ Tashiro Kazui and Susan Downing Videen, 'Foreign relations during the Edo Period: Sakoku reexamined', *Journal of Japanese Studies* 8:2 (Summer 1982), 283-306. Here 298.

⁴ Nagasakiken (ed.), *Nagasaki Kenshi*, 1151. This would have been a little over one million dollars. Recall that the indemnity imposed on Chōshū after the shelling of Shimonoseki in 1864 was three million dollars, and that the shogunate could only afford to pay half the amount. See FO46/65 no18, Parkes to Clarendon. 31 January 1866, Yokohama.

⁵ Nagasakiken (ed.), *Nagasaki Kenshi*, 1152.

⁶ Ibid., 1103-8; Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, 216-8.

Tsushima domain would follow Chōshū's lead in carrying out anti-foreigner attacks.⁷

The denial of the transfer request meant that Tsushima had to find an alternative way of ameliorating its food shortage. It thus began to lobby for support from the shogunate for compensation to make up for the loss of profits from the Korea trade. It helped Tsushima that the relations between the shogunate and Chōshū in the early 1860s were not as bad as they would later become in the middle of the decade. Tsushima could be allied with Chōshū and seek support from Edo for the time being.

Between late 1862 and 1864, Tsushima submitted a series of requests to the shogunate for financial and military aid. At first Tsushima asked for military support based on the assertion that the recently adopted policy of *jōi* would expose the island as the first target of retaliation by the Western countries. Given the recent memory of the Tsushima Incident this was not farfetched. Its demand was emboldened when on 20 February 1863 Tsushima, as the result of its lobbying with the support from Chōshū, received the emperor's direct order to carry out attacks on foreigners.⁸ In the letter submitted to Edo on 14 March Tsushima argued that its economic reliance on Korea in this precarious moment posed a threat to its survival and it was essential that it be replaced with domestic sources. Now Tsushima was able to claim that the domain's security and economic issues had national significance. On 7 May Chōshū demanded, on Tsushima's behalf, that the shogunate give the island domain an annual aid of 100,000 *koku*, along with the lease of military vessels and cannons. At this point Korea did not factor into the demand for support; instead the letters mentioned Korea as a substantial source of income for Tsushima that needed to be replaced by domestic sources.⁹

But this changed after an instruction was given to Tsushima from Itakura Katsujiyo, the retainer and the effective head of the Tokugawa regime at the time, to investigate the situation in the Korean peninsula, and the following meeting between Ōshima Tomonoyō, who administered Tsushima's office in Osaka, and the shogunate officials, Katsu Kaishū and

⁷ Nagasakiiken (ed.), *Nagasaki Kenshi*, 1128-30.

⁸ Hyun Myung Cheol, 'Tsushima han *jōi* seiiken to enjo yōkyū undō', in Inoue Katsuo (ed.), *Kaikoku* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2001), 203.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 204-9.

Yamada Hōkoku. Katsu was in charge of the shogunate's naval affairs and Yamada was a Confucian scholar from Chōshū who advised Itakura. Tsushima's letter to the shogunate submitted two weeks after Ōshima's meeting with Katsu and Yamada, in turn, emphasised that Western troops could use Korea as a base from which to attack Tsushima. It recommended altering the policy of 'retreat and defence' to 'taking measures before foreign barbarians (*gaii*) intrude into Korea'.¹⁰ Thus Tsushima's demand came to adopt the logic that its security, and by extension Japan's national security, was linked with the situation in Korea. Itakura, in spite of opposition from within the shogunate leadership, decided to give the Tsushima domain an annual aid worth 30,000 *koku*. This was roughly the same amount as the annual rice production of the Sō's lands in Kyushu, and covered most of the domain's needs for the stipend to be distributed among the samurai class.

Some historians have portrayed Tsushima's demand for aid and its linkage with the situation in Korea as a harbinger of *seikanron* in Tsushima, based on the jingoistic language used in these letters. Kimura Naoya and others have pointed out that Ōshima's letter in 1864 received a word-by-word editing by Yamada. In this letter Ōshima called for drastic reform of Korean-Japanese relations which he saw as obstructed by anachronistic customs. He recommended the commencement of the exchange of envoys between Seoul and Edo, without the unnecessary grandeur of the current Korean envoy; to approach Korean commoners to garner support for renewed Korean-Japanese relations; arms exports in order to gain the confidence of the Korean court; the provision of technical support in various industries; the subjugation of Koreans by force if necessary; the opening of trade with Beijing via Korea; and the strengthening of Japan's navy.¹¹ Indeed the statement shows an aggressive attitude towards Korea, if backed with little evidence of viability. Yet to indict Ōshima as a forerunner of Japanese imperialism convinced of the desirability of invading Korea based on the contents of this letter alone, as suspected by Kim Key-Hiuk and others, is an overstretch.¹²

¹⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, 212.

¹¹ Kimura Naoya, 'Genji gannen Ōshima Tomonojō no Chosen shinshutsu kenpakusho ni tsuite', *Shigaku* 57:4 (March 1988), 113-127.

¹² Kim, *The Last Phase*, 97.

After the departure of the *Posadnik*, even though foreign vessels kept appearing on the shores of Tsushima, no records suggest that the island domain conducted any attacks against them in the same manner that Chōshū attacked Western vessels in the straits of Shimonoseki. When, on 4 July 1864, one foreign ship anchored at a bay in Tsushima, the domain's response was to send officers on board to inquire into the situation – the same manner in which it approached the *Posadnik*.¹³ Furthermore, as will be discussed later, Ōshima himself proposed a much more measured approach to Korea after the Meiji Restoration. Nor did he support the proposal to send thirty battalions to Korea, which was drafted by a foreign ministry official named Sada Hakubō following his investigation into the situation in *waegwan* in the spring of 1870.¹⁴ It is possible that Ōshima changed his position after the regime change in the capital. It is equally possible, however, that Ōshima was merely adjusting his rhetoric to the liking of the shogunate leadership in order to ensure full financial support for his domain. Hyun Myong Cheol's view that Ōshima accepted the shogunate's view and altered the arguments looks more convincing than the assertion by Kim.¹⁵

With 30,000 *koku* promised to arrive every year, it looked as though the domain's finances were finally secure. However Tsushima was put in an increasingly awkward position as the schism grew between the shogunate and Chōshū, the trend that became decisive after the Shimonoseki war in 1864 and the negotiations for indemnity which fell upon the shogunate. The shogunate terminated the aid to Tsushima in 1864, after providing the much-wanted 30,000 *koku* of rice for just two years.

Tsushima's effort to draw support from Edo by emphasising its strategic importance failed to address the core problem. Little earnest effort to increase the island's food production seems to have taken place in the 1860s. The statistics submitted to the Meiji government in 1868 and 1869 show Tsushima's crop production within the island (which was all barley) as 2,324 *koku* and 3,793 *koku* respectively, still falling far short of supporting

¹³ ISK vol.5, 304. The ship of unknown nationality left after several days' stay.

¹⁴ Ishida Tōru, *Kindai Ikōki no Nicchō Kansei* (Hiroshima, Keiryūsha, 2012), 129.

¹⁵ Hyun, 'Tsushima-han jōi seiken to enjo yōkyū undō', 213.

itself.¹⁶ Instead the domain leadership's strategy in the early 1860s was to focus on developing relations with the Tokugawa shogunate by presenting itself as a focal point for national security. When animosity against foreigners was at its peak across the country, this rhetoric garnered much sympathy from the shogunate as well as in Chōshū. But as soon as the shogunate's stance diverged from Chōshū's, this ceased to be a viable survival strategy.

It was clear that after 1865 the shogunate became reticent about supporting Tsushima. The domain asked to resume the support of 30,000 *ku* twice in 1865,¹⁷ but the shogunate gave less than ten percent of that amount in 1865 and 1866.¹⁸ The growing difficulty in Tsushima is apparent in that in the summer of 1866 the domain encouraged its samurai class to engage in farming.¹⁹ The challenge for supplying rice to the samurai class was compounded by the sheer number of the latter. As the domain economy struggled, Tsushima had increasingly relied on donations from wealthy merchants who had typically had success in fishery and whaling. Having nothing else to offer in return, the domain promoted these merchants to the samurai class. By the time of the domain's liquidation in 1871, almost half of the all households in Tsushima were categorised as 'samurai'.²⁰

Once the rice provision from the shogunate was dramatically reduced, Tsushima looked to the other side of the straits for support. Nowhere was the need to reform the relations with the Korean counterparts felt more strongly than at the *waegwan*. On 24 February 1867, some ninety Tsushima islanders residing in the *waegwan* breached the rule about not leaving the premises and travelled to the prefect's office in Donglae, the province that included Pusan and which oversaw interactions with the Japanese at the *waegwan*, in

¹⁶ Ishikawa, 'Meiji ishin ki no Tsushima hansei to Nicchō Kankei', 3, 8.

¹⁷ ISK6:180, ISK6:213.

¹⁸ ISK6:240. The record shows that the shogunate gave 5,000 bushels (*hyō*). The unit *ku*, equal to 1000 *gō*, was counted slightly differently from one domain to another, but the shogunate defined one bushel of rice as 350 *gō*. With this conversion rate, the aid granted to Tsushima this time was 1,750 *ku*, a pittance to what it had wanted to receive.

¹⁹ ISK6: 479.

²⁰ As of July 1869, Tsushima had 15,062 samurai, compared with 14,639 commoners. Nagasakiiken (ed.), *Nagasaki Kenshi*, 1171.

order to complain about the delayed provision of rice and cotton.²¹ The *waegwan* residents were in an especially precarious position because all of their daily provisions were supplied by the Koreans. The biggest fear for the residents was to be deprived of these supplies, to which the Koreans sometimes resorted in order to force the *waegwan* residents to behave as they wanted.

In order to break away from the ever-accumulating debt to the Koreans, and apparently without consulting Edo, in early 1867 Tsushima sent Nii Magoichirō, who had negotiated with Nikolai Birilev, the captain of the *Posadnik*, as an envoy to Pusan. This was in part a response to the news of heightening diplomatic tensions in Korea. The year 1866 saw two major incidents involving Westerners in Korea. In February nine French missionaries were killed. Later that year an American merchant ship, the *General Sherman*, was burnt in Pyongyang, with all twenty-four crew killed after landing for the purpose of procurement.²² The language in the letter carried by Nii suggests that Tsushima feared that French or American retaliation might jeopardise Korea's independence. In this unprecedented move for a domain whose primary function was to liaise between the Korean court and the Tokugawa shogunate, Nii called for reform in Korea-Tsushima trade relations. He proposed to establish direct communications between Tsushima and Donglae. One of the key measures proposed was arms exports from Tsushima.²³ The letter referred to the 'uncertain situation of the world in which countries focus on defence' and called for the need of Korea and Tsushima to assist each other.²⁴ It seems that the idea of the arms trade had been on the domain's agenda for some time before Nii's proposal, as it had appeared in Ōshima's letter to the shogunate in 1864.²⁵

This was no minor issue to bring up for Nii. Arms trade had been absent from Korean Japanese interaction for close to 300 years, since the Japanese invasion via Tsushima in the

²¹ Entry on the third day of the second month of the fourth year of Kojong. *Choson Wanjo Sillok*, vol.1 p.257. Accessed at <http://sillok.history.go.kr/> on 18 August 2015. Ishida, *Kindai Ikōki no Nicchō Kankei*, 90.

²² Kim, *The Last Phase*, 47-51.

²³ Ishida, *Kindai Ikōki no Nicchō Kankei*, 78-9.

²⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, 78.

²⁵ This suggestion of arms trade is another indication that the bellicose rhetoric used by Ōshima towards Korea might not have represented the real intention of the domain.

1590s.²⁶ In fact, arms exports by any domain were prohibited by the shogunate. Yet Tsushima's economy was so bad by 1867 that some extraordinary measure was inevitable. Since Tsushima did not produce surplus agricultural products for export, arms seem to have been one of the few items it could offer. It is also possible that the domain saw a benefit in strengthening the defence capability of the Koreans. Ōshima in 1864 argued to the shogunate that there was 'no question' that Japan should supply arms to Korea, while it would be a great source of concern if other countries gave weapons to the latter.²⁷ Ōshima's proposal indicates that this was meant to be a preemptive measure in the interests of Japan's national security. It is unclear, though, where Tsushima would have procured arms for export.

As Ishida Tōru has shown, this proposal for arms trade backfired and had a lingering negative effect on Korean-Japanese relations, as it raised concerns among the Koreans who oversaw the Japanese relations. Most importantly it led to countermeasures from the Taewongun, including the appointment of his close aides to Donglae. Jeong Hyeon-deok became the provincial prefect, and Ahn Dong-jun took direct charge of *waegwan* affairs in Pusan. James Lewis has noted that their unusually long tenure may well point to the Taewongun's personal confidence in them.²⁸ The Taewongun instructed Jeong and Ahn to reject any communications diverging from the old custom. Ishida has argued that this was the reason why the Korean officials year after year refused to receive Japanese communications on the grounds that the format was not right.²⁹ The diplomatic conundrum around the Tsushima strait needs to be seen in this light – Korea had a problem with the format as well as the messenger who was trying to redefine its role in the trilateral relations.

Without Tsushima's attempt to reform the trade scheme with Korea and the Taewongun's personal instruction against it, the ensuing issue over the letter format in itself could not have produced such a prolonged conundrum. Irregularity in the letter format in itself was not new in Korean-Japanese communication. Lee Hun has shown that there had

²⁶ Ishida, *Kindai Ikōki no Nicchō Kankei*, 82.

²⁷ Reprinted in Kimura Naoya, 'Genji gannen Ōshima Tomonojo no Chosen shinshutsu kenpakusho ni tsuite', *Shigaku* 57-4 (March 1988), 113-127. Here 122.

²⁸ Lewis, *Frontier Contact between Choson Korea and Tokugawa Japan*, 170.

²⁹ Ishida, *Kindai Ikōki no Nicchō Kankei*, 80-85.

been close to 200 such cases between 1614 and 1840, and that the Korean response had not amounted to outright refusal to receive them in all of these years.³⁰ At least on one occasion Korea received an irregular letter from Japan. Ishida notes that in 1860 Korea received Japan's notification of the signing of the commercial treaties with the Western countries in 1858, even though it did not match the form of previous examples.³¹ It is thus highly probable that Taewongun's countermeasures in response to the Nii mission of 1867 began to adversely affect relations between the Korean court and Tsushima, thus preventing the former from accommodating the Japanese approach later on.

Therefore the strained relations between the Meiji government and the Korean court after 1868 had their origin in communications that predated the installment of the emperor in Tokyo. It is also necessary to bear in mind that Tsushima's policy regarding Korea was to a large extent based on its economic predicament. It is possible that its jingoistic rhetoric was the result of its effort to please Chōshū men like Yamada who had an influence on the shogunate's policy-making until Itakura's demise in 1866.

After the Restoration

The immediate aftermath of the fall of the shogunate was necessarily a confused period and there was no clear line within the newly emerging government as to who should take the lead in negotiating with Korea. On 14 May 1868 the new government, still busy consolidating its power in the capital that it had captured a month before, noted to the Tsushima domain that it should take charge of diplomacy with Korea and inform Pusan of the enthronement of the emperor. Sō Shigemasa, the domain leader who had accompanied the imperial force to Osaka during the Boshin War, did not lose this opportunity to make another demand for assistance from the new government, arguing that acknowledging his men's role in communications

³⁰ Ibid., 68.

³¹ Ibid., 68-70.

with Korea was inseparable from financially supporting his domain.³² In other words he claimed that Tsushima could not handle relations with Korea on its own, since it could not prepare the gifts that would have to accompany the mission. Indeed in the summer of 1868 the domain asked the Meiji government twice to give it copper to be shipped to Korea, as well as provide financial aid for commerce. The Meiji government denied both requests.³³

Sō's overture to the Meiji government was essentially a repetition of the request for support to the shogunate that Ōshima had made a few years previously. Tabohashi Kiyoshi has rightly argued that Tsushima's real motivation in taking charge of Korean relations was its economic concerns, and that the diplomatic reconfiguration was 'a superficial reason'.³⁴ What is also worth noting in Sō's letter is his reference to the fiefdom in Kyushu, not Tsushima Island, as the real home for his family. He noted that the Sō family had lost their base in northern Kyushu during the warring period in the fourteenth century and, 'having no alternative', ended up in Tsushima.³⁵ This statement makes a clear contrast to the emotional attachment to Tsushima Island felt by some of his subordinates, who regarded Tsushima to be their fatherland. At the very top of the domain, Sō understood that his family had been forced to move to this remote island with little productive capacity and little chance for prosperity outside of relying on external support. This emotional detachment from the island made it easier for Sō after the Meiji Restoration to take up a position within the foreign ministry, residing in Tokyo, while some of his officers attempted to stick with the status quo.

At the end of 1868 Tsushima sent a mission to Korea in order to notify it of the Meiji Restoration. By then, however, the Korean suspicion of Japan was mounting and the Koreans found an excuse to stall the negotiations due to the irregular nature of the Japanese communication. As is well known, Ahn Dong-jun complained about the use of the character 'emperor' to refer to the Japanese head of state. Higuchi Tetsushirō, Tsushima's envoy, was thus stuck in the *waegwan* without being able to deliver the letter from the Meiji emperor – a

³² Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankeishi*, vol.1, 137; Ishikawa Hiroshi, 'Meiji ishin ki ni okeru Tsushima no dōkō', *Rekishigaku Kenkyū* 709 (1998), 3.

³³ ISK9: 139; ISK 9:414.

³⁴ Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankeishi*, vol.1, 148.

³⁵ Ibid., 139.

disgrace on the mission's part.³⁶

As Higuchi's mission became stymied the Meiji government began taking firmer action by itself. On 7 April 1869, the Meiji government ordered Sō Shigemasa, back in Tsushima by then, to come to Tokyo.³⁷ Having just managed to finance participation in the Boshin War, Tsushima struggled to pay for its lord's visit to the capital. A government report on Tsushima's debt written a few years later notes that following Sō's travel to Tokyo in 1869 the domain's payment of stipend to the samurai class began to be delayed, while 'across the domain it was almost on the verge of a famine; the situation was beyond description'.³⁸ Sō Shigemasa in Tokyo again begged the Meiji government for financial aid, telling its leaders that he could not go home empty-handed. This time the Meiji government responded by granting Sō a fiefdom in Kyushu, worth 30,000 *koku*, to match the aid previously given by the shogunate.³⁹ However, the Meiji government did not accept the other request made by Sō, namely to compensate it for the future loss of trade which would result from the separation of the Korea trade from the domain's finances. Rather, Tokyo told Tsushima to continue trading with Korea.⁴⁰ This was not what Tsushima wanted to hear, and given that the Koreans' suspicions precluded any possibility of the swift resumption of trade in the near future, Tsushima's economy was barely solvent even with Tokyo's new commitment. What was worse, the crop yield in 1869 was particularly bad, producing less than half of the average year.⁴¹ Something had to be done to save the domain from total disintegration.

The Meiji government began to recognise the scale of the trouble in Tsushima and took the initiative. In October 1869 it told Tsushima that it foresaw no role being played by the Sō family in Korean-Japanese relations. The new relations would be based on modern international relations, the government reckoned, 'because Korea is a foreign country too, it

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 172.

³⁷ Ōuchi Hyōe and Tsuchiya Takao (eds.), *Meiji Zenki Zaisei Keizai Shiryo Shūsei* vol.9, (Tokyo: Kaizōsha: 1933), 320.

³⁸ Reprinted in *Ibid.*..

³⁹ ISK10: 178; ISK10: 211.

⁴⁰ Ishikawa, 'Meiji ishin ki no Tsushima hansei to Nicchō Kankei', 12.

⁴¹ Ōuchi and Tsuchiya (eds.), *Meiji Zenki*, 320.

does not bode well if our relations were not based on international law'.⁴² Tsushima naturally resisted the Meiji government's attempt to remove it from the equation and the foreign ministry for the moment backtracked and acknowledged Tsushima's role as a temporary measure.⁴³ Tsushima duly proposed to send Sō Shigemasa to Pusan in order to negotiate the re-opening of communications, but the foreign ministry dismissed the idea.⁴⁴

Despite the emerging tension with Tokyo, Tsushima had to do something to persuade Korea to talk to the new government. In the spring of 1870 Tsushima saw a narrow window of opportunity opening up for a new relationship between the Korean court and the Meiji government thanks to a suggestion made by Ōshima Tomonojō. Ōshima proposed that official letters between them should be addressed to their respective governments as an institution, rather than an emperor or king as an individual, thereby circumventing the issue of which character should be used to describe the Japanese emperor. Ōshima also suggested that the Tsushima envoy keep using the old seal given by the Korean court, not the one made by the Meiji government, which had been another reason for Ahn's rejection. Ahn approved the idea, and if all had gone well, this might have allowed Sō Shigemasa to visit Korea as the Meiji government's representative.⁴⁵ However, Seoul's position hardened as the result of a few incidents that purportedly showed Japan's hostile intentions towards Korea. A boastful comment by a lone samurai in Shanghai had begun to spread a rumour that Japan was planning an invasion of Korea.⁴⁶ Then there was a visit to Seoul by a German ship, the *Hertha*, which carried a Japanese interpreter – a confirmation, from the Taewongun's perspective, that Japan was collaborating with the Westerners to the detriment of Korea's interests. These incidents made it impossible for Ahn to proceed with Ōshima's scheme. Meanwhile in Tokyo, the hard-liners in the foreign ministry opposed the idea of dispatching Sō and instead appointed Yoshioka Kōki, an official who had no prior connection to Tsushima, as envoy.

⁴² Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankeishi*, vol.1, 194.

⁴³ Ibid..

⁴⁴ Ibid., 194-6.

⁴⁵ Ishida, *Kindai Ikōki no Nicchō Kankei*, 130. On this Ōshima's proposal in the spring of 1870, see also Makino Masashi, 'Meiji ishinki no Tsushima-han to "seifu tōtai" ron', *Nihon Rekishi* 766 (2012), 54-70.

⁴⁶ On this incident, known as Hachinohe affair, see Kim, *The Last Phase*, 71-6.

Yoshioka was the first non-Tsushima official in centuries to deliver a Japanese message to Korea, although the Tsushima islanders knew this would fail. The opportunity had been lost before Yoshioka landed on Pusan.⁴⁷

Having borrowed heavily from local and Osaka-based merchants throughout the 1860s, Tsushima had all but exhausted its possible source of lenders. As a last resort, Tsushima's officers in Osaka turned to Western merchants in the treaty ports without consulting the home domain. This reliance on foreign capital is an ironic turn of events for a domain previously known for its association with pro-emperor, anti-foreign, *sonnō jōi* ideology. Yet this was not the time for an ideological policy. In the winter of 1870, British, American, German, and Portuguese merchants in Osaka, Hyōgo, and Nagasaki provided cash as well as sugar and textiles at a monthly interest rate of 2.5 percent.⁴⁸ Having been unable to resume the Korea trade, however, Tsushima could not pay it back. The news of the unexpected debt to foreigners stunned the domain leadership as they realised they had sunk into an even deeper abyss. Unable to pay back any of the foreign creditors, the latter filed a lawsuit.⁴⁹ Prior to that, James Enslie, British consul in Hyōgo, tried to liquidate Tsushima's debt, having received complaints from one of the British creditors named Lucas Waters, but in vain.⁵⁰ Giving up the negotiations in Osaka, Lucas travelled to Yokohama to sue the Meiji government and make them enforce payment, leaving with Enslie copies of the six contracts that he had signed but which now proved to be worthless.⁵¹ The island's administration had all but collapsed.

As pressure was mounting from Japanese as well as foreign lenders, Tsushima once again reinvigorated the effort to move forward the negotiations with Korea. On 23 June 1871, Sō Shigemasa met with Hirotsu Hironobu, a Korea specialist in the foreign ministry. Hirotsu proposed the dispatch of Sō as a foreign ministry official, together with the removal of Tsushima from the Korea trade and compensation for the domain. Three weeks later Sawa

⁴⁷ Kim, *The Last Phase*, 121; Joe Hongihl, 'Meiji shoki Nicchō kankei no saihen to Tsushima', in Yokoyama Yoshinori (ed.), *Bakumatsu Ishin to Gaikō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2001), 229-30.

⁴⁸ TNA FO262/212 no35 Gower to Adams, 9 June 1871 Hiogo. Incl.

⁴⁹ Ōuchi and Tsuchiya (eds.), *Meiji Zenki*, 321-35.

⁵⁰ TNA FO262/212 no33 Gower to Adams, 30 May 1871 Hiogo. Incl.

⁵¹ TNA FO262/212 no35 Gower to Adams, 9 June 1871 Hiogo.

Nobuyoshi, the foreign minister, approved the plan. The success of the motion to dispatch Sō indicates the resurgence of moderate opinion on the Korea question within the foreign ministry. But the momentum was soon swept away by the political earthquake caused by the abolition of domains, announced officially on 29 August.⁵²

In the first half of 1871, as Tsushima was approaching the foreign ministry via Hirotsu to make a breakthrough by sending Sō to Pusan, it was doing everything to raise cash to service its debts. In March 1871 Sō Shigemasa wrote to the officers in Donglae, going over the head of Pusan-based officials, and begged them to meet with the foreign ministry officials who were there.⁵³ Around the same time the domain declared an emergency measure of taking over the private trade with Korea conducted by its merchants. This meant that all the profits from trade with Korea conducted by merchants would go directly into the domain's pocket, effectively forcing the merchants to make sacrifices for the domain's short-term financing. However, the domain rescinded the order after half a year, having met with opposition from the merchants as well as some of the *waegwan*-based officials.⁵⁴

Not long after this Sō Shigemasa began to make up his mind to give up the domain, for on 18 August, eleven days before the abolition of domains was officially promulgated, he asked Tokyo to take control of his fiefdom, citing excessive debt as the reason.⁵⁵ Tsushima's total debt to foreigners was ¥357,503. This was the third largest of all the domains at the time.⁵⁶ Unlike most of the other domains that accumulated foreign debt either as the result of botched trade projects or defeat in the Boshin War, Tsushima's economic difficulty stemmed from the long-term structural shift in the domain's diplomatic and economic situation. Adding to this its borrowing from the domestic sources, Tsushima's total debt exceeded ¥1 million.⁵⁷ Plagued with political infighting, and having exhausted every possible means of obtaining cash, the Tsushima domain in the summer of 1871 had lost all avenues for possible reform. If

⁵² Joe, 'Meiji shoki Nicchō kankei no saihen to Tsushima', 233.

⁵³ DNGM 4:271-2.

⁵⁴ Ishikawa, 'Meiji ishin ki ni okeru Tsushima hansei to Nicchō Kankei', 7; Ishikawa, 'Meiji ishin ki no Tsushima hansei to Nicchō Kankei', 31.

⁵⁵ Ishikawa, 'Meiji ishin ki no Tsushima hansei to Nicchō Kankei', 31-2.

⁵⁶ Nagasakiiken (ed.), *Nagasaki Kenshi*, 1177. The top two debtors were Akita and Morioka.

⁵⁷ Ishikawa, 'Meiji ishin ki no Tsushima hansei to Nicchō Kankei', 31.

the abolition of the domains had not taken place, some enforcement measures would have been imposed by the debtors. This would very likely have included the seizure of its Kyushu fiefdom by the Western merchants, since Tsushima had offered rice from there as security.⁵⁸ The abolition of the domains thus salvaged Tsushima, along with many other domains struggling with debt. The loans were taken up by the Meiji government, which paid Tsushima's lenders back by February next year.⁵⁹

After the domain was no more, Sō Shigemasa was willing to work under the foreign ministry to achieve the reforms that he had intended to implement vis-à-vis Korea. He was soon appointed director of foreign affairs, and the foreign ministry gave him an order to go to Korea on 18 September 1871.⁶⁰ However opinions within the foreign ministry were still divided on reliance on former Tsushima individuals to persuade the Korean court. Some officials, including Hirotsu, argued that dispatching Sō himself was the only way that the Koreans would respond, because they had made clear they would only talk to Tsushima people. He argued, having accompanied the Yoshioka mission and seen the stagnation firsthand, that it was no use just sending envoys if the Koreans would not agree to the new character of Japanese diplomacy. He was also dismissive of taking a tough stance and insisting on establishing direct communication between the two governments. This was because the Korean officials in Pusan, if unconvinced, always had the option of withdrawing provisions from the *waegwan* and virtually taking its residents, some 300 of them from Tsushima, as hostages. Because the sea was difficult to cross in the winter months, Korea's suspension of provisions would bring the *waegwan* residents to their knees. Hirotsu, who was then staying at the *waegwan*, therefore could not believe that the foreign ministry was still balking at sending Sō, as the Tsushima islanders struggled to survive: 'These days we are all exhausted, completely disoriented, not knowing what to say, and absent-minded'.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Nagasakiken (ed.), *Nagasaki Kenshi*, 1178-9.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1180.

⁶⁰ Ishikawa, 'Meiji ishin ki ni okeru Tsushima han no dōkō', 11.

⁶¹ CJ10-101.

Nevertheless others in the foreign ministry, such as Sada Hakubō and Yanagihara Sakimitsu, took a firmer stance against Korea and were more sceptical of the former Tsushima officials' allegiance to Tokyo. Seeing less reason to cater to what seemed to be the unreasonable intransigence of the Koreans, they preferred sending a foreign ministry official and to take a decisive step to revamp the Korean-Japanese relations with a demonstration of military force if necessary.⁶² Their hawkish stance was due partly to concern over what might happen if Korea was invaded by a Western country. Drawing on from information in the English-language newspapers, Yanagihara claimed that the Western nations were 'drooling over Korea increasingly year after year'.⁶³ In his view, the forerunner among the Westerners was Russia. Urase Mosuke, a foreign ministry official originally from Tsushima who accompanied the Yoshioka mission in March 1870 and had stayed in the *waegwan* ever since, reported a rumour that hundreds of Koreans had crossed the Heilongjiang River and fled to Russia's Maritime Region following a large-scale famine.⁶⁴ There was some truth in the rumour he heard. Steward Lone and Gavan McCormack have noted that in 1869 alone, some 7,000 entered Russian territory.⁶⁵ In addition, the foreign ministry kept receiving worrying reports about Russian moves in the northern border region of Korea, including the observation that the Russians in the Maritime Region 'seem to be secretly cultivating the Korean poor, persuade the Koreans at the first instance and make them a defence against our country'.⁶⁶ In the end the hawks in the foreign ministry prevailed, and at the end of 1871 the foreign ministry appointed Sagara Masaki, another non-Tsushima official but of higher rank than Yoshioka, to head the mission. The purpose was not to negotiate a new trade scheme, but simply to inform Korea of the abolition of the domains.⁶⁷

One month after the appointment, Sagara's mission arrived at Pusan. He ordered the return of Higuchi, the first post-Restoration envoy from Tsushima who had stayed in the

⁶² Joe, 'Meiji shoki Nicchō kankei no saihen to Tsushima', 223.

⁶³ CJ4-100.

⁶⁴ CJ6-48.

⁶⁵ Stewart Lone and Gavan McCormack, *Korea Since 1850* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 7.

⁶⁶ Hirotsu, Moriyama, and Yoshioka to the foreign ministry, 28 March 1871, Pusan. CJ6-58.

⁶⁷ Ishikawa, 'Meiji ishin ki ni okeru Tsushima no dōkō', 12.

waegwan for over three years trying in vain to deliver the emperor's letter about the Meiji Restoration. Sagara's mission did not carry high hopes nor was it ready to make easy compromise. The foreign ministry did not expect the Koreans to receive the letter that Sagara carried, but it reckoned that they could respond by withdrawing most of the Japanese from the *waegwan*, leaving ten to twenty merchants behind, in case the Koreans stopped supplies.⁶⁸

By this point the foreign ministry had become suspicious of what the Tsushima officials were up to in the *waegwan*. A few days after their arrival, the MOFA officials told the *waegwan* residents that no one except them was allowed to speak to the Koreans about diplomatic matters. 'Whether a samurai or merchant, it is strictly prohibited to inquire about the feelings [of the Koreans] or to make fallacious comments', the envoys told the head of the *waegwan*, Fukami Rokurō.⁶⁹ The negotiations soon reached the by now familiar stalemate. The Korean officials refused to receive the letter from Sagara and repeatedly declined to even meet him. Fukami, who was sympathetic to the foreign ministry despite his coming from Tsushima, was aggravated: 'this situation of the repeated delay of the conduct is extremely suspicious', he claimed. 'On the part of our envoy and myself, this [failure to deliver the emperor's message] is an utter disservice'. After much wrangling, Sagara finally managed to deliver his letter to Go Jae-Geon, who served in place of Ahn Dong-jun while he was away.⁷⁰ A reply, though, never came and the stalemate continued. Infuriated by what they perceived as the repeated disingenuity exercised by the Korean officials, the Sagara mission stormed out of the *waegwan* on 1 June 1872 and went to Donglae magistrate office on foot, which took them five days.⁷¹ The record of the Donglae magistrate shows that fifty-six '*waegwan* Japanese and others' arrived at the gate, which suggests that not only the MOFA officials and the Korean officials – who presumably were forced to lead the way – but Tsushima men also took part.⁷² But the guards at the gate denied their entrance or the demand to see Jeong. The

⁶⁸ DAJP 1.1.2.3-4 'Taikan seisaku kankei zassan', vol.1, foreign ministry to Shikan.

⁶⁹ CJ11-14. Gaimu Shusshī to Kanshi, 26 February 1872.

⁷⁰ Kim Ui-hwan, *Chosón taeil kyosōpsa yǒn'gu* (Seoul, T'ongmun'gwan, 1966), 207.

⁷¹ CJ12-74. Yoshioka to foreign ministry, 29 July 1872.

⁷² Pusan Sisa P'yōnch'an Wiwōnhoe (ed.), *Tongnae-bu Kyerok* (Pusan: Pusan Sisa P'yōnch'an Wiwōnhoe, 1964), 459.

party returned to Pusan ten days after the departure, empty-handed.⁷³

Hanabusa's mission to Pusan, the autumn of 1872

After this headlong approach to try to make Korea accept the letter from the Meiji government had failed to produce any result, the MOFA attempted a different way to accomplish the goal of establishing diplomatic ties. The key themes they identified were the repatriation of Korean castaways and the clearance of Tsushima's debt with the Korean court left over from the tributary relations. On 20 September 1872, the MOFA appointed Hanabusa Yoshimoto, director of MOFA, as an envoy to Pusan. Hanabusa was a diplomat with experience of participating in negotiations overseas, although this was his first visit to Korea. He had been on a mission to the United States as well as the one to Qing China, when he and Yanagihara had had preparatory negotiations for the first Sino-Japanese treaty, in 1870. Two years after this mission to Pusan, Hanabusa would be made the first secretary of the Japanese legation in St. Petersburg and took charge of the negotiations with the Russian government over the *Maria Luz* incident. He was thus one of the main frontline diplomats in the early Meiji diplomacy. This time the instructions given to Hanabusa were to repatriate former Tsushima officials and other Japanese not immediately needed in Pusan; deliver the overdue goods to Korea on behalf of Tsushima; and hand over the Korean castaways who had been held in Tsushima due to the cutting off of communications between the two countries.⁷⁴ In other words, Hanabusa's mission moved away from the theoretical debate of how the emperors in Korea, Japan, and China stood in relation to one another and concentrated on practical issues, while taking a decisive step to remove Tsushima from the scene.

The Meiji government decided to send Hanabusa's mission on two Western-style navy vessels, *Kasuga* and *Yugōmaru*. This was perhaps meant to be a show of force, but the

⁷³ Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankeishi* vol.1, 282-7; Kim Ui-hwan, *Chosŏn taeil kyosōpsa yǒn'gu*, 228.

⁷⁴ CJ16-89.

fact was that it had to carry a large quantity of goods, including copper belts, which precluded the use of small Japanese ships. Prior to the departure the foreign ministry impressed upon the delegation that no crew should land at Pusan and they should refrain from any aggressive response if there was provocation from the Korean side.⁷⁵ As he departed Yokohama, Hanabusa believed that he would not be able to trust the former Tsushima men in Pusan as colleagues or subordinates. He therefore ordered Oku Gisei, a MOFA official originally from Tsushima who took part in the mission, to report on the relations between the two groups and report secretly to him. Hanabusa's suspicion, and the series of previous reports on Korea-Tsushima collaboration, proved to be well placed.⁷⁶

Hanabusa left Yokohama on 30 September and first loaded some twenty-four tonnes of copper belt and other overdue items listed by Sō in Osaka.⁷⁷ Hanabusa's *Kasuga* then went directly to Tsushima, but *Yugōmaru* stopped at Nagasaki and boarded soldiers.⁷⁸ The two ships met again in Tsushima and headed for Pusan together with a Japanese-style boat that carried thirteen Korean castaways, in much the same manner as the Americans in 1837 had brought Japanese castaways in an attempt to open a communication route with the Japanese.⁷⁹ The three ships arrived at Pusan at 4pm on 17 October. Hanabusa lost no time in speaking to the former Tsushima officials who had remained in the *waegwan*. He interrogated the Tsushima men one by one throughout that night and by dawn next day, he concluded that there was indeed collaboration between them and the Korean officials, and ordered the repatriation of Umitsu Motarō, Nakayama Kihei and others, who had been in charge of trade with Korea. Hanabusa then rebranded the *waegwan* as the Japanese official residence (*Nippon kōkan*); appointed its new head and his two deputies and interpreters, mostly from the foreign ministry, though some of them, such as Oku, had served the

⁷⁵ CJ16-103, 104.

⁷⁶ CJ16-92.

⁷⁷ CJ16-117.

⁷⁸ CJ16-121, CJ15-63.

⁷⁹ Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan*, 25-7; Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Pursuit of Power in Modern Japan, 1825-1995* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 36.

Tsushima domain in its Edo residence.⁸⁰ Hanabusa requested a meeting with the deputy of Ahn, Hyeon Ji-sun, but Hyeon refused to meet him because of illness. Choe Joe-su, an interpreter, instead received Hanabusa's letter.⁸¹ Hyeon took issue with the fact that Hanabusa was not from Tsushima and, as the foreign ministry predicted, suspended the visits of Korean merchants to the *waegwan*. Hanabusa's report stated that the gate of the *waegwan* remained open as usual and the interpreters went back and forth, though no merchants were in sight.⁸²

In spite of the tension, the contact with the Koreans continued even on the Japanese gunboat. Ahn and Hyeon made their point by repeatedly refusing to meet the MOFA officials, but the lower-rank officers turned out to be more liberal and curious. The interpreters and the neighbouring residents, who had seen few Western-style ships before, wanted to see the *Kasuga*. On the morning of 18 October, Hanabusa permitted them on board and treated them with liquor.⁸³ With this invitation Hanabusa probably hoped that the Korean attitude would soften, but that was not the case. The next day Hanabusa informed Hyeon of the appointment of the new representatives, and requested the Korean court's certificate for the vessels.⁸⁴ But Hyeon reprimanded in writing the unilateral withdrawal of the Tsushima officials. One of the Japanese officials replied to this letter by demanding a receipt for the products that the mission had brought.⁸⁵ The next day Hyeon gave the Japanese the list of items overdue from the former trade with Tsushima.⁸⁶

During Hanabusa's stay, the Pusan officials conducted double-track negotiations. On the one hand Ahn and Hyeon refused to negotiate with the MOFA officials and castigated their attempt to enforce a unilateral change to the way things had been; on the other hand the interpreters, Choe Gun-seon, Son Yol and others, visited the private residence of the Japanese interpreters and repeatedly requested a meeting with the former

⁸⁰ CJ14, CJ16-130, 131, 132, 133, 134.

⁸¹ DAJP HYKM F-21, Diary of Hanabusa Yoshimoto, 18 October 1872.

⁸² Hanabusa to the foreign ministry, 18 October 1872. CJ15-63.

⁸³ DAJP HYKM F-21, Diary of Hanabusa Yoshimoto, 18 October 1872.

⁸⁴ DAJP HYKM F-21, Diary of Hanabusa Yoshimoto, 19 October 1872.

⁸⁵ CJ18-34.

⁸⁶ CJ15-84.

Tsushima officials. The Japanese interpreters refused.⁸⁷ Hanabusa took another occasion for food diplomacy on 24 October, when on board the *Kasuga* the Japanese celebrated the birthday of the Meiji emperor with meals and drinks. The Korean officials accepted the invitation and came on board, though Hanabusa's diary does not specify who participated.⁸⁸ In contrast to the conventional understanding of the existing scholarship, the communication between the Koreans and the Japanese was therefore not totally severed by Hanabusa's expulsion of the former Tsushima officers.

Ultimately, however, Hanabusa failed to persuade the Koreans to receive the goods overdue from the Korea-Tsushima trade. In other words the Koreans stuck with the principle of trilateral relationship via Tsushima. On 26 October, Hanabusa left matters in the hands of Fukami and retreated to Tsushima, where he stayed for another month. During his stay he received information from Pusan that Ahn, who had been absent, was now on his way back to his office. Hanabusa thus asked Tokyo if he should return to Pusan and try to contact Ahn, but he did not cross the Tsushima strait again until 1878 when another mission brought him there.⁸⁹ He returned to Tokyo on 16 December 1872.⁹⁰

Hanabusa's report from Tsushima in November reveals his perspective on the relationship with Korea, not all of which is correct based on what is known today. He reckoned that the main obstacle to the establishment of diplomatic communications between Tokyo and Seoul was not the Koreans, but Tsushima. He pointed out that if Korea and Japan could agree on the language that signified their equal standing, Ahn might have been amenable. In other words, he acknowledged that Ōshima's approach in the spring of 1870 could have worked, although he saw the reason for its failure in Tsushima's obstruction, rather than Korea's hardened attitude. From what he understood, it was Urase's comment in 1871 hinting at a Japanese expedition to Korea that had put the Koreans on the defensive and cut off the trade. Hanabusa may be correct in saying that some of the Tsushima men's

⁸⁷ CJ18-34.

⁸⁸ DAJP HYKM F-21, Diary of Hanabusa Yoshimoto, 24 October 1872.

⁸⁹ CJ14-42.

⁹⁰ TNA FO46/156 no162 Watson to Granville. Yedo. 16 December 1872.

advice against meeting the foreign ministry officials hampered the talks, but as was discussed earlier the Taewongun had decided on the policy of non-negotiation in 1867. Hanabusa went as far as to suggest that if there had been no double agent within the *waegwan* and the negotiations by Sagara had continued from the spring of 1872, he would have been able to meet Ahn.⁹¹ His distrust of Tsushima is conspicuous, and probably reflected the voice of the majority in the foreign ministry.

Immediately after Hanabusa's departure, the Koreans' attitude softened. The next morning the merchants were back in the *waegwan*. They told the remaining MOFA officials that permission to resume trade would be given that morning and they had not had time to procure food for sale, but would be back tomorrow.⁹² On 30 October, chief interpreter Choe came to the *waegwan* and told the Japanese that Jeong and Ahn were both back in their positions, and that Ahn would be arriving at Pusan in five to six days.⁹³ Even though Ahn was still unwilling to visit the *waegwan* by himself, the pace of exchange of messages and the frequency of meetings between Choe and the Japanese officers slightly increased.

With the Tsushima men out of sight, it seems that some of the lower-rank Korean officials began to seek a new modus operandi with the foreign ministry officials. For the next month and a half, Choe went back and forth between the *waegwan* and Donglae, sometimes within a few days, to relay communications between Ahn and the MOFA officials. Ahn stuck with the argument that now that the Tsushima officials had left, no one in the *waegwan* was qualified to handle the tributary trade products. Thus the talks did not lead the negotiations to any new ground. There was one crucial change, however. As the Tsushima men disappeared from his sight, so did the border zone that had once connected the two sides of the Tsushima Strait. Ahn now faced Japan.

⁹¹ CJ18-25, Hanabusa to foreign ministry, Meiji 5/10 (November 1872).

⁹² CJ16.

⁹³ CJ18-34.

Conclusion: Tsushima becomes Japan

In the early 1870s, the foreign ministry and Tsushima shared the overall goal of doing away with the tributary relations with Korea previously maintained by the latter domain. Beyond that, however, the two parties had diverging and ultimately conflicting interests. The foreign ministry aspired for Japan to be the first country to establish treaty relations with Seoul, which, the government hoped, would put it in a position to be consulted by the Western countries when they approached Korea – a tremendous boost to the prestige of the newly born government.⁹⁴ Another reason for the foreign ministry to push for its opening of relations with Korea was related to its sense of vulnerability. The foreign ministry officials saw a power vacuum and firmly believed that Korea was ‘up for grabs’ by the militarily superior Western countries; and if it indeed became a protectorate or a colony of one Western country, it was certain that others would seek to counter the power balance by acquiring neighbouring lands, including islands in Japan. In the minds of the foreign ministry hard-liners, the conclusion of a treaty with Korea before anyone else was a measure that would prevent any territorial scramble in Korea and Japan from gaining traction. This is not to say that they read the situation correctly. The foreign ministry tried to understand the international relations around the Korean Peninsula with imperfect information; it failed to understand what had brought about the refusal by the Korean officials to negotiate. Instead of investigating why the Koreans were far more stringent than they used to be, the foreign ministry officials identified Tsushima as the main obstacle.

On the other hand, throughout the 1860s and the early 1870s Tsushima’s fundamental goal in approaching Korea for a new relationship was the domain’s financial survival. The long-term effect of the declining trade with Korea had pushed the domain into the heavy debt that ultimately crushed it. It needed to reform relations with Korea in order to resume the import of rice, as well as to receive aid from the Meiji government. Whatever worked best in the minds of the potential donor in the capital, Tsushima was ready to implement. Ōshima

⁹⁴ Ishida, *Kindai Ikōki no Nicchō Kankei*, 113-4.

adopted the *seikanron* type of discourse in 1863-4, but he took a more moderate course in 1870 in an attempt to open dialogue. After the domain's liquidation, Sō Shigemasa, who tended to approach the domain's problem more by appealing to Edo than carrying out reform at home, was willing to work under the auspices of the foreign ministry. For them, the opening of Korea was necessary not for its own sake but primarily because it would provide the way out of the domain's debt.

How did Tsushima cope with the structural shift of inter-state relations around it, and why did it cease to exist as a border zone? The fundamental limitation in its approach was that it tried to find solutions outside the domain rather than improving economic production at home. Tsushima counted on favour from the shogunate, Chōshū, Korea and the Meiji government at different times. Unlike Japan itself, which found a balance among the Western countries that upheld its independence, Tsushima found itself with increasingly limited options primarily due to its weak economic foundation. As a domain that had built its whole existence upon its role as intermediary between Korea and Japan, the long-term decline of trade between the two had a slow but steady damage on its revenue. Debts piled up and the effort to control the situation led the islanders to try various measures: first a transfer, proposed by Sasu; and then a reform of the Korea trade, garnished with the jingoistic rhetoric catering to the taste of those in power at the time. The corollary of that, however, was that it heightened alarm on the Koreans' side, which, a few years later, made it impossible for the Meiji government to effectively negotiate any new form of communication. Tsushima sought a favour from all its neighbours, but eventually failed to get decisive support from any.

The weak economic base of the island domain created the political turmoil that rendered policy-making even more difficult. The lack of leadership from Sō Yoshiakira in the mid-1860s and his failure to restore order among the rivalling factions cost him dearly. The mismanagement inhibited economic reform, forcing him to rely on private merchants for quick cash, only to place him deeper in debt. The lack of stable income at home meant that Sō was in no position to make a decisive departure from the dependence on Korea. If this had not been the case, Tsushima's approach to Korea on the eve of the Meiji Restoration might have

been less provocative, leaving some room for manoeuvre for the Meiji government officials when they tried to notify the Korean government about the regime change and the abolition of the domains, neither of which succeeded. Moreover the resistance to the foreign ministry enacted by *waegwan* residents would surely have been less intense. Thus it is not enough to see the origins of the Korean-Japanese diplomatic stalemate in Japan's fear of Western aggression and its domestic political concern; it needs to incorporate the financial dilemmas of Tsushima.⁹⁵

The triumph of the hard-liners against Korea within the foreign ministry in the autumn of 1870, which reversed the decision to dispatch Sō as the ministry's envoy, certainly limited Tsushima's options. Yet the adoption of such policies was not preordained; in September 1871 the foreign ministry appointed Sō again as envoy to Korea, though this was to be reversed once again. The foreign ministry's willingness to delegate the negotiations to Sō, limited though it may have been, demonstrates that it is too simplistic to describe Japan's attitude towards Korea through reference to the *seikanron* discourse observed in the words of a vocal few throughout this period.

Ultimately the demise of Tsushima came from outside the equation of Korea-Tsushima-Japan triangle. The abolition of the domains on 29 August 1871 is typically explained through the Meiji government's need to seek a broader base for political support.⁹⁶ Yet seen from the perspective of marginal domains such as Tsushima, it was also concerned with financial salvation. With no prospect of paying back its debt, Tsushima petitioned for its liquidation before the official announcement from Tokyo. In this sense Tsushima's battle had ended long before the *waegwan* was emptied by Hanabusa. Still, the latter's visit was the indispensable last step to seal the history of Tsushima as a border zone. As the result of his mission, Tsushima lost all of the special political character that placed it equidistant between Japan and Korea. Now it was just another island belonging to Nagasaki prefecture, which

⁹⁵ Kim, *The Last Phase*, 88.

⁹⁶ Michio Umegaki, *After the Restoration: The beginning of Japan's modern state* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 65-74.

might be a port of stoppage for the Japanese going to Korea or vice versa, but carried no authority to handle the transactions across the strait.

Chapter 3 The balance buckles in the north

On 30 March 1867, two international agreements were signed that had a significant impact on the trajectory of the North Pacific region. One was concluded in Washington and stated that Russia and the United States agreed to the former's sale of its territory in North America to the latter for \$7.2 million. The other was sealed in St. Petersburg between the Russian foreign ministry's Asia division chief, Pëtr Stremoukhov, and an envoy sent by Japan's Tokugawa shogunate, Koide Hidemi, confirming that Sakhalin Island was in the common possession of both countries. These signings on the same day, albeit by pure coincidence, nevertheless signify the undercurrent of the history of the North Pacific and the possibility of investigating the history of Sakhalin in that light.

Sakhalin went through a peculiar state of dual possession by Russia and Japan from 1867 to 1875, until the treaty of St. Petersburg created the Russo-Japanese border in the La Perouse Strait between Sakhalin and Hokkaido.¹ The conventional approach to this subject unsurprisingly has been to describe it as one phase of the Russo-Japanese relationship and as part of the growing tension between the two governments' imperial ambitions, leading up to the war of 1904-5.² As will be seen below, a closer look at the diplomatic developments at the turn of the 1870s demonstrates that this approach does not fully account for Japan's response. With regards to the involvement of Britain, it has simply been noted that Sir Harry Parkes, British minister, recommended that Japan abandon Sakhalin and focus on the development of Hokkaido.³ Little mention is made of the activities of the British navy even though they took

¹ Hokkaido was called Ezo until 20 September 1869, and was often spelt Yezo or Yezzo in English writings of the time.

² George Lensen, while acknowledging that '[in the mid-nineteenth century] Japan was not the major concern of the Russian policy makers', still framed the subject in the context of bilateral relations. John Stephan's work gives a sweeping overview of the island's history from antiquity to the present. Lensen, *The Russian Push toward Japan: Russo-Japanese Relations, 1697-1875* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959); John Stephan, *Sakhalin: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

³ Stephan, *Sakhalin*, 60.

the primary role in gathering information about the Russian Far East. To date, Akizuki Toshiyuki's monograph offers the most comprehensive account of the question of borders and the Russo-Japanese negotiations in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, and is based on a wide range of Japanese and Russian primary sources.⁴ As Akizuki acknowledged, however, the Russian diplomatic documents were not available to him, and so he relied on published sources such as memoirs on the Russian side. It is only in the last decade or so that historians have begun to produce research using Russian archival materials.⁵

Some challenges remain. In the first place, the diplomatic history of nineteenth-century Sakhalin has largely been written with the primary purpose of understanding the origins of Russo-Japanese territorial bickering in the following decades and which lingers to the present day, and has therefore focused on the territorial claims made by Russia and Japan and the shift of the borderline around the island. This tendency has sidelined the treatment of non-territorial factors such as commercial interests. Also precluded has been the involvement of other parties such as Britain and the United States, except for a brief acknowledgement of their role either as advisers or mediators for the Japanese.⁶ Most importantly, the existing literature has paid meagre attention to the role Sakhalin played in Russo-American relations. In particular, the link between the 1867 sale of Russian America and the Russian

⁴ Akizuki, *Nichiro Kankei to Saharin Tō*.

⁵ Andrew Gentes has discussed the development of the penal colony system in Sakhalin in relation to Russia's domestic reform under tsar Alexander II. Sharyl Corrado's work has uncovered the primary sources from various Russian archives including that in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk in Sakhalin and has shown that the Russian administrators of Sakhalin feared a foreign intrusion, including American merchants' commercial stake in the coalmines. With regards to the broader region of eastern Siberia, Mark Bassin has produced a series of works dealing with the relations between Russian imperialists' imagination and the government's policy on the region. Sakon Yukimura's edited volume has also touched upon various aspects of Sakhalin history in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, mostly from an economic perspective. Andrew Gentes, 'The institution of Russia's Sakhalin policy, from 1868 to 1875', *Journal of Asian History* 36:1 (2002), 1-31; Gentes, 'Sakhalin as *cause célèbre*: the re-signification of tsarist Russia's penal colony', *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 32 (2012), 55-72; Corrado, *The "end of the earth"*; Bassin, *Imperial Visions*; Bassin, 'Inventing Siberia: visions of the Russian east in the early nineteenth century.' *American Historical Review* 96:3 (1991), 763-94; Sakon Yukimura (ed.), *Kindai Tōhoku Ajia no Tanjō: kokyōshi eno kokoromi* (Sapporo: Hokkaido Daigaku Shuppankai, 2008).

⁶ Another example is that not much connection has been established between the so-called Great Game and Anglo-Russian relations in the Far East including Sakhalin. The scope of this paper however does not allow for the treatment of this important theme.

establishment of a penal colony in, and resulting exclusive possession of, Sakhalin has been generally neglected.⁷

This chapter aims at revisiting the diplomatic negotiations on Sakhalin's border issues from a multilateral perspective, bearing in mind the context of the transformation of the North Pacific region, especially the emergence of the balance of favour. It focuses on the period between 1867 and 1871 the years in which the diplomatic balance in Japan's northern border buckled – but never fell apart. It suggests that the fixation on Russo-Japanese relations may have limited the scope of our understanding of why and how Russia sought to possess the entire island of Sakhalin and how other countries in the region coped with it. In this respect, attention needs to be paid to the British naval activities in the surrounding waters as well as American merchants' commercial interests in the region. This web of multilateral relations needs to be understood as a whole, so as to arrive at a fuller picture of the international relations of the North Pacific in the late nineteenth century. Britain and Japan initially perceived Russia's attempt to keep other Western powers away from Sakhalin as a sign of its desire to thrust into Hokkaido. 1871 was the year when the Anglo-Japanese cooperation was at its highest under this assumption; but as will be discussed in the next chapter, the best informed among the Meiji elites began to realise Russia's attention was no longer pointed towards Hokkaido. The competition between them and the Russians was a long-term one, fought primarily in the Russian Far East and Korea.

The historical image of Russia as a northern neighbour

⁷ For a recent attempt at comparative analysis of penal colonies around the globe in the nineteenth century, see Clare Anderson, Carrie Crockett, Christian G. De Vito, Takashi Miyamoto, Kellie Moss, Katherine Roscoe, and Minako Sakata, 'Locating penal transportation: punishment, space and place c. 1750-1900', in Karen Morin and Dominique Moran (eds.), *Historical geographies of prisons: Unlocking the usable carceral past* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2015), 147-67. They emphasise the collective construction of the penal regime in which not only the state government but also local officers and even convicts themselves and their families took part in the operation of transporting convicts to a specific location within the respective empires.

The Japanese have held for over two centuries the image of Russia threatening Japan's north. The image is so strong that it often completely eclipses the other major northern neighbour, the United States. For historians, Japan's relations with Russia in the north have been obfuscated by the incompleteness of the documentary record, but nevertheless the recurring image in the historiography places Russia as the initiator of the interaction, as is observed in the title of Lensen's classical work written in 1959.

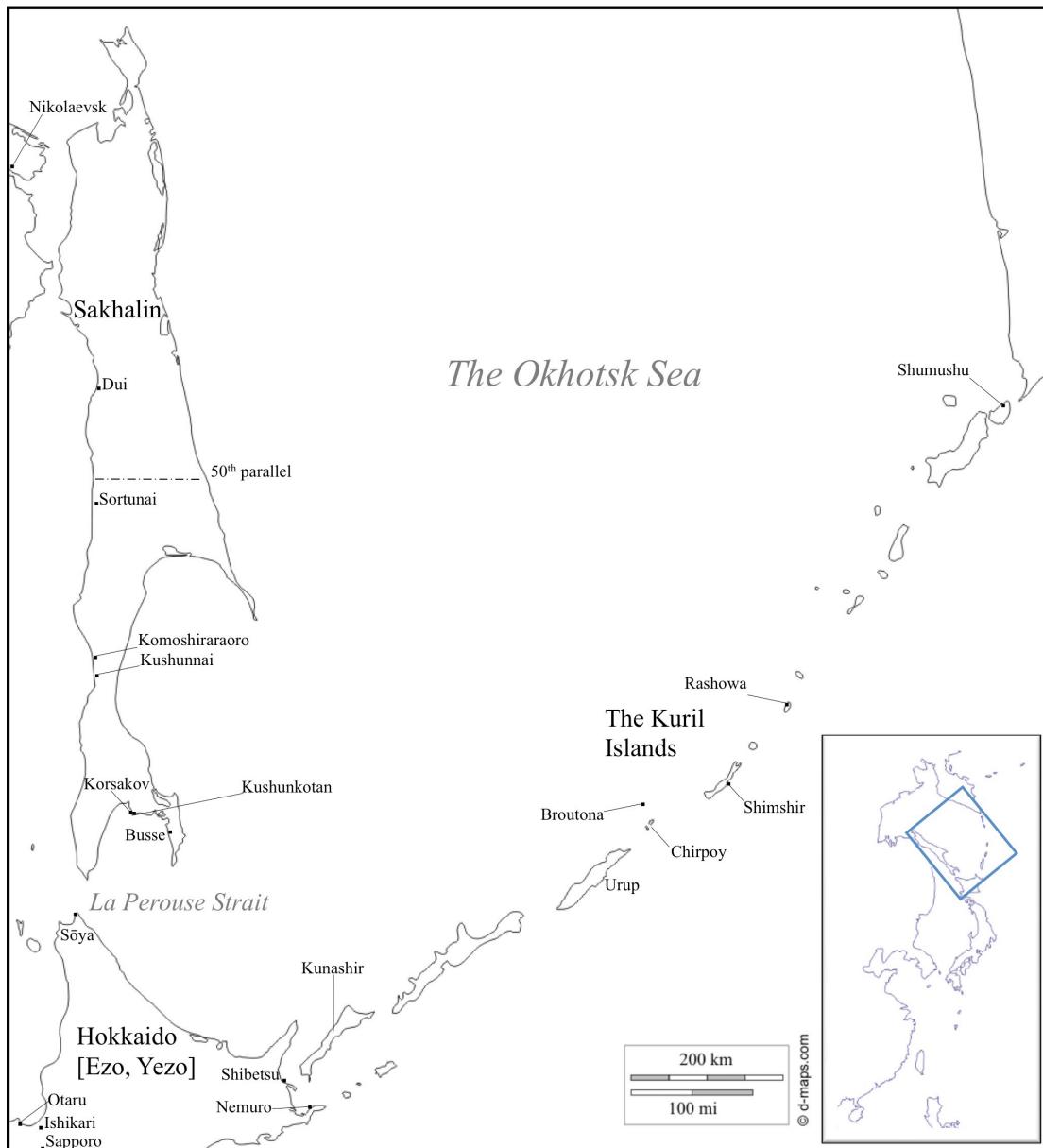
The Japanese fear of Russian aggression began to build up after the clash on Etorofu Island in 1806-7.⁸ Russian naval officers Svokhtov and Davidov carried out the attack as retaliation for the Tokugawa shogunate's harsh treatment of their envoy, Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov, who had visited Nagasaki in a vain attempt to open Japan to trade in 1804. This attack prompted the Tokugawa shogunate's reinforcement of the islands, and the incident was told and retold in popular writings about Japan's northern frontier until the menacing image of Russians coveting a southern advance was ingrained into the Japanese psyche.⁹

It is true that Russia was the only country that actively approached Japan from the north and tried to settle the border with the shogunate. Indigenous peoples in Sakhalin had maintained loose tributary relations with the Qing, but by the mid-nineteenth century Beijing's control over the island had become so tenuous that it never factored into the border settlement talks between Russia and Japan. In the late summer of 1853 Russian officers led by Nikolai Busse established a military post on Sakhalin's southern coast facing Aniwa Bay, naming it Korsakov post, and told the Japanese and the Ainu inhabitants there that they were defending the place against the Americans. In the following spring, however, the Russian soldiers temporarily retreated in order to avoid a British and French attack following the outbreak of the Crimean War. Russia and Japan tried to settle the question over the ownership of Sakhalin during the talks that led to the 1855 Treaty of Shimoda. The shogunate's representative proposed the division of the island at the 50th parallel, but Russia refused to

⁸ See Lensen, *Russian Push toward Japan*, 158-76.

⁹ Lensen has noted that the Russians came to be known as 'red devils'. *Ibid.*, 170. Also see Stephan, *The Kuril Islands*, 73-80; Akizuki, *Chishima Rettō*, 156-73.

meet halfway.¹⁰ In the following decade the officers from both countries stationed in Sakhalin increasingly saw each other's presence as an obstacle. But this does not mean that the two countries were simply in competition with each other. For Russia, Sakhalin's value lay in the fact that it guarded the mouth of the Amur River, the control of which was vital for the administration of Manchuria. The competitors Russia had in mind were not the Japanese, but the other Western powers.



Map 3: Sakhalin, Hokkaido and the Kuril Islands¹¹

¹⁰ Akizuki, *Nichiro Kankei to Saharin Tō*, 62-95; Stephan, *Sakhalin*, 19-29, 42-56.

¹¹ The map was retrieved from <<http://d-maps.com/m/europa/russia/sakhalin/sakhalin02.gif>> and adapted by the author [accessed 8 September, 2014].

The Temporary Regulations

The presence of the two countries' officers in Sakhalin led to a clash in the spring of 1866, when ten Japanese officers on patrol around Komoshiraraoro, on the western coast of Sakhalin just above the 48th parallel, collided with sixty to seventy Russian soldiers at the back of a Russian barrack and were taken in captivity to the nearby settlement of Kushunnai. The Japanese asserted that the Russian soldiers were intruding into their territory, as they upheld the 50th parallel as the border between the Japanese and Russian parts of the island. Russia claimed that the Japanese had assaulted them first and they had merely defended themselves. The Russians bound eight of ten Japanese officers and took them away on a sledge. They were held for one and a half months while the Japanese and Russian officials discussed the matter in Kushunnai.¹² The news shocked the shogunate as evidence of Russia's renewed effort to drive the Japanese out of the island, and caused them to take prompt action.

Shortly after the release of the eight officers, foreign magistrate Koide Hidemi, who also served as governor of Hakodate, left for Edo to report the incident. There he argued that 'it is urgently necessary for the Court to decide on the issue of the border'.¹³ Koide argued that, while the Japanese claim was not backed by incontrovertible evidence, neither was Russia's. He thus reckoned 'there is a one or two in ten chance' that Russia would agree on drawing a border on the island.¹⁴ The Tokugawa shogunate soon appointed him as an envoy to St. Petersburg. Koide left Yokohama on 18 November 1866.¹⁵ This was the second Russo-Japanese negotiation on the border question to be held in St. Petersburg, following the

¹² Hiwa Mizuki, '19 seiki Karafuto wo meguru "kokkyō" no hakken', *Bulletin of the Graduate Division of Letters, Arts and Sciences of Waseda University* 4 (2008), 22-24. The location of Komoshiraraoro can be confirmed in Matsuura Takeshirō and Abe Hiroshi, *Hokkaido Koku Gunzu* (1869). Mountains Archive of Early Modern Japan, Shinshū University Library Digital Collection.

¹³ DAJP ZTZ *Keieimon* 472, 'Henkyō Bunkai: Karafuto Bunkai Narabini Keiei Ikken', vol.11. Koide Hidemi and Oda Ichizō to foreign magistrates, the sixth month of Keio 2 (1866).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ ISK6: 649.

Takenouchi mission in 1862, but the first one whose primary purpose was to speak to St. Petersburg about the issue of Sakhalin.¹⁶

Koide and Pëtr Stremoukhov, the head of the Russian foreign ministry's Asian division, started negotiations on 4 February 1867 which lasted for two months.¹⁷ Koide asserted that Japan had a legitimate claim and it was only fair that it got the southern portion of the island, with a border on the 50th parallel. Koide did not repeat the argument employed by his predecessors based on economic relations with the indigenous Ainu as a way of asserting territorial rights.¹⁸ Even though he was not fully convinced by his own argument, he stuck to other ways of legitimising the Japanese claim: accounts from Japanese explorers as evidence of Japan's control before Russia's, and a map produced in Europe that painted the northern and southern portion of the island in different colours.¹⁹ Stremoukhov first reminded the Japanese that it was them who had halted the talks on the borders. He pointed out that the Takenouchi mission had agreed in 1862 to send a plenipotentiary to Nikolaevsk, a Russian port on the mouth of the Amur River facing the northwestern coast of Sakhalin, but in the end had failed to do so. On the other hand Russia had appointed Pëtr Kazakevich, who was then about to start his assignment as military governor at Nikolaevsk, as a plenipotentiary. He had waited in vain for four years, and therefore the government had not given the same power to his successor. Stremoukhov acknowledged that Japan had some claim on the southern part of the island, but because the possession of the whole island was vital to Russia's security, he

¹⁶ The first mission led by Takenouchi Yasunori in 1862 had the primary purpose of sealing an agreement on the postponement of the opening of ports and cities. See chapter 1.

¹⁷ On the negotiations between Koide and Stremoukhov, see Lensen, *Russian Push Toward Japan*, 435-6; Stephan, *Sakhalin*, 59; Akizuki, *Nichiro Kankei to Saharin Tō*, 173-7. Both Lensen and Stephan have noted that Koide offered the 48th parallel as the border, but the Japanese' minutes of the meetings suggests that he named the settlements on each end of the island between the 48th and the 49th parallel and proposed to draw a line between them, and this proposal was summarily withdrawn. Koide later confirmed that the shogunate's instruction had been to stick to the 50th parallel. See DAJP, KCKJ vol.1, the second meeting of Koide and Stremoukhov, 6 February 1867; KCKJ vol.1, Koide's report to the Meiji government, 16 March 1869.

¹⁸ On the Tokugawa officials' logic linking their control over Ainu and their territorial claim for Sakhalin, see, for instance, Oguma, *Nihonjin no Kyōkai*, 51-4; Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 'Lines in the snow: imagining the Russo-Japanese frontier', *Pacific Affairs* 72:1 (1999), 69-70.

¹⁹ Before leaving Edo he stated to other foreign magistrates that 'there was no evidence that [Japan] has been claiming [Sakhalin] as our land (*kyūrai onkoku no chi to tonae kitari soro kakusho mo korenaku*)'. DAJP ZTZ *Keieimon* 472, 'Henkyō Bunkai: Karafuto Bunkai Narabini Keiei Ikken' vol.11, Koide Hidemi and Oda Ichizō to foreign magistrates, the sixth month of Keio 2 (1866).

asked Japan to give up its claim and receive two kinds of compensation. The first was freedom to fish on the coast of Sakhalin, as this was the main Japanese economic activity there. The second was Urup Island, the southernmost of the Russian territory in the Kuril Islands, with the neighbouring three tiny islets called Chirpoy (consisting of two islets) and Broutona.²⁰

Throughout the negotiations Stremoukhov went out of his way to justify Russia's approach to the issue. He explained to Koide the reason for proposing mixed inhabitancy in case they failed to agree on the border as following:

Pardon me saying this, but if Japan goes to war [with a Western country] it will be unable to prevent foreigners from stationing in this island, which will be a tremendous blow to both of our countries. Yet if the border had been drawn, my country could not do anything [in the Japanese territory], and so either way we both benefit from not separating the island.²¹

This remark shows that Stremoukhov perceived Sakhalin within multilateral relations. Because the island sat at the mouth of the Amur River, control of which was vital for the holding of the Maritime Region that Russia had recently acquired from the Qing government, the tsarist government felt that it had to make absolutely sure that no foreign power would establish a stronghold on Sakhalin.²² In effect this was the same tactic that had been employed by Birilev in Tsushima several years before. They both asserted that Russia and Japan had a shared interest in denying Western (which, for Stremoukhov, excluded Russian) vessels access to the strategic chokepoints in the region. Koide argued that Japan would never allow any third-party to occupy Sakhalin, but Stremoukhov replied that some country could always pick a fight and force Japan to grant such a privilege. Stremoukhov persuaded Koide by saying that leaving the territorial status vague and extending Russian influence was a security

²⁰ DAJP, KCKJ vol.1, the fifth meeting of Koide and Stremoukhov, 15 February 1867.

²¹ DAJP, KCKJ vol.1, the third meeting of Koide and Stremoukhov, 9 February 1867.

²² DAJP, KCKJ vol.1, the second meeting of Koide and Stremoukhov, 6 February 1867.

guarantee that Russia could offer to Japan: ‘For instance, Hong Kong would not have been a British territory if there was mixed inhabitancy with the Russians’. Koide was not impressed. ‘So you are planning on taking Karafuto [Sakhalin] just like Hong Kong for the British, and then proceeding to Ezo later on’. Stremoukhov said he was ‘truly surprised’ to hear that and denied any such intention.²³

According to the account that Koide submitted to the Meiji government in 1869, during the negotiations Stremoukhov named Britain and France as the countries potentially interested in interfering in Sakhalin.²⁴ Stremoukhov repeated the same argument four years later to Andrew Buchanan, the British ambassador to Russia, except this time he avoided naming Britain. He said ‘American or any other foreign’ establishments in Sakhalin facing the mouth of the Amur would be ‘a serious political evil and a source of embarrassment, if not danger, in time of war’.²⁵ One could observe here the painful lesson that Russia had learnt from the Crimean War that Petropavlovsk and its other possessions in the Pacific were indefensible against hostile Western fleets.²⁶ Also apparent is the parallel between Sakhalin and the aborted attempt at occupying Tsushima in 1861, when Birilev made the same argument about British or French designs on the island. The two-month-long negotiations showed that the two parties saw the border question in Sakhalin completely differently. Russia’s reasons for insisting on owning the entire island originated in geopolitical calculations in which Japan was not its main source of concern. Instead his priority was to prevent Western states from acquiring territory in Sakhalin.

At the broader level Russia’s apprehension of Britain getting in the way reflected its strategic refocusing on the Far East instead of the North Pacific. St. Petersburg no longer saw much commercial value in the possession of its Pacific territory, having decimated the animals whose skins had once provided lucrative business. This loss of interest in the Pacific

²³ DAJP, KCKJ vol.1, the third meeting of Koide and Stremoukhov, 9 February 1867.

²⁴ DAJP, KCKJ vol.1, Koide to the Meiji government, 16 March 1869.

²⁵ TNA FO65/772 no258. Buchanan to Clarendon, 30 November 1869.

²⁶ Igor Naumov, *History of Siberia* (London: Routledge, 2006), 124-5; G. Patrick March, *Eastern Destiny: Russia in Asia and the North Pacific* (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 1996), 125-7; Ilya Vinkovetsky, *Russian America: An Overseas Colony of a Continental Empire, 1804-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 50-51.

ultimately led them to the sale of Russian America.²⁷ Although by this time the Russian policymakers understood that the Amur River was not easily navigable due to its shallowness and the cold climate that froze the river for around six months, Sakhalin remained strategically vital as long as the Maritime Region and potentially Manchuria and Korea were within the scope of their imperial aspirations.²⁸ Stremoukhov's line of argument was based on these economic and strategic merits, and the offer of Urup and other privileges was a demonstration of his willingness to make a deal with Japan. It also shows that Stremoukhov did not regard the presence of the Japanese people in Sakhalin in itself as threatening to Russia's interests.

Koide saw none of this large picture. Here his approach was less liberal than the shogunate officials who dealt with the *Posadnik* six years previously. Instead of seeking a balance of favour, Koide focused on keeping the Russians as far away as possible from the mainland – precisely in line with the image of the Tokugawa diplomacy presented by Auslin. It was only natural for him to assume that any Russian action in Sakhalin signalled its design towards Japan. At this point there is no indication that Parkes in Edo had discussed the Sakhalin question in detail with the Japanese, which might have given the Japanese a fuller picture. Koide's goal therefore was to keep the Russians as far away as possible from the Japanese community in the southern part of Sakhalin, so as to avoid conflicts that might escalate into a full war between the two nations. Having received the instruction to draw a border at the 50th parallel, Stremoukhov's offer of a territorial swap and granting of fishing rights did not meet his needs. Back in Japan, the anti-Tokugawa factions had been criticising the shogunate for its inability to face up to the pressure from the Western powers. If these people learnt that the Tokugawa had cut a deal with Russia to retreat from Sakhalin, they would be aggravated even further and intensify their offensive against the shogunate. Thus Koide explained:

²⁷ Vinkovetsky, *Russian America*, 186.

²⁸ On the Russians' dwindling expectations on the usefulness of the Amur in the early 1860s and their attention turning southwards, see Bassin, *Imperial Visions*, 237-9.

[Had he given up the entire island to Russia] it would be as though Japan had no power to defend itself from other countries' invasion because it was so weak.... If I had to report this [failure to draw a border on the island] it would raise the anger of the nation and it is hard to see what will follow. This is an enormous difficulty for the country.²⁹

Therefore Koide was faced with the impossible task of persuading Stremoukhov to set a border on the island without offering anything in return. This forced him to rely on moral arguments, as he proclaimed that 'drawing a border is not about discussing merits and demerits, it is about drawing the border at the place where it should be drawn'.³⁰ He asserted that Russia's refusal to draw a border at the 50th parallel was 'not amicable'.³¹ According to what he perceived as right, Russia should show its magnanimity by agreeing to Japan's proposal. That, Koide argued, was the way to show courteous feelings towards a friendly nation. Unsurprisingly, this did not work for Stremoukhov. He asserted that Russia was showing its friendship by offering compensation for Japan's claim to southern Sakhalin, for if Russia had not wanted good relations it would have rejected any Japanese claim on the island from the beginning.³² Being far removed from the tensions and antagonism against foreigners in Japan, Stremoukhov did not fully understand Koide's precarious position, nor probably would it have mattered to him had he known.

The two sides talked and talked past each other. As Stremoukhov hinted he would end the negotiations, Koide's statements grew more desperate. He said it was unfriendly of the Russians not to agree on drawing a border on the island despite the fact that his delegation had travelled all the way to Russia.³³ As the negotiations increasingly appeared to be heading towards failure, on 16 March 1867, during the tenth round of talks, Stremoukhov presented a draft of the temporary regulations documenting the Russian proposal of seceding Urup Island

²⁹ DAJP KCKJ vol.1, the sixth meeting of Koide and Stremoukhov, 20 February 1867.

³⁰ DAJP KCKJ vol.1, the third meeting of Koide and Stremoukhov, 9 February 1867.

³¹ DAJP KCKJ vol.1, the seventh meeting of Koide and Stremoukhov, 25 February 1867.

³² DAJP KCKJ vol.1, the fourth meeting of Koide and Stremoukhov, 12 February 1867.

³³ DAJP KCKJ vol.1, the eighth meeting of Koide and Stremoukhov, 28 February 1867.

and three adjacent islets as compensation for the Japanese claim on southern Sakhalin. As the two parties failed to reach an agreement, the draft went on, ‘the island of Sakhalin is left as before in common possession’. The agreement allowed both countries to settle in and use any unoccupied part of the island, and employ the indigenous people, even as indentured labourers if they were willing.³⁴ On 30 March, Koide had no choice but to sign the document that registered his failure. He regretted two years later the course of action that he had had to take as he explained the details of the negotiations to the Meiji government.³⁵ The signing of the temporary regulations revealed that Russia was trying to squeeze Japan out not because the Japanese presence itself was a threat, but due to the possibility that the weakness of Japan might be exploited by a third party. The Tokugawa officials did not seem to have fully understood this, and even if they had, the shogunate’s approach of keeping away Russian encroachment by drawing a border on Sakhalin precluded the possibility of accepting the latter’s proposed compensation. As the shogunate lost its political grip in mainland Japan in the mid-1860s, its ability to carry out liberal measures in regard to boundary negotiations also dwindled.

For those who had already held the belief that Russia had every intention to invade Ezo (Hokkaido), which was most of the Japanese at the time, the temporary regulations were a disgrace for Japan; the result only reinforced the historically held image that Russia and Japan were competing headlong over territorial delimitation unless Japan took decisive action there. Such a view of Russia partly contributed to the attention paid to the northern border immediately after the Meiji government’s inauguration, but also invited Russia’s action in Sakhalin beyond the establishment of its military post.

The Japanese feelers for selling Hokkaido

³⁴ Quoted in Lensen, *The Russian Push Toward Japan*, 495-6.

³⁵ DAJP KCKJ vol.1, Koide’s report to the Meiji government, 16 March 1869.

Even though it was widely talked about, Russia never got close to occupying Hokkaido, and no evidence suggests that it was the government's official intention. Instead it was Prussia that came closer to possessing territory in Hokkaido, through the work of two men: Max von Brandt, the Prussian consul general and later minister to Japan; and Reinhold Gaertner, an agriculturalist. During the Boshin War of 1868-9, the fluid status of Ezo presented opportunities for these Prussians to seek possession of part of the island through diplomatic as well as commercial means.

In 1860 von Brandt first came to Japan as part of the Prussian state mission that concluded the country's first treaty with Japan and opened diplomatic relations. Two years later von Brandt returned to Edo to serve as the first consul general for Prussia. Reinhold Gaertner and his two younger brothers, Conrad and Otto, all came to Hakodate between 1864 and 1870. Reinhold worked on a farm on land leased from the shogunate in Hakodate. Conrad served as a Prussian consul in Hakodate, while Otto joined Reinhold's farm in 1870.

The first contact between the Gaertners and von Brandt seems to have been in 1865 when the latter visited the island. He came back in the summer of 1867 and travelled around the island on horseback with Reinhold. Ezo struck von Brandt as a good place for German agricultural immigrants with its climate similar to northern Europe, the land suitable for agriculture and raising livestock, and the local population of the Ainu and the Japanese presenting hardly any problem for potential newcomers from Europe.³⁶ When he was temporarily back in Berlin in February 1867 he proposed to the Prussian government that it should colonise Ezo, which he claimed was possible with 'eight corvettes, several men of war, and 5,000 marines'. However the Naval Ministry rebuffed the idea on the grounds that it could not risk antagonising Russia, an important ally in European diplomacy at the time. Here again one can observe multilateral relations at play in Japan's border zones.

Von Brandt resumed the lobbying for his project when the Tokugawa shogunate fell in Edo and a civil war ensued in northeastern Japan. On 31 July 1868 he proposed to Otto van

³⁶ Andreas Baumann, 'Nihon kokudo ga nerawareru (dai ichi bu): Chūnichi ryoji Buranto no Ezochi (Hokkaido) shokuminchika no gairyaku to soreni kakawatta Gerutona kyodai no shutsuji', *Kokusai Kankei Kenkyū* 32:1 (2011), 83.

Bismarck, the chancellor, that Prussia should purchase territory in Ezo from two Japanese domains that had contacted him. According to his claim, the Aizu and Shōnai domains, which were fighting against the emperor's forces led by Satsuma and Chōshū, had come to von Brandt with an offer to sell the share of territory in Ezo that the shogunate had entrusted to them in exchange for cash and ammunition. The two domains were in desperate need of quick cash, and the territory in Ezo was the easiest asset with which to part. For these domains, possessing a fiefdom in Ezo was a liability rather than an asset, because they had to station troops for its defence while no immediate financial gains were expected. Already in the previous summer Shōnai had requested to the shogunate that it be discharged from the defence of Ezo, citing 'exhaustion within the domain'.³⁷

With this renewed prospect for colonising Ezo coming from the Japanese side, von Brandt pushed the Prussian government to accept the offer. One month after his first message on the subject he prodded the home government with a report that Thomas Glover, a Scottish merchant in Nagasaki, had sold his interests in the Ryukyu Islands to the British government (which was false). He also claimed that the Americans were on their way to purchase land for a naval base in Nagasaki (another false statement). It is highly probable that von Brandt exaggerated the rumours he heard in order to sway Berlin's opinion to his favour. He made it look as though the principle of neutrality to which the foreign powers had agreed at the outbreak of the civil war in Japan – i.e. the balance of favour that halted Western intrusion into Japan – no longer existed. If a scramble for Japan was indeed taking place, then one should be acting before others. In Berlin, Bismarck dismissed the first proposal by von Brandt on the ground of neutrality, but he changed his mind upon receiving the second letter describing the British and American moves around Japan. On 29 October Bismarck thus authorised von Brandt to negotiate with the Aizu and Shōnai domains about purchasing their territory in Ezo. However just a week later, on 6 November, Aizu surrendered to the

³⁷ ISK7: 202.

emperor's troops and Shōnai fell the next day.³⁸ Their demise was reported to the foreign representatives in Yokohama by the new imperial government on 16 November. Ernest Satow, the secretary for the British legation who attended that meeting, noticed that upon hearing the news 'some of the faces of foreign representatives went pale'.³⁹ There is little doubt that these pale faces included von Brandt, considering that at this point he had been waiting for Berlin's reply to his proposal. By the time Bismarck's green light reached von Brandt at the end of 1868 or the beginning of 1869, there was no Aizu or Shōnai with which to negotiate.

Meanwhile in Hakodate, Reinhold Gaertner had been building up his farm under the permission of the shogunate's authority. In the spring of 1867 he rented forty acres of farm and became the shogunate's agricultural adviser. However, the volatile political balance of the time meant that in the next two years Reinhold had to re-negotiate the land lease three times, keeping pace with the changes of government in Hakodate. When the Boshin War began and the imperial forces took over Hakodate in June 1868, he managed to continue his job under the imperial government. Inoue Iwami, who hired Reinhold, was noted in Ernest Satow's memoirs as being 'full of schemes for its [Ezo's] colonisation for Japan, and for the introduction of the European system of farming under the supervision of a German named Gaertner'.⁴⁰ In the winter of that year, however, Hakodate was again taken over by the pro-Tokugawa forces led by Enomoto Takeaki which had fled the losing battle in the mainland. Reinhold demanded Enomoto's government implement the contract he had concluded several months ago. With its empty purse Enomoto's government signed on 31 March 1869 a ninety-nine-year lease of land of about ten square kilometres – a massive expansion from Gaertner's previous land lease.

It should be noted that the overture to von Brandt and Gaertner's ninety-nine-year lease does not mean that the Japanese attitude towards the northern border had changed; it simply indicated that because of domestic politics some people opted to seek short-term

³⁸ On the correspondence between Bismarck and von Brandt, see Hakoishi Hiroshi (ed.), *Boshin Sensō no Shiryōgaku* (Tokyo: Bensei Shuppan, 2013), 49–52.

³⁹ Quoted in Hagiwara, *Edo Kaijō* (Tokyo: Asahi Shuppansha, 2008), 298.

⁴⁰ Ernest Satow, *A diplomat in Japan* (London: Seeley, Service and Co., 1921), 380.

gains. It does imply, however, that the Japanese around the time of the Meiji Restoration did not regard territorial possession as sacrosanct or inherently unchangeable. It was an asset just like mineral resources or commercial privileges which, if they so wished, could be bartered for non-territorial advantages.

How did Russia, observing from Hakodate and in the Russian Far East, respond to the outbreak of the civil war? If indeed Russia was trying to impress upon the Japanese that its interests were opposed to that of Britain, the civil war in Japan should have presented Eugene Butzow, the Russian consul in Hakodate, with a good opportunity to make the pro-Tokugawa elements rely on Russian support. Furthermore, the proclamation by Enomoto in late 1868 to establish an alternative government in Hakodate could have been a perfect puppet government that Russia could use in competing against British influence in Japan and East Asia.

The records during this tumultuous period are not best preserved and it is difficult to reconstruct the actions of pro-shogunate domains such as Aizu and Shōnai. There is some indication that Butzow supported the pro-Tokugawa domains. On 31 May 1868, Butzow invited Sugiura Baitan, the shogunate's Hakodate magistrate, to the Russian consulate. Butzow asked if there was any way not to give up Hakodate to the imperial forces, but Sugiura told that the shogun already had declared he would obey the emperor.⁴¹ Sugiura later noted that Butzow offered to provide Russian soldiers for the shogunate but he declined.⁴² On another occasion Butzow worked with Reinhold on a legal case concerned with the sale of a vessel owned by Shōnai to a Prussian merchant in Niigata, a port whose control was in dispute. Eusden suspected that Butzow was assisting Gaertner in drafting letters to the imperial government's court in Hakodate,⁴³ since he was 'most bitter against the Southern Party, and laughs at the idea of the importance of their being in possession of Neegata.'⁴⁴

⁴¹ Sugiura Baitan, *Sugiura Baitan Metsuke Nikki Hakodate Buggyō Nikki* (Tokyo: Sugiura Baitan Nikki Kankōkai, 1991), 519.

⁴² Mishima Tsuyoshi, 'Mishima Nakasu okina danwa', *Kyūbakufu* 1:9 (1971[1897]), 86.

⁴³ R. Geartrner to Ono Junsuke, Hanfūji in Charge of Foreign Affairs, Hakodate. 19 October 1868. Copy enclosed in Eusden to Parkes, 27 November 1868. Confidential. TNA FO262/146.

⁴⁴ Eusden to Parkes, 27 November 1868. Confidential. TNA FO262/146.

Butzow, however, never went out of his way to defy neutrality and support the continuation of the civil war. As far as the surviving sources go, there is no evidence of close cooperation between the rebel government of Enomoto and Butzow. All that Butzow did to support Enomoto was to visit his fleet in Hakodate on 18 December 1868 together with his American and Prussian colleagues.⁴⁵ The lack of overt support for the shogunate raises questions as to Russia's intentions in Hokkaido. At the very least it could be argued that Russia's policy in Hokkaido was to strike a balance between advancing its interests and aligning itself with the other foreign representatives.

The Meiji government's fear

Enomoto's rebel government in Hakodate was short-lived. Having united Kyushu, Shikoku, and Honshū by November 1868, the troops of the new government mounted a decisive attack on Hakodate in May 1869 and defeated Enomoto, who surrendered himself. Reinhold Gaertner yet again signed a new lease with the arriving Meiji authorities on 24 July which gave him the right to develop the previously held land free of tax for ten years. The end date for the contract was not specified.⁴⁶ When the dust settled, the foreign ministry saw Gaertner's concession as 'extremely inconvenient' and tried to cancel the deal. The biggest concern was whether the Gaertner contract could tip the balance and invite other countries to demand similar privileges. The foreign ministry therefore wrote to the Kaitakushi, the newly created department of the government in charge of developing Hokkaido:⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Adams to Parkes, 24 December 1868. Incl. in Parkes to Stanley, 30 December 1868. Cited in Hagiwara *Edo Kaijō*, 321-322.

⁴⁶ HULNSC Dōshiryō 148, 'Garutoneru Jisho Ikken Shorui'.

⁴⁷ There does not seem to be a universal English translation of the name of the office. Some scholars use 'Hokkaido Colonial Office'; others 'Hokkaido Colonization Office'; and yet others 'Hokkaido Development Office'. This thesis uses the original Japanese name, Kaitakushi.

In the treaties with various countries it is written that if a privilege is given to one country it should be given to the other countries as well; could we refuse if each country asks for a lease of such an extensive land as previously referred to? We have a not minor concern for a country like Russia and therefore want to know if we can refuse this [contract with Gaertner].⁴⁸

Kaitakushi contacted Reinhold in order to cancel the deal. The government officials explained: 'if we lend your country a piece of land we cannot help but lending to other countries when they ask for it'.⁴⁹ They claimed that they could terminate the contract, referring to one of the articles in the contract stating that 'Should the Japanese government require to have the above mentioned ground back again, the government must pay all the expenses caused on the original ground'.⁵⁰ Reinhold was not amused by this request. He told the government officials that inviting foreigners to develop and farm in Ezo would only serve the Japanese, considering the massive amount of land available. He had already invested in seeds and equipment and was getting some results. He had also hired several Prussian families, including his youngest brother Otto, to work on his farm and they were on their way to Hakodate when the Meiji government contacted him about cancellation. The issue was raised with von Brandt in Tokyo as well. Understandably, von Brandt refused to mediate between Reinhold and Kaitakushi by emphasising the merits of Western agriculture in Hokkaido.⁵¹ After some squabbling Reinhold demanded 75,000 dollars as compensation, while the Meiji government had reckoned 20,000 at most.⁵² The two sides eventually settled on 62,500 dollars and the Gaertner brothers went back to Germany.⁵³

Two observations can be made here. Firstly, despite the lack of Butzow's overt support for an alternative government in Hokkaido, the Meiji government still believed that

⁴⁸ Foreign Ministry to Kaitakushi, 21 December 1869. DNGM vol.2-3, 376.

⁴⁹ HULNSC Dōshiryō 148, 'Garutoneru Jisho Ikken Shorui'.

⁵⁰ *Shinsen Hokkaidoshi*, vol.6, 14.

⁵¹ HULNSC Dōshiryō 148, 'Garutoneru Jisho Ikken Shorui'.

⁵² Foreign Ministry to Dajōkan and Benkan, 1 January 1870. DNGM vol.2-3, 407.

⁵³ *Shin Hokkaido Shi*, vol.3, 114-8; *Nanaichō Shi*, 466-73; Tanabe Yasuichi, *Buna no Hayashi ga Kataritsutaeru Koto: Puroshia jin R. Garutoneru Nanaemura Kaikon Tenmatsuki* (Sapporo: Hokkaido Shuppan Kikaku Sentā, 2010).

Russia was a source of concern for Japan's security in the north. Secondly, the officials of the imperial government took the view that the MFN clause in the treaties that they had inherited from the shogunate could bring about a disastrous outcome. Just like Tsushima in 1861, Gaertner's farm in 1869 was perceived as the first domino bloc that could affect the survival of the state. They were particularly concerned about what Russia might do. As seen below, at least until 1871 the Meiji government maintained the assumption that Russia would thrust into Hokkaido if it saw a chance.

Anglo-Japanese response in Hokkaido

The British in the Far East perceived Russia's increasing activity in Sakhalin and the Maritime Region with suspicion, as it seemed to vindicate the rumoured Russian desire to possess Ezo, which had persisted in observers' minds since the Tsushima incident. At the beginning of 1868, when the Japanese archipelago was engulfed in revolutionary war, Parkes feared Russia might exploit this opportunity in the north of Japan. Although he had received information on the Russian settlements in the Maritime Region and Sakhalin from the navy officers who had visited these places most recently in 1865 and 1866, he had no up-to-date knowledge of the Russian military presence there and what it was intended for.⁵⁴

The fear of Russian encroachment was shared by the new Japanese rulers, who began reinvigorating their rule on Sakhalin as soon as they took over the country. In the summer of 1868, Okamoto Kansuke, who had first drawn his government's attention to Sakhalin, led some eighty officers and 200 migrants and replaced the shogunate's officials in Sakhalin. Okamoto initially refused to recognise the 1867 temporary regulations in his conversations with his Russian counterpart.⁵⁵ Ironically Okamoto's attempt to recover from the diplomatic

⁵⁴ On the British navy's visits to the Russian Far East in the mid-1860s, see Ugai Masashi, 'Igirisu no tairo jōhō shūshū katsudō: 1865-6 nen no Saharin tō shisatsu', *Gakushūin Daigaku Kenkyū Nempō* 49 (2002), 1-30.

⁵⁵ Akizuki, *Nichiro Kankei to Saharin Tō*, 190.

retreat made by Koide in the previous year seems to have caused the Russians in Nikolaevsk to think that military posts were not enough to sustain their position in Sakhalin.⁵⁶ On 19 September 1868, the governor-general of Eastern Siberia, Mikhail Korsakov, told St. Petersburg that ‘the existence of military posts alone is insufficient for the achievement of our goal. Political and economic considerations demand the urgent founding of a settled agricultural population on the island.’⁵⁷

The typical Japanese view on Ezo was that Russia was ‘drooling’ over it and Japan needed to act quickly in order to secure its possession.⁵⁸ It was little different from the *bakumatsu* period when the shogunate had appointed domains in northeastern Japan to take charge of the defence of the island.⁵⁹ The sense of urgency only increased after the Meiji Restoration and led to the creation of Kaitakushi, which took charge of the development of Ezo and Sakhalin, on 15 August 1869. At this point the Japanese policymakers saw Sakhalin and Ezo as a single geographical space in which their rule had to be reinforced in competition with Russia.

In February 1868 Parkes asked the British China squadron to send a ship to Hakodate to prepare for a possible Russian movement. HMS *Icarus* was dispatched, but it did not observe anything unusual. Eusden assured Parkes that the port was ‘in a perfect state of security and safety’, and he did not ‘think there was any fear of danger’.⁶⁰ Eusden sent the *Icarus* back to Yokohama on 16 April.⁶¹ On the other hand Admiral Henry Keppel, commander-in-chief of Britain’s China squadron, was in a much better place to gather first-hand information as his ship travelled along the coast of the Russian Far East in August 1868. During his visits to several ports in the area, he heard a rumour that Russia had sent a garrison to Kunashiri Island, a Japanese territory off the eastern coast of Hokkaido.⁶² As soon as he

⁵⁶ Corrado, *The “end of the earth”*, 49-50.

⁵⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 39. Corrado’s translation.

⁵⁸ See, for instance, Iwakura to Sanjō, 9 April 1869. DNGM 2-1, 367-377.

⁵⁹ *Shinsen Hokkaidoshi*, 76-77. Matsumae, Sendai, Akita, Tsugaru, and Nambu domains toko part from 1855; Aizu and Shōnai were added in 1859.

⁶⁰ TNA FO262/146 no5. Eusden to Parkes, 5 March 1868.

⁶¹ TNA FO262/146 no19. Eusden to Parkes, 24 April 1868.

⁶² TNA ADM125/121 no266. Keppel to Secretary of the Admiralty, 23 Aug. 1868. HMS *Rodney* at Port May.

came back to Yokohama in early September, Keppel sent HMS *Rattler* to check on Kunashiri.⁶³ Parkes decided to dispatch Francis Adams, the secretary of the legation, and Ernest Satow, an interpreter in Japanese, on the ship.⁶⁴

Given that Satow was by far the best Japanese speaker among the British corps, sending him away for a few weeks amid the great political turmoil in mainland Japan attests to the importance Parkes attached to this northern mission. It was also decided that the *Rattler* would cooperate with French navy's vessel, the *Duplex*, in carrying out the mission. Parkes wrote to London that he had sent Adams because he 'wanted a head at Hakodate.... Mr Eusden is a very amicable man but his despatches show that he is not a man of great power, and combined operations with the French require such delicate handling that I felt the need of other assistance.'⁶⁵ Parkes forwarded the report from Keppel to the officials of the emerging Meiji government, who had not heard the rumour.⁶⁶ The Meiji government sent Inoue Nagaoki on the *Rattler*. Inoue had been assigned to the Hakodate office of the Meiji government but had still been in Yokohama.⁶⁷

Gordon Daniels has described Parkes's response to the Russian troops in the north in the first years of the Meiji government as 'practical and well-tempered' because '[h]e advised the [Japanese] Government to do nothing which might provoke the Russians and suggested that Ministers should concern themselves with strengthening Hokkaido'.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, before his recommendation that Japan should give up Sakhalin, his initial response in 1868 was frantic. Reading the reports to the Admiralty by Keppel and others who visited the Russian Far East including Sakhalin up to 1868, it was the unanimous opinion of the British officers in the Far East that Russia intended to take Hokkaido if an opportunity presented

⁶³ TNA ADM 125/121 no284. Keppel to Secretary of the Admiralty, 8 September 1868. HMS *Salamis* at Yokohama.

⁶⁴ Parkes to Hammond, 12 September 1868. Cited in Hagiwara, *Edo Kaijō*, 243.

⁶⁵ TNA FO391/14. Parkes to Hammond, 31 December 1868. Original underline.

⁶⁶ ITKM-DNL, 16-1(13).

⁶⁷ TNA FO46/97 no238. Adams to Parkes 15 September 1868. Incl to Parkes to the foreign office, 7 Oct 1868. See also Yasuoka Akio, 'Bakumatsu Meiji shoki no nichiro ryōdo mondai to eikoku', *Kokusai Seiji* 58 (1977), 7. For Inoue's assignment to Hakodate dated the fifteenth day of the fourth month of Meiji 1 (1868), see The National Institute for Defense Studies, Tokyo, Japan, HA3, Gunmukan-Zatsu-M1-2-2, *Gyoseikan Tasshigakitome*.

⁶⁸ Daniels, *Sir Harry Parkes, British Representative in Japan, 1865-83* (Surrey: Japan Library, 1996), 102.

itself.⁶⁹ Given that Britain was in no position to face Russia militarily in the region, Parkes and Keppel sought to deal with the situation by minimising the chance of Russia's taking unilateral action in Hokkaido. They thought this could be achieved by opening another port in Hokkaido near the Russian troops' stations in the north of Japan. Thus Parkes ordered Adams to see if they could open the port of Shibetsu, which he probably knew nothing about, on the opposite coast to Kunashiri, while Keppel told Henry Stephenson, the captain of the *Rattler*, to gauge the possibility of opening a port in northern Hokkaido. Any attempt to open a port, which was most obscure even to the Japanese, could only have been a political move. Still, if accomplished, Keppel and Parkes thought it 'would go far to neutralize Russian designs on the island'.⁷⁰ Parkes further told the leaders of the emerging Meiji government that they should open the port of Sōya in the north for this purpose. Sharing his fear of Russia's action in Hokkaido, the key officials in the Meiji government were keen on taking Britain's advice. On 28 September, Kido Takayoshi, one of the councillors (*san'yo*) who collectively ran the Meiji government, wrote in his diary: 'we plan... to open a port to the treaty powers on the edge of Ezo; and to dispatch persons there to carry out our policy of securing the borders of the land'.⁷¹

This attempt to incorporate northern Japan further into the treaty-port system was a typically British response for maintaining its strategic interests in a region where it could not make a military commitment against a rival country. It is exactly the same idea as the one suggested by Alcock in the London Protocol of 1862 about Tsushima. When preventive occupation – which was the Russian approach – was impossible, opening a port for trade and neutralising the area was deemed to be the most cost-effective tactic. However, in reality this could not be achieved without merchants getting drawn to the region.

⁶⁹ TNA ADM125/121 no341. Memorandum on coal in Sakhalin and Ezo by R.E. Crossman, 2 October 1868. Hyogo. Incl.1 to Keppel to the secretary of the Admiralty, 4 November 1868. HMS *Salamis* at sea.

⁷⁰ TNA ADM 125/121 no284. Keppel to Secretary of the Admiralty, 8 September 1868. HMS *Salamis* at Yokohama.

⁷¹ Kido's diary 28 September 1868. Kido Takayoshi, *The diary of Kido Takayoshi. Vol.1 1868-1871* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1983), 99.

This strategy of geopolitical counterbalancing came to an abrupt end with the running aground of the *Rattler* on the cape of Sōya before it could reach Kunashiri.⁷² But the French ship *Duplex*, which rescued the stranded crew of the *Rattler* and brought them back to Hakodate, confirmed that there were no Russians in Kunashiri.⁷³ Therefore the rumour of a Russian invasion of Japanese territory turned out to be incorrect, yet the British continued to feel the necessity to preempt Russian adventurism. Until the early 1870s the British officers in the Far East continued to firmly believe that Russia's aim was to expand southwards from Sakhalin to Hokkaido and take Hakodate. The communications to London from the British representative in Tokyo reflected this view and portrayed the Japanese migration to Hokkaido in this light. In the summer of 1872 the British Chargé d'affaires, Robert Watson, went to Hakodate and observed that the Japanese migration was 'perhaps not uncalled for with a view to prevent the possibility of any Russian or other settlement being established on some part of the island'. He feared that if Russia occupied Hakodate it would be 'a formidable menace' to the British possession in the Pacific.⁷⁴

Watson and others' apprehension was not sufficient to persuade London, however. Whether or not there was an imminent Russian threat, by the end of the 1860s there was no chance that London would endorse any substantial British action on the Sakhalin question. Parliament and the British general public had been deeply critical of the aggressiveness of the British navy in Japan after the bombing of Kagoshima in the summer of 1863, in contrast to the post-facto approval given by the Foreign Office.⁷⁵ Also in 1869 the newly appointed first lord of the admiralty Hugh Childers embarked on reforms in order to cut down on the navy's 'excrescences and redundancies'.⁷⁶ Nor was there any commercial viability in opening another treaty port in Hokkaido. It would be hard to get to because of the constant fog and rough sea, and no market of any significance existed in the island or nearby. Even

⁷² Stephenson to Keppel, 7 October 1868. NMM STP/1.

⁷³ TNA FO46/97 no262. Adams to Parkes, 19 October 1868.

⁷⁴ TNA FO46/155 no87. Watson to Granville, 3 September 1872.

⁷⁵ Fox, *Britain and Japan 1858-1883*, 116-9.

⁷⁶ Edmund Childers, *The life and correspondence of the Right Hon. Hugh C.E. Childers, 1827-1896* (London: J. Murray, 1901), 160.

commercial activity in Hakodate, which centred around the export of seafood such as kelp to China, was anything but thriving. In 1867 Hakodate accounted for just 2.5 percent of Japan's foreign trade.⁷⁷

From the China station's viewpoint, too, the project of defending northern Japan against Russia was a difficult one to implement. The fleet was already stretched from the Strait of Malacca to the coast of China, where more pressing issues such as piracy and the aftershocks of the Taiping Rebellion in China required the attention of the fleet. When in December 1872 Admiral Henry Kellett, who had replaced Keppel as commander-in-chief of the China station, requested a replacement of vessels, the new ships were not intended for stationing around Japan but for Malacca and watching and intercepting the coolie trade in the Pacific.⁷⁸ The idea of creating a new treaty port and thereby deterring Russia's advance to Hokkaido may have made abstract strategic sense, but it was never viable in practice.

Thus the news that Russia had started to emulate the Japanese effort in developing southern Sakhalin presented Parkes with difficulty in the summer of 1869. An account from Captain Wilson, a British national who had transported Russian soldiers from Nikolaevsk to Sakhalin which reached Eusden in Hakodate, shocked Parkes. On 1 August Russia opened a military post in Hakkotomari on the southern coast of Sakhalin and named it Korsakov post. This new military post sat just several hundred metres away from the Japanese commune of Kushunkotan, separated by a hill. The Japanese officials in Kushunkotan complained that the Russians had forcefully taken over land used as an Ainu graveyard, ignoring Japanese and Ainu complaints.⁷⁹ The action struck Parkes as proof of Russia's aggressiveness in the region, rather than as insecurity aroused by the arrival of the Japanese immigrants.

If Britain were to counter Russia's move, the only option for Parkes was to encourage and support the Japanese control of Hokkaido. He therefore met with the Japanese leaders on the subject five times in the space of two weeks in September 1869. Again his initial response

⁷⁷ Hakodate Shi Shi Hensanshitsu (ed.), *Hakodate Shi Shi* vol.2 (Hakodate: Hakodate-shi, 1990), 137-9.

⁷⁸ TNA ADM1/6229 no350. Shadwell to the Admiralty, HMS *Salamis* at Shanghai. 6 December 1872.

⁷⁹ Akizuki, *Nichiro Kankei to Saharin Tō*, 190-1.

was more fraught than well-tempered. On 9 September he urged Japan to send troops and install arsenals on the northern coast of Hokkaido. He also pointed out that Russia's connection of the Amur region with St. Petersburg by the telegraph network indicated its preparation for 'unexpected events', and thus Japan should draw a telegraph line from Tokyo to the northern edge of Hokkaido, too. Japan should also inform the treaty powers if there was another clash with Russia, as 'it will not fall on the deaf ears of the ministers (*kōshi wa kikizute niha itasanu hazunari*)', Parkes assured Iwakura Tomomi, a court noble and one of the key figures in the leadership.⁸⁰ This would have encouraged Iwakura, who had devised a plan to send migrants to Hokkaido and Sakhalin. Iwakura's plan was to relocate from Hakodate the former soldiers who had surrendered in the Restoration War to the new government in the spring of 1869. This would save the government the cost of sending reinforcements from the mainland, as well as the cost of shipping the defeated soldiers back to their original domains. Iwakura and Ōkubo Toshimichi planned to send 500 of them to Sakhalin, with another 500 in Nemuro, on the eastern coast facing Kunashiri, and 300 to Sōya on the northern tip. They also decided to send 200 'Tokyo poor', vagrants from the war-torn capital, to Sakhalin.⁸¹

The vast majority of the officers, if not all, in the early years of the Meiji Restoration assumed that Russia's ultimate aim was Hokkaido, which led to the government's quick responses to strengthen its position on the island. The first package was to give it the official name, Hokkaido, to divide it into eleven 'countries', and to designate various domains, court nobles, temples and individual samurai to take charge of defending it, all of which was done in late 1869.⁸² Parkes supported the development of Hokkaido as well as Sakhalin. But after learning that the Japanese were far outnumbered and outgunned in southern Sakhalin from the report by Captain Wilson, he changed his tone and recommended a more moderate approach. Due to the imminent expansion of Russia's military force in Sakhalin, as the report suggested,

⁸⁰ ITKM-NDL 16-1(11). 9 September 1869.

⁸¹ ITKM-NDL 16-2(4). 7 September 1869.

⁸² *Shinsen Hokkaidoshi*, 91-4; Nagai Hideo, *Nihon no Kindaika to Hokkaido* (Sapporo: Hokkaido Daigaku Shuppankai, 2007), 117.

up to 1,200 men, there was no chance that the Japanese could match that, nor should they try. Besides, in the British perception, this many soldiers concentrating on Sakhalin could not possibly be there only for the defence of the island. On 14 September Parkes recommended to the Japanese not to send troops to Sakhalin.⁸³ Parkes was convinced that Russia had a plan to invade Hokkaido, as Wilson's report told him that 'it is general talk at Nicolaevsk that the Russians will very shortly be in the possession of the island of Yesso'.⁸⁴ Wilson was told by a Russian officer that 'if the Japanese made a war... then the Russians would take Yesso, as they required Hakodate for a harbour'.⁸⁵ Parkes suggested to Keppel that Britain should send a vessel to Sakhalin to collect information.⁸⁶ Keppel, who already held the opinion in 1868 that Russia wanted to obtain a port in Hokkaido or Korea, concurred. Now that this possibility was imminent, Keppel asked for the Admiralty's instruction to deal with 'the various contingencies that may result from Russian aggression on Japan'.⁸⁷

Sharing the belief that Russia wanted to take Hokkaido, the Meiji government kept in close communication with Parkes on the subject. On 18 September 1869, Iwakura explained to Parkes the revised plan was to send migrants and to develop those places 'on the principle of sheer tranquillity'. He ruled out sending troops to Sakhalin. With regards to Hokkaido, he now intended to send troops to Sōya and Nemuro, and family migrants to the city of Ishikari in the southwest. Parkes approved and said he would be 'completely satisfied' if they could accomplish all of it within the year. He impressed upon Iwakura that this plan should remain unchanged and be executed immediately. 'He looked very much worried about this issue', Iwakura wrote to his colleague Ōkubo after the meeting.⁸⁸ Parkes was no doubt highly alarmed, as he reported to London that the Japanese plan of sending troops to northern Hokkaido but not to Sakhalin, where they would only strengthen the presence 'in an industrial sense'. It was 'natural that the Japanese government should view with apprehension the

⁸³ Akizuki, *Nichiro Knakei to Saharin Tō*, 193.

⁸⁴ TNA FO46/112 no173. Wilson's report. Enclosure to Eusden to Parkes, 7 September 1869.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ TNA FO46/112 no173. Parkes to Keppel, 15 September 1869.

⁸⁷ TNA FO46/112 no173. Keppel to Parkes, HMS *Salamis* at Yokohama, 16 September 1869.

⁸⁸ Nihon Shiseki Kyōkai (ed.), *Iwakura Tomomi Kankei Monjo*, 8 vols (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1968), vol.4, 314, Iwakura to Ōkubo, 18 September 1869.

collection of so large a force at a point separated only by a narrow strait from their own territory.' The Japanese, Parkes further noted, 'will remonstrate with the Russians against the aggression which they believe the latter committed... but they are equally resolved to avoid collision and not to afford the Russians a pretext for attacking Yezo'.⁸⁹ This latter comment was Parkes's own policy as well. All told, even though Parkes was apprehensive that Japan's sending troops even to Hokkaido was going to increase tensions, this was necessary for its defence.

It appears that Parkes never thought Russia's move could have had a defensive reason. Reporting to London that 'it is difficult to see what interest the Russians have yet formed in Saghalin that can require the protection of even six hundred men', he did not think of the possibility that these soldiers were intended to protect the Russian Far East against his own empire.⁹⁰ The news that Russia had established a penal colony in Sakhalin reached him not before the end of 1869, through a dispatch from Buchanan in St. Petersburg forwarded by London.⁹¹ In any case, the British government in London had already decided by early 1870 that Sakhalin should go to the Russians. In St. Petersburg, where Stremoukhov suspected that the British were helping the Japanese to resist Russia in Sakhalin, Buchanan assured the Russians that 'this information was entirely erroneous, and that on the contrary, the Japanese had been advised to consider favourably any reasonable and fair offer, which might be made to them for the cession to Russia of their portion of the island'.⁹²

Concurrently with the dispatch of migrants and troops to the north, the Meiji government sought a diplomatic solution vis-à-vis Russia with the help of the United States. Historians who have written about the history of Sakhalin in this period have taken only a brief note of the fact that the United States attempted to work as a mediator between Japan and Russia at the turn of the decade. Even though it did not materialise into any agreement,

⁸⁹ TNA FO46/112 no173. Parkes to Clarendon, 18 September 1869.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ TNA FO65/771 no197. Buchanan to Clarendon 19 October 1869. Buchanan wrote that the Russian government sent an officer to Sakhalin 'to report as to the capabilities of the island... to form a penal settlement'.

⁹² TNA FO65/802 no201. Buchanan to Clarendon, 1 June 1870.

the involvement of Charles DeLong, American minister to Japan, sheds light on the broader international relations of the North Pacific and tells us that Russia's Sakhalin policy did not exist in isolation from Russo-American relations.

In December 1869 in Tokyo, DeLong informed the Japanese foreign ministry that the United States was ready to mediate Japan's border dispute with Russia, 'with a view of promoting peace and goodwill – and the interest of Japan'. DeLong had obtained information that Japan was responding to the recent fortification by Russia of the southern coast of Sakhalin by preparing 'hostile proceedings', which probably referred to the plan for installing cannons at Sōya that Iwakura and Parkes had discussed in September.⁹³ DeLong's offer was at least partly motivated by the fact that American fishing vessels operated in the northern rim of the Pacific, and St. Petersburg had made complaints about these vessels exploring their waters.⁹⁴ He therefore wanted to clarify where the northern border of Japan lay.⁹⁵

This, no doubt, sounded like a blessing to the Japanese leaders including Ōkubo Toshimichi, one of the councillors, who around that time described to Iwakura the question of Sakhalin as 'today's immense fear.... To say that dining and sleeping cannot be done at ease does not begin to describe it'.⁹⁶ Now that direct negotiations with Russia had proved futile, asking for a third party's mediation was the only course if Japan were to retain any territory on Sakhalin. The Meiji government hoped that the US might be able to play Britain's role in Tsushima in 1861. On 4 March 1870, three senior officials – Itō Hirobumi, Ōkuma Shigenobu and Terashima Munenori – met with DeLong and asked for his opinion on the possible measures to be taken. Following the failure in St. Petersburg two years previously, 'we are at a loss', they told him.⁹⁷ DeLong replied that Japan should quickly end the state of dual possession under the 1867 temporary regulations. He asked the Japanese to prepare a letter

⁹³ DAJP B.1.4.1.2 *Karafuto Kyokai Danpan* vol.1, no.16. DeLong to the foreign minister of Japan, 11 December 1869.

⁹⁴ See Seward to de Stoeckl, 24 June 1868, Department of State, Washington. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1868-1869*, 486. Seward asked de Stoeckl to explain Russia's allegations on American activities 'affecting the freedom of the fisheries in the Sea of Okhotsk'.

⁹⁵ DAJP, B.7.1.4.40, 'Karafuto Tō Ikken', *Jimu Sanyō* vol.2. DeLong to Foreign Minister of Japan, 13 December 1869.

⁹⁶ Ōkubo to Iwakura, 15 December 1869. *Ōkubo Toshimichi Monjo* vol.3, 321.

⁹⁷ DNGM, iii, 78.

addressed to Washington and guaranteed that the American minister in St. Petersburg would then approach the Russian government on account of the fact that Japan had no permanent representative stationed there.⁹⁸

Eleven days later the Meiji government sent a draft letter requesting mediation to DeLong. They also took a leaf out of Parkes's book and proposed to open a treaty port in Kushunkotan.⁹⁹ The Japanese government held high hopes that this could provide a way out of the stalemate. There is some indication that Parkes complained to the Japanese officials responsible for the Sakhalin affairs about this approach to the Americans, but it did not stop them.¹⁰⁰ In the summer of 1870 the Dajōkan, a cabinet-like higher body of the government led by a court noble Sanjō Sanetomi, gave an official order to the foreign ministry that it should 'discuss well with the Americans and send an envoy to the United States if necessary'.¹⁰¹ The Japanese diplomats began collecting evidence supporting their claim on Sakhalin.

The United States was no Britain, however. The process of preparing an official request for the American president was slowed down by the personal feud between DeLong and his secretary, Anton Portman, who objected to American involvement in the dispute. Because Portman thought the Japanese diplomats were dragging DeLong into an issue that was 'unripe or raw' and the United States would only hurt itself if it agreed to mediate, he refused to copy the documents relating to the issue. Other American residents in Yokohama noticed DeLong's resulting predicament. Thomas Walsh, a prominent American merchant in Yokohama, wrote to American president Ulysses Grant that DeLong 'has, or very recently had, neither Secretary, clerk, interpreter nor attaché to aid him... but was obliged to do every part of those duties himself, even to the copying of his own despatches'.¹⁰² The animosities between DeLong and Portman led to the latter's six-week-long sabotage, and DeLong was

⁹⁸ DAJP B.7.1.4.40, 'Karafuto Tō Ikken'. DeLong to Foreign Minister of Japan, 13 December 1869.

⁹⁹ Terashima and Sawa to Charles DeLong. 15 March 1870. Tokyo. DNGM, iii, 79-80.

¹⁰⁰ AH B0-69/1 *Doi Toyoki Nisshi*, 14 July 1870.

¹⁰¹ NDL KKKM 88-1. Order directed to Sawa Nobuyoshi and Terashima Munenori. The seventh Month of Meiji 3 (1870).

¹⁰² Walsh to Grant, 7 November 1870, Yokohama. Cited in John Simon (ed.), *Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967) vol.21, 313.

forced to hire a Japanese interpreter.¹⁰³ The materials prepared by the Japanese to buttress their claim on Sakhalin were finally sent off to Washington in September.¹⁰⁴ DeLong, who remained optimistic in spite of the internal mess, told Hamilton Fish, secretary of state, that he felt ‘convinced... that successful action... upon your part will go very far to advance American influence and promote American interests here’.¹⁰⁵

As the Meiji government and DeLong waited to hear from Washington, another opportunity arose for the Japanese to discuss Sakhalin with the United States. On 4 October 1870, former secretary of state William Seward stopped at Japan on his way to a trip around the globe in a private capacity.¹⁰⁶ In a conversation with him, Foreign Minister Sawa Nobuyoshi broached the issue of the border negotiations with Russia and asked if the United States could serve as a mediator. Seward sounded positive, telling Sawa that the United States had had an issue with Russia on illegal fishing by American vessels around the coast of the Russian territory in the Pacific, but had managed to settle it with the purchase of Alaska. He then suggested Japan do the same with Sakhalin. This commercial approach was not what Sawa wanted to hear. He told Seward that Japan could not buy things that were already theirs, and that was the end of the conversation on the topic.¹⁰⁷ Sawa was clearly hoping that Seward would help persuade the Russians to agree on drawing a border at the 50th parallel.

In Washington, on 11 November, Fish wrote to Andrew Curtin, the American minister to Russia, instructing him to enquire about Stremoukhov’s view on possible American mediation in an informal conversation before making an official offer.¹⁰⁸ But the discussion did not go any further, and the reason can be found in Stremoukhov’s frustration with the United States with regards to the North Pacific. On 1 June 1870, Stremoukhov told

¹⁰³ Jack L. Hammersmith, *Spoilsmen in a “flowery Fairyland”: The Development of the US Legation in Japan, 1859-1906* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1998), 88.

¹⁰⁴ DNGM, iii, 100-13.

¹⁰⁵ Delong to Fish, 20 September 1870. Quoted in Hammersmith, 87.

¹⁰⁶ Stephan has noted that Seward’s visit took place in 1869, but it was in 1870. Stephan, 61.

¹⁰⁷ William Seward, *William H. Seward’s travels around the world* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1873), 58.

¹⁰⁸ National Archives, Washington, D.C., U.S.A., Diplomatic instructions of the Department of State, 1801-1906. Russia. Microfilm Reel 137. Fish to Curtin, 11 November 1870.

Buchanan the United States was ‘the last power in the world’ Russia would ask for mediation.

This was because:

the aggressive proceedings of American citizens, on the coast of the Russian possessions in the Pacific, had rendered it necessary to keep a naval squadron in these waters, to maintain police, and to protect Russian fishing stations and the neighbouring coasts, on which the crews of American vessels are in the habit of landing and wantonly destroying game and timber.¹⁰⁹

Stremoukhov told Buchanan that the United States had recently proposed a convention with Russia ‘by which the two powers should grant to each other a reciprocal right of fishing on their respective coasts in the Pacific’. This struck Stremoukhov as a ‘one-sided proposal’ and he ‘did not conceal his apprehension this question might lead ere long to a serious misunderstanding between Russia and the United States’.¹¹⁰

The Japanese learnt that Russia would not accept the proposed American mediation from Eugene Butzow, the Russian minister to China, who stopped at Yokohama on 24 December 1870.¹¹¹ Butzow opposed the Japanese approach to the Americans and instead told Soejima Taneomi, foreign minister, that Japan should contact St. Petersburg directly.¹¹² On the next day Japan announced to DeLong that it would no longer pursue American mediation.¹¹³ DeLong proved to have been overly sanguine about his government’s relations with Russia. Stationed in a location far removed from both the United States and Europe, DeLong was not best placed to keep track of the temperature between other capitals. In conversation with Butzow, the Japanese made a last attempt to retain southern Sakhalin by

¹⁰⁹ TNA FO65/802 no201. Buchanan to Clarendon, 1 June 1870. It is quite telling that this is exactly what Japan ended up doing in the Kuril Islands in the coming decade. See Chapter 4.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ DNGM, iii, 117; Yasuoka Akio, *Soejima Taneomi* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2012), 134.

¹¹² DNGM, iii, 118.

¹¹³ DNGM, iii, 121.

telling him that it ‘should be a tip of an iceberg’ for such a large country as Russia, but Butzow flatly denied any chance of agreeing to divide the island.¹¹⁴

Coastal survey by HMS *Sylvia*

In retrospect, it was Britain that was committed to Japan’s rule of Hokkaido throughout the early years of the Meiji government, in resistance to the Russian activities. In March 1870 Japan offered to pay the British navy for conducting a hydrographical survey of the coast of Hokkaido.¹¹⁵ The Japanese officials were so keen on doing this quickly that they even offered to employ some British surveyors in Japan who were about to take leave from their employment in the Royal Navy.¹¹⁶ It was ‘principally a political question’, as the hydrographer’s office of the Admiralty observed, because the commercial activities around Hokkaido by British ships were minimal.¹¹⁷ HMS *Sylvia*, the surveying vessel of the China station, had been concentrating its efforts around the Inland Sea, which had had the heaviest traffic of foreign ships, connecting Nagasaki with Osaka. However, having completed the survey of the most essential part of these waters, Kellett agreed to send it to the north. In May 1871 the ship surveyed the coast of Nemuro and Kunashiri, struggling with bad weather and drift ice. Having killed time around Hakodate, probably waiting for favourable weather, the *Sylvia* began a circumnavigation of Hokkaido in August, which it did in twenty-three days.¹¹⁸ As the *Sylvia* was concluding the mission, the Admiralty in London had already decided that one year of digression was enough for the purpose and directed the ship to resume its surveying work in the Inland Sea.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ DNGM, iii, 118.

¹¹⁵ TNA ADM1/6150 no280. Kellett to Admiralty, HMS *Salamis* at Yokohama, 4 July 1870.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. See also ITKM-NDL 16-1(1).

¹¹⁷ TNA ADM1/6150 no280. Hydrographer’s note, September 1870. Enclosure to Kellett to Admiralty, HMS *Salamis* at Yokohama, 4 July 1870.

¹¹⁸ TNA ADM53/10056. HMS *Sylvia* Logbook, 7 May 1870 to 26 November 1871.

¹¹⁹ TNA ADM1/6214. Admiralty’s notes on the *Sylvia*’s survey of Yezo, 21 September 1871. Also see Beasley, ‘From conflict to cooperation’, 102-3.

Throughout this period Parkes and Kellett constantly received reports from Admiralty officers as well as from Buchanan in St. Petersburg that did nothing but reinforce their conviction that Russia was going to take Sakhalin and proceed to Hokkaido unless Japan took some measures to stop it. The reports told them such things as 'the general impression formed by foreigners [in Sakhalin] is that the Russians will not be content till they get possession not only of Saghalien but also of Yezzo with the port of Hakodate';¹²⁰ or that a Russian officer in Busse, a coal mine on the southern coast of Sakhalin, 'gave me to understand that in time Russia would possess Sakhalin... the present treaty [i.e. the 1867 temporary regulations] was very unsatisfactory... the strait of La Perouse made a natural boundary....';¹²¹ 'altogether from what I saw and heard, I fancy that any winter, when there is little communication with other ports, the Russians might pick a ground of quarrel with the Japanese, take temporary charge of the place, and then use that as a means of getting it ceded to them by treaty....';¹²² 'there can be little doubt... that the Russian government have decided to obtain eventually possession of the whole island, and... they will succeed at last in forcing the Japanese to accede to their wishes'.¹²³ Even though there was an occasional acknowledgement that some of the Russian officers denied having any aggressive intentions towards Hokkaido,¹²⁴ such evidence was overwhelmed by 'the voluminous correspondence which has been referred to the Admiralty by the Foreign Office during the last several years - that Russia has a strong yearning towards Yezo and its off-lying dependencies'.¹²⁵

Conclusion

¹²⁰ TNA ADM125/121 no341. Memorandum on coal in Sakhalin and Ezo by R.E. Crossman, 2 October 1868. Hyogo. Enclosure 1 to Keppel to the secretary of the Admiralty, 4 November 1868. HMS *Salamis* at sea.

¹²¹ TNA ADM1/6150 no2. Denison to Ross, HMS *Cormosant* at Yokohama, 16 November 1869.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ TNA FO65/772 no258. Buchanan to Clarendon, 30 November 1869.

¹²⁴ TNA ADM1/6191 no432. Kellett to the secretary of the Admiralty, 15 December 1871. HMS *Ocean* at Singapore.

¹²⁵ TNA ADM1/6150 no280. Hydrographer's note, September 1870. Incl. to Kellett to Admiralty, HMS *Salamis* at Yokohama, 4 July 1870.

The years between 1867 and 1871 were a transitional period for strategic relations in the northern edge of Japan, during which each party sought to steer the balance of favour to its liking. At the macro level, Russia made a retreat from the Pacific as a naval seafaring power and began concentrating on the Eurasian Far East. Because at the centre of that plan lay the development of the Amur River region, exclusive control of Sakhalin became its priority. This led to the establishment of a penal colony on the island in 1868. To the Japanese, these Russian moves reinforced the old fear about Russia's southward advance towards Japan that they had held since the early-nineteenth century. Koide's mission was to use the border settlement as a way of enhancing national security, but Russia did not agree to drawing a border on the island.

During the Boshin War the Japanese sought to sell part of Hokkaido for short-term gain. Such feelers demonstrate that Japan's attitude towards border zones did not always see the maximisation of its territory as the highest priority. Land, like mineral resources, was a tradable commodity. But this attitude quickly dissipated as soon as the Meiji government consolidated its regime throughout the Japanese archipelago. Instead, establishing firm control of the border zone in the north of Japan became a foreign policy imperative for the purpose of maintaining the balance of favour and preventing the first domino to fall. Through the negotiations with Gaertner, the government realised its precarious situation: if one country gained a territorial concession from Japan, the others would soon demand the same. This was why the government spent \$62,500 to buy back a piece of land from Gaertner.

In much the same manner as at the time of the Tsushima incident, the Meiji government's first strategy towards the border question in Sakhalin was to side with the British and keep up with the Russian settlement while avoiding escalation. In Sakhalin, Russia was the country that had the largest to lose if it failed to secure the territorial control. If any foreign presence on the island remained, either militarily or commercially, that could open a path for other powers to move in. In the same way that Japan wanted Tsushima free from foreign hands, Russia wanted Sakhalin for itself. The Japanese briefly sought to employ American support, but soon went back to the partnership with Britain. The Anglo-Japanese

joint hydrographical survey around Hokkaido in 1871 was made possible due to the prevalence of the perception among the Japanese and the British that Russia aimed at expansion into Hokkaido. The degree of coordination marked the high point of the cooperation between the two countries.

The balance of favour that the Japanese policymakers realised up to 1871 was a negative one, meaning that a domino could fall and threaten the existence of Japanese territorial integrity. In the next few years, however, they began to understand the other side of the mechanism. If there existed a diplomatic and military equilibrium among the Western countries, Japan could defend its territorial claims without exercising military power. Neither Russia, nor Britain nor the United States were willing to proactively tip the balance in order to seek exclusive control around the Japanese archipelago. The next chapter discusses how the Meiji negotiators took advantage of this positive balance of favour.

Chapter 4 The balance restored

By the beginning of the 1870s the Meiji government had exhausted its diplomatic options to maintain a presence in southern Sakhalin. The British, while encouraging the Japanese to focus on the development of Hokkaido and cooperating on such moderate measures as the surveying of Hokkaido's coast, did not directly intervene to ward off the Russians from southern Sakhalin as they had in Tsushima in 1861. Neither did St. Petersburg accept the American proposal for mediation that the Meiji government had sought. Foreign Minister Soejima Taneomi's attempt at negotiating with Russia in the Maritime Region in the summer of 1871 failed because St. Petersburg refused to send a plenipotentiary, knowing that it could not accept Soejima's insistence on drawing a border on the island anyway.¹

In spite of – or perhaps because of – such diplomatic frustration, the Meiji government in the early 1870s pursued de-escalation between the Russians and the Japanese, in response to the rising level of violence in southern Sakhalin, as will be seen below. One could also see this as the restoration of the balance of favour in Japan's northern edge, providing the conditions conducive to its adventurism in the south discussed in chapter 6. How did this restoration of balance come about? The crucial point in approaching this question is to see the agreed deal as a tacit Russo-Japanese demarcation between Sakhalin and Hokkaido, rather than to focus on the territorial swap between Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands which the treaty terms stipulated. The emergence of boundaries in the Kuriles had a different character from that in Sakhalin and will be dealt with in the next chapter. What was important for Russia, Japan, as well as Britain, was the fact that the border emerged in the Sōya (La Perouse) Strait. Most importantly, the decision makers in the Meiji government on the northern policy came to the realisation that their interests regarding Hokkaido were in fact not opposed to Russia's.

¹ Yasuoka Akio, *Soejima Taneomi* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2012), 134-6.

Sakhalin-Hokkaido demarcation

Many of the Japanese in Sakhalin, especially until 1868, were seasonal workers who would engage in fishing in Sakhalin in the summer and spend the winter in a less hostile climate. It was after the Meiji Restoration that it became imperative to construct more substantial year-round settlements in order to claim control on southern Sakhalin. That was why in mid-August 1868, Okamoto Kansuke, an enthusiastic official who had been put in charge of the Japanese settlement in Kushunkotan, adjoining Korsakov, arrived there with eighty officers and 200 migrants from Hakodate and dispatched officers to eight stations in the southern part of the island.² However the settlers themselves found the place difficult to cultivate. John Will, the captain of a British ship the *Khankai*, who had long experience of sailing around northern Japan, observed the predicament of the Japanese colonists in Kushunkotan already in 1870. When he took several Japanese officials to Kushunkotan in the early summer of 1870, he also took aboard some 120 migrants from Hakodate under the Japanese government's request.³ When he arrived, the beach next to the Japanese settlement was covered with pots buried in the sand for fermenting herring, which had caused 'a malaria'. A third of the migrants transported on the *Khankai* 'got sick or died' during the three weeks of the ship's stay. On the return trip Will was asked to take on board around eighty seriously ill Japanese migrants. 'One dozen were able to get up with help, but more

² Akizuki, *Nichiro Kankei to Saharin Tō*, 189.

³ Akizuki has noted that Will wrongly recorded the year and this visit actually took place in 1868, but Akizuki's interpretation does not square with other parts of Will's text. After three weeks in Kushunkotan, Will returned to Hakodate, and after 'a couple of weeks' he was ordered to go to Kushunkotan again and then to Sōya in order to retrieve the goods from a wrecked HMS *Rattler*. The British consul Richard Eusden in Hakodate recorded that the *Khankai* arrived with the *Rattler*'s guns on 20 October 1870, and therefore Will's visit to Kushunkotan most likely happened in 1870 too. See Akizuki, *Nichiro Kankei to Saharin Tō*, 89, 221n5; John Baxter Will, *Trading under sail off Japan, 1860-99: The recollections of Captain John Baxter Will, sailing-master & pilot*, ed. George Lensen (Tokyo: Sophia University in cooperation with the Diplomatic Press, Tallahassee, Fla., 1968), 61-3; TNA FO262/192 no35. Eusden to Parkes, 3 October 1870. On the wreck of HMS *Rattler*, see Hagiwara, *Edo Kaijō*, 244-56.

than half had to be hoisted on board and lowered in the hold by tackle'.⁴ Eusden in Hakodate noticed that the *Khankai* came back with 'the whole of her crew suffering from fever'.⁵

The Karafuto Kaitakushi, the Meiji government's branch responsible for the administration of Sakhalin, reported from Kushunkotan to the Meiji government that 130 of the residents were sick and lacked medicine, and eighty of them had been taken to Hakodate. But as the facility in Hakodate could not possibly treat all of them, it pleaded with the government to provide assistance.⁶ Three months later the government told the Tokyo prefecture to receive thirty-eight ill migrants who had been sent back from southern Sakhalin. The Tokyo office complained that they should have been settled in Hakodate, since the migrants had lost their registration with the city, which was already swarming with the homeless poor. Tokyo in the end grudgingly accepted them, noting that they would not repeat this in the future.⁷

Another source of difficulty for the Japanese in Sakhalin was a series of violent episodes and clear limitations on the rule of law. In southern Sakhalin, the tension between the Russians and the Japanese grew in 1873, following the relocation of Russia's battalion to Korsakov in the previous year. Lawlessness and chaos was especially prevalent in Korsakov and the neighbouring Japanese settlement of Kushunkotan, including incidents involving indigenous peoples. In late March 1873 a Tungus man named Gherasim Germogenov and the two Yakuts, Erasen Petrov and Ivan, confined an 18-year-old Ainu woman named Kematonke in a hut in a mountain for five days, raped and killed her, and dumped her body into a river. The case was exposed when an Ainu man heard the story from a Yakut and reported it to a Japanese officer. Three Ainu, one of whom was the victim's brother, and a Japanese migrant fisherman went to Germogenov's house and captured him. They took Germogenov to Higashi Tonnai, the nearest Japanese settlement and tied him to a pillar in the settlement's office. The

⁴ Will, *Trading under sail off Japan*, 62-3.

⁵ TNA FO262/192 no28. Eusden to Parkes, 1 August 1870.

⁶ NAJP, KO00426100. *Kōbunroku Meiji San'nen*. Vol.111, 'Karafuto Kaitakushi Udagai'. Karafuto Kaitakushi to Benkan, 4 August 1870.

⁷ NAJP, KO00426100. *Kōbunroku Meiji San'nen* vol.111, 'Karafuto Kaitakushi Udagai', 'Ijūmin byōshin kyojaku no mono Tokyo fu he fukuseki ukagai', Tokyo prefecture to Benkan, tenth (intercalary) month of Meiji 3 (1870).

Japanese fisherman then interrogated Germogenov, beating him several times on his back with a stick. He admitted that he was present at the hut but that the other two were culpable.⁸ It is not clear from the sources how the other two were captured but all three were interrogated by a team of Japanese and Russian officers, and eventually sent off to Nikolaevsk to face a trial. The result of the trial is not known.⁹

The violent atmosphere peaked in April with an arson attack on Japanese warehouses by Russian soldiers. Drunken Russian soldiers set fire to the warehouses that stored fishing nets and other equipment, collectively obstructed the Japanese from trying to put out the fire by throwing stones at and beating them, and robbed the Japanese of their water pumps and put them into the fire. Nevertheless, when the news arrived in Tokyo the response was more measured than in 1869. Instead of escalating tensions, the Japanese foreign ministry simply suspended the border negotiations with Butzow that had been going on and off since his arrival and the two parties sent investigators. The investigators conducted interviews with both sides and referred the case to the governor of the Maritime Region, although it was only in August 1875 that the verdict was notified to the Japanese. All suspects had been acquitted on account of insufficient evidence.¹⁰

The first half of 1873, when the Korea question dominated the Meiji leaders' minds in Tokyo, was not a time for quick military reinforcement or escalation – not, in particular, for the sake of a migration project that was deemed to have little chance of success. Shortly after taking charge of the development of Hokkaido, it was clear to Kuroda Kiyotaka, the head of the Kaitakushi, that the colonisation project of southern Sakhalin had to be abandoned regardless of the competing Russian presence. In October 1870 Kuroda anticipated that mixed inhabitancy in Sakhalin would not last for more than three years.¹¹ His trip to Sakhalin in the next year only reinforced his view as to intractability of the colonial problem for his

⁸ NAJP, A01100069800. *Kobunroku Meiji Shichinen*. Vol.234. Kaitakushi Udagai.

⁹ Akizuki, *Nichiro Kankei to Saharin Tō*, 218.

¹⁰ Ibid., 210-3, 224n50.

¹¹ 'Hokkaido Karafuto Kaitaku ni Kansuru Jōsō', October 1870, in *Kenseishi Hensankai Shūshū Monjo* 488 'Kuroda Kiyotaka Iken Shorui', 10-21. Also see Akizuki Toshiyuki, 'Meiji shonen no Karafuto: Nichiro zakkyo wo meguru shomondai', *Slav Kenkyū*, no. 40 (1993): 1-21.

government. Akizuki has noted that after submitting a memorandum on his views in early 1871, Kuroda began to focus on the protection of migrants and temporary workers rather than any further development.¹²

Kuroda's view was not widely shared within the government. Maruyama Sakura, one of the senior members of the Kaitakushi office in Sakhalin, firmly believed that a Japanese presence was a security imperative against expansionist Russia and was in favour of a military buildup in Sakhalin.¹³ He told his subordinates that nobody in the government supported Kuroda's memorandum.¹⁴ Sanjō Sanetomi, the prime minister, also maintained doubts about negotiating a treaty with Russia until January 1874, as he feared the possible negative consequences in the future.¹⁵ Regardless, when in March 1874 the Kaitakushi in Sapporo, which had absorbed the branch in Sakhalin, called for applicants to move from Sakhalin to Hokkaido, almost ninety percent of the Sakhalin residents applied and left the island.¹⁶ The Japanese settlers were clearly in retreat before the dual possession came to an end.

If indeed Russia wanted Hokkaido, the failure of the Japanese in southern Sakhalin should have been a welcome sign. Especially the clash between the Russian soldiers and the Japanese in April 1873 provided an excuse, if the conduct of Western imperialism in other parts of the world was any guidance, to justify a beefed-up military presence of Russian troops in southern Sakhalin and the occupation of parts of Hokkaido, as feared by many in Japan. Newspapers in the mainland Japan reported not only Russo-Japanese clashes in southern Sakhalin, but also the Russo-British rivalry in Central Asia as evidence of Russia's expansionist inclinations. For instance, a Tokyo-based newspaper informed its readers on 3 September 1873:

¹² Akizuki, 'Meiji Shonen no Karafuto', 7.

¹³ Maruyama Masahiko, *Maruyama Sakura Den* (Tokyo: Chūaisha, 1899), 60-61.

¹⁴ AH B0-69/1 *Doi Toyoki Nisshi*, 23 July 1870.

¹⁵ Sanjō to Iwakura, 10 January 1874. Reprinted in Sasaki et al (eds.), *Iwakura Tomomi Kankei Shiryo* vol.1, 203-4.

¹⁶ Akizuki, *Nichiro Kankei to Saharin Tō*, 220.

The Russian government gradually seeped into Central Asia and seems to be nearing British India. It has now defeated Khiva in Central Asia and subjugated its ruler. Although it is not known what will ensue, [Russia] will probably add that land to its own territory. Therefore it looks as though Britain and Russia would stand in each other's way, and within several years the two countries will enter a showdown in Afghanistan or in India.¹⁷

While the specific tactics to be employed against Russia varied, it is fair to say that one thing was clear to the Japanese people: 'even a three-year-old child knows Russia is aiming at Hokkaido.'¹⁸

In reality this did not happen. The Russian response to the series of violence and crime in Sakhalin was to investigate them, often in collaboration with the Japanese counterparts. The temporary regulations adopted in 1867 had little specific guidance to this effect, and therefore the officers improvised the procedures as they went along. The investigation into the murder of a Japanese settler named Katō Motosuke was one such example. On 29 October 1873 the body of Katō was found under a bush on the outskirts of Korsakov, a few kilometers away from his house in a nearby Japanese village. The Japanese officers talked to the witnesses, including Motosuke's wife. They then captured a Manchu man named Mikhail Spuichin who lived in a hut on the nearby coast. Spuichin had visited Motosuke's house on the morning he disappeared, and so the suspicion fell on him. The interrogation of Spuichin took place with a surprising degree of cooperation between the Japanese and Russian authorities. The suspect was taken into custody by a team of Japanese officers and Russian soldiers and put under house arrest while awaiting interrogation in a Russian military barracks since the Japanese did not have any facility on the island in which to confine a criminal suspect.¹⁹ Because he turned out to be a Russian subject the investigation was conducted by Russian officers. Justice, though, was hard to achieve, for the

¹⁷ *Tokyo Nichinichi Shimbun*, 3 September 1873.

¹⁸ Nakajima Yū, untitled essay, in Sada Hakubō, ed., *Karafuto Hyōron* (Tokyo: Chōfun Girōbō, 1875).

¹⁹ NAJP, KO01256100. *Kōbunroku Meiji Shichinen*. Vol.234. *Kaitakushi Udagai*.

Japanese later discovered that in fact Spuichin had been sent back to Manchuria. The Japanese complained and he was brought back to Sakhalin for trial in the summer of 1874. However, the case never saw an end before the transfer of the island to Russia.²⁰

All told, the atmosphere in southern Sakhalin was markedly tense for the Japanese residents. Between 1871 and 1874 at least five Japanese were murdered in Sakhalin. With this grim picture emerging as to the future of Japan's Sakhalin settlement, however, some of the most well-informed Japanese leaders were beginning to realise the flip side of the coin as far as the diplomatic environment was concerned. Russia's attitude in the north was beginning to look calmer than before. In 1872 Russia effectively closed its consulate in Hakodate with the opening of the legation in Tokyo.²¹ The gaudy building that they built in 1860 gazing down at the town of Hakodate from a hilltop had led the residents to rumour that it was meant to be a future government office once they occupied the island. That day never came. It is impossible to fully understand the Russian thinking as to why this was the case without examining Russian primary sources, as carried out by Gentes and Corrado, and it falls beyond the scope of this thesis.²² What is important here is the gradual realisation on the Japanese side that Russia might not be as aggressive as had been imagined regarding Hokkaido.

The Sakhalin-Korea linkage and the Treaty of St. Petersburg

As the question of an expedition to Korea became the top issue for the government in 1873, those who advocated the dispatch of troops thought they needed to prevent Russia's intervention. It was clear that given its Far Eastern possessions Russia would not welcome Korea coming under Japanese influence, if not outright occupation. The underlying geopolitical logic was the same as that which Russia had used when it sought to occupy

²⁰ Akizuki, *Nichiro Kankei to Saharin Tō*, 218.

²¹ Hakodate Shishi Hensanshitsu (ed.), *Hakodate Shishi Tsūsetsuhen* vol.3, 1032.

²² Gentes, 'The institution of Russia's Sakhalin policy, from 1868 to 1875'; Corrado, 'The "end of the earth": Sakhalin Island in the Russian imperial imagination, 1849-1906'.

Tsushima in 1861. Soejima Taneomi, a firm proponent of sending troops to Korea sought to use the border negotiations in order to obtain the Russian neutrality in Korea. He proposed to Butzow that Japan give up southern Sakhalin in exchange for a Russian pledge of neutrality over Korea in the event of a Korean-Japanese war. Soejima told Parkes that he was confident that Russia would agree, making a lasting impression on Parkes's mind.²³ Yet Butzow declined to get into such terms with Japan and the talks halted when Soejima left office following the defeat of his group in the leadership split over the Korea policy.²⁴

When Ōkubo Toshimichi emerged as the effective leader of the government following the leadership split and the resignation of Soejima, Saigō Takamori and others, he believed that a Russian pledge of neutrality over Korea in the event of Korean-Japanese war could not be trusted. Therefore the instructions for Enomoto Takeaki, the plenipotentiary for negotiating the boundaries between Russia and Japan, in March 1874 prior to his departure to St. Petersburg did not include any conditions about Korea. It simply stated that he should offer to yield southern Sakhalin and in exchange receive the Kuril Islands, the numbers of which were not specified. The instructions also told Enomoto to secure fishing privileges around Sakhalin and tax-free access to the ports there for Japanese fishermen.²⁵ Nevertheless it was clear to the leadership that the Korean question might be brought up during the talks.

When appointed to serve as the negotiator on the boundary questions in St. Petersburg, Enomoto was serving in the Kaitakushi under Kuroda, having recently been released from imprisonment for his treason against the emperor during the Boshin War of 1868-9. The only reason he had escaped execution, despite the fact that he was the leader of the rebellion in Hakodate, was that Kuroda had stood up and sued for his pardon.²⁶ The latter understood the value of Enomoto's knowledge of the northern frontier, international law and naval affairs. Enomoto had participated in the Tokugawa exploration mission to Hokkaido and Sakhalin in the early 1850s, had then started his career as a naval trainee in Nagasaki in

²³ Parkes to Derby, 24 July 1875. Tokyo. TNA FO46/192 no94.

²⁴ [Enomoto to Terashima,] 22 November 1874. St. Petersburg. DNGM 7, 446.

²⁵ Sanjō Sanetomi to Enomoto Takeaki, 5 March 1874. DNGM 7: 420-421.

²⁶ Saigō Takamori to Katsura Shirō, 12 January 1873. Saigō Takamori Zenshū Sensan Iinkai (ed.), *Saigō Takamori Zenshū* vol.3 (Tokyo: Yamato Shobō, 1978), 215.

1856, and went on to study international law in The Hague for five years before coming back to Japan to join the pro-Tokugawa cause. No one else in the Meiji government could match his expertise.

Enomoto left Japan on 10 March. He travelled through the recently opened Suez canal, made a couple of stops at European capitals and reached St. Petersburg on 22 June 1874.²⁷ Enomoto then spent the summer negotiating the handling of the incidents in southern Sakhalin involving the Japanese nationals. The first negotiations on the border question between Enomoto and Pëtr Nikolaevich Stremoukhov, the head of the Asian Division of the Russian Foreign Ministry, took place on 14 November. Stremoukhov's approach had softened compared to his stance vis-à-vis Koide. Stremoukhov emphasized that there was no intention on the Russian side to expand its territory. He asserted that Russia just wanted to establish a penal colony, and having a border on the island would only cause trouble. He also showed his willingness to consider giving compensation for receiving the southern end of the island.²⁸ Enomoto reported to Tokyo on 26 November: 'it does not seem Russia is wrestling to get Karafuto quickly by force, they mainly use tactics.'²⁹ He observed that Russia wanted to achieve two things: the development of the coal mines in Sakhalin, which would help supply the Siberian fleet in Vladivostok; and to command the La Perouse Strait between Sakhalin and Hokkaido so as to secure its fleet's access to the outer sea.³⁰

Enomoto did not waste time debating the relative strengths of the two countries' legal standing in Sakhalin. His approach was pragmatic and aimed at reaching a political settlement. What Enomoto had in mind was in fact more aggressive than Soejima's quest for Russian neutrality. Enomoto wanted to make Russia accept Japanese rule over Pusan if Japanese troops took it, in return for yielding southern Sakhalin. Enomoto believed that taking possession of Pusan and controlling the Tsushima strait was vital for Japan's national security. This would allow Japan to prevent the Russian fleet in Vladivostok from getting out

²⁷ Enomoto Takeaki to Terashima Munenori, 22 June 1874. DNGM 7: 426.

²⁸ DNGM 7: 442.

²⁹ Enomoto Takeaki to Terashima Munenori, 26 November 1874. Encrypted telegram. St. Petersburg. Reprinted in *Terashima Munenori Kankei Shiryōshū* vol.1, 135-6.

³⁰ DNGM 7: 445-446.

of the Sea of Japan, just as the 1856 Treaty of Paris cloistered Russia in the Black Sea. If Russia was interested in such an offer, however, the ‘wording needs to be carefully done,’ Enomoto wrote to Tokyo.³¹ Even though Soejima’s idea of Russian neutrality over Korea had been dismissed by Ōkubo, Korea was still part of the picture for Japanese diplomacy vis-à-vis Russia. ‘Korea was constantly on Enomoto’s mind,’ as Kim Key-Hiuk has noted.³²

On 2 January Stremoukhov proposed to secede the Kuriles except for the two northernmost islands. This was a major concession and should have been welcome for Japan given the instructions from Sanjō. However, Enomoto did not think it was imperative to seek the maximum territorial gain. His response was to request just three islands in the southern part of the Kuriles and instead asked for Russian battleships in exchange for the control of southern Sakhalin.³³ This surprised Stremoukhov, but he agreed to consider the offer. In the next meeting on 11 January Enomoto dropped the demand for the islands, except for Urup, where some merit was expected in sea otter hunting and building ports, and focused his compensation on battleships. Russia declined this peculiar demand,³⁴ but by the end of February Enomoto was still optimistic. He wrote to Yamanouchi Teiun, his old friend who now worked for the Kaitakushi in Tokyo, that because the Russian side was hoping for a swift conclusion he would be able to draw a substantial compromise. He even thought drawing the border on the island was not impossible with the current Russian attitude, but that was not his goal.³⁵

As he observed the diplomatic situation in Europe firsthand, Enomoto’s view on Russia markedly differed from what was prevalent in Japan. He pointed out that Russia had too large a territory which imposed financial constraints on them.³⁶ It was less than fifteen years since Russia had taken the Maritime Region and its power could not be substantial in the near future. Due to these financial and geographical reasons, Japan need not worry about

³¹ DNGM 7: 446.

³² Kim, *The Last Phase*, 219.

³³ Enomoto Takeaki to Terashima Munenori. 3 January 1875. St. Petersburg. DNGM 8: 168.

³⁴ Enomoto Takeaki to Terashima Munenori. 15 January 1875. St. Petersburg. DNGM 8:179.

³⁵ Enomoto Takeaki to Yamanouchi Teiun, 28 February 1875. St. Petersburg. NDL-ETKM 6-4.

³⁶ Enomoto Takeaki to Kuroda Kiyotaka, 29 August 1874. St. Petersburg. NDL-KKKM, vol.7, 76-80.

Sakhalin as much as people feared. Yet he also reminded Yamanouchi Teiun that ‘this is only for the ears of the learned, not for the commoners’.³⁷ He said so presumably because public fear of Russia would facilitate the occupation of Pusan that Enomoto wished to see, possibly with the ships that he hoped would be handed over from Russia.

On 4 March, in the sixth meeting with Stremoukhov, Enomoto switched gears and demanded the transfer of the entire Kuriles. Stremoukhov was reluctant on the grounds that it would leave no passable route to the Pacific for the Siberian fleet. ‘The Ministry of Navy does not agree,’ he said.³⁸ Enomoto acknowledged that losing this passage would certainly be inconvenient for them if any difficulty arose in case of war, but went on to elaborate the other compensation he wanted. Among these conditions were the opening of ports in the Maritime Region for Japanese trade, and allowing a Japanese consul there. Stremoukhov agreed to the former, but not the latter. He said a commercial agent would be acceptable but not a consul, because Russia ‘does not want Britain’s consul in the region, so we do not allow it to other powers.’³⁹ This is another example of the delicate balance of rights and privileges in the North Pacific. It also shows that Russia was continuously concerned about Britain around its Far Eastern possession and saw Japan’s presence as a possible avenue which might invite British activities.

The two sides came to an agreement for the most part on 24 March. Enomoto’s telegram to Tokyo on the next day reported that Russia agreed on the major issues and he asked for the emperor’s permission to sign the treaty.⁴⁰ The treaty was signed between Enomoto and Prince Gorchakov, the foreign minister, on 7 May. It stipulated that the whole island of Sakhalin was to become Russian territory, while the Kuril island chain went to Japan. They agreed that Russia would buy up the Japanese properties left on Sakhalin, the value of which would be determined when officials from both countries investigated them. It was also agreed that Japan would do the same for Russian property in the Kurils, though

³⁷ Enomoto Takeaki to Yamanouchi Teiun, 28 February 1875. St. Petersburg. NDL-ETKM 6-4.

³⁸ DNGM 8: 186.

³⁹ DNGM 8: 186-189.

⁴⁰ Enomoto Takeaki To Terashima Munenori, 25 March 1875. 0:30pm. Encrypted telegram. St. Petersburg. Reprinted in *Terashima Munenori Kankei Shiryōshū* vol.1, 140-141.

Stremoukhov assured Enomoto that there was none.⁴¹ Japanese fishermen were granted the right to engage in fishing around Sakhalin for ten years, and also enjoyed tax-free access to Korsakov for ten years; Japan would have the right to put a consul in Korsakov; and the Japanese ships would enjoy most-favoured nation treatment in ports around Okhotsk and eastern Kamchatka and for fishing in those areas.⁴² The indigenous people were to choose either Russian or Japanese nationality within three years.

Enomoto obtained almost all that he had sought aside from the initial request for Russian battleships as part of the compensation. In exchange for southern Sakhalin, from which the Meiji government had already decided to retreat, Japan obtained the whole of the Kuril Islands and cut off Russia's Siberian fleet from the north Pacific. It also secured monetary compensation for the properties in Sakhalin; and the Japanese commercial interests were largely guaranteed. Russia gained almost nothing in material terms other than exclusive control of southern Sakhalin. All the treaty did for Russia was that it removed a source of instability in the Far East. Although the local admiral called the swap 'a mistake' and said that the Siberian fleet was 'disgusted' with the deal,⁴³ Russia could now concentrate on more pressing issues closer to home. In the spring of 1875, a 'war scare' spread around Europe suggesting that Germany might stage a preventive war against France, which was still recovering from its defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of 1871. Tsar Alexander II tried to contain Germany by visiting Berlin himself.⁴⁴ Hanabusa Yoshimoto, then first secretary of the Japanese Legation in St. Petersburg, observed that foreign minister Gorchakov was anxious to cut a quick deal in order not to delay his departure to Berlin.⁴⁵ The Tsar and Gorchakov left for Berlin to attend a summit meeting with German emperor Wilhelm I on the day after Gorchakov signed the treaty with Japan.⁴⁶ The Japanese public, meanwhile, was not entirely

⁴¹ Enomoto Takeaki to Terashima Munenori, 17 April 1875. Telegram. St. Petersburg. DNGM 8:202.

⁴² Article 6, the Treaty of St. Petersburg, signed 7 May 1875. DNGM 8: 220-1.

⁴³ Eusden to Parkes, 4 September 1875. Hakodate. TNA FO262/273 no 30.

⁴⁴ Robert Blake, *Disraeli* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1966), 571; A.J.P.Taylor, *Bismarck* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955), 154; Kajima Morinosuke, *Bisumaru no Gaiko Seisaku* (Tokyo: Kajima Kenkyūjo, 1958), 25-34.

⁴⁵ Hanabusa's diary entry, 6 May 1875. DAJP HYKM F-25.

⁴⁶ Loftus to Derby, 11 May 1875. TNA FO65/909 no148.

pleased, for it suspected that this agreement might not stop the Russians even if a deal had been reached on Sakhalin.⁴⁷

Throughout the negotiations, Enomoto kept in touch with Terashima Munenori, the foreign minister in Tokyo, via telegraph. This was a new development for the Russo-Japanese boundary negotiations – or for any diplomatic negotiations that the Meiji government was engaged in for that matter. In contrast to the case of Takenouchi mission in 1862 or Koide mission in 1867, Enomoto was able to report to Terashima the details of the conditions agreed upon in St. Petersburg through encrypted telegraphs and then ask for the emperor's approval to sign the treaty on his behalf. This greatly facilitated the process, although some of the details had to be confirmed after an on-site investigation by both parties.

What did the two parties agree about Korea in the end? Shortly after the negotiation concluded, Enomoto's telegram to Terashima read that '[u]ntil today this [Russian] government has never said a thing about Korea, and so of course I have not uttered a word. Given that Russia has not sorted out the Maritime Region there does not seem to be as much planning as people in our country surmise.'⁴⁸ All the urgent communications had been conducted through telegram between Tokyo and St. Petersburg. As far as the remaining telegrams go, no word on Korea is recorded in the Japanese communications. Thus it is fair to say that, despite the fear of Parkes and the extrapolation of some historians, no secret agreement over Korea seems to have existed.⁴⁹ The link between the two issues remained hypothetical rather than real, though it did affect the negotiators' strategic considerations.

Enomoto's aversion to mentioning Korea during the negotiations speaks to its potential to spoil the talks. As Enomoto contemplated in November 1874, control of the southern end of the Korean Peninsula was of paramount importance for the command of the East China Sea. If Russia built a base on the opposite coast to Tsushima, Japan 'would lose

⁴⁷ For scepticism on the effectiveness of border settlement for halting Russia's advance, see *Tokyo Akebono Shimbun*, 13 June 1875. Reprinted in Meiji Hennenshi Hensankai, *Shinbun Shūsei Meiji Hennenshi* vol.1 (Tokyo: Rinsensha, 1940), 337-8.

⁴⁸ Enomoto Takeaki to Terashima Munenori, 10 April 1875. St. Petersburg. Reprinted in Terashima Munenori Kenkyukai (ed.), *Terashima Munenori Kankei Shiryōshū*, vol.1, 36-37.

⁴⁹ Ishii Takashi suspects the existence of secret agreement on Korea. See Ishii Takashi, *Meiji Shoki no Nihon to Higashi Ajia* (Tokyo: Yūrindo, 1982), 279, 323.

the big goal of naval defence,' he wrote to Terashima.⁵⁰ Pusan in his mind was 'absolutely necessary' in order to command the Korean strait and the western coast of Japan. He argued that this was the crux of the Korean expedition; the outrage over 'national humiliation' was a mere 'pretension'. If Japan had Pusan, Enomoto wrote, 'we can safely call that double-headed eagle a blank threat.'⁵¹

The British balancing

While the negotiations were taking place in St. Petersburg, Britain watched the development of Japanese diplomacy towards Korea anxiously. When in September 1874 Parkes visited Hakodate, he drew a comparison between Japan's opening of ports and that in Korea:

I have taken a short trip to Hakodate... .It is a terribly lifeless place... It is also a fine station for our fleet to visit in the summer, for purposes of health, and the only point from which we may watch Russian proceedings on the opposite coast. I hope Korea may not pass into their hands some fine day. The opening of the Hakodate Port saved Yezo, and if the Koreans were not such fools, they would see that the opening of their territory would be their salvation also.⁵²

One could observe that here Parkes's attention was turned from Hokkaido to Korea. Also notable is his interpretation that Hokkaido had been secured under the Japanese sovereignty with the opening of Hakodate, which is too kind to himself given that he was frantically trying to open an additional port in northern Hokkaido in order to stop the Russian intrusion

⁵⁰ Enomoto Takeaki to Terashima Munenori, 11 January 1875. St. Petersburg. DNGM8: 172-8.

⁵¹ Enomoto Takeaki to Yamanouchi Teiun, 12 January 1876. St. Petersburg. NDL-ETKM 5-9.

⁵² Parkes to Sir D. Brooks Robertson, 23 June 1874. Cited in Frederick Dickins, *The Life of Sir Harry Parkes* vol.2 (London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1894), 193-4.

just a few years previously. Nevertheless, he does share the view with the Japanese that Russia's priority for development had moved to the Eurasian continent.

Japanese domestic politics also caused some concern for Parkes, too. The Meiji government's grip on the country looked far from perfect. Indeed, the government had just quelled a rebellion in Saga in northern Kyushu led by Etō Shimpei in February 1874. After the rebellion was quelled, Parkes observed that the Meiji government was fortunate because the various segments of the society that held remonstrance to the Meiji government – destitute low-rank samurai, marginalised former feudal lords, and struggling peasants – did not join Etō's call to attack the government. He was not sure, however, whether 'this good fortune' could be repeated when Japan was poised to take action in the Korean peninsula.⁵³

Parkes thus felt the necessity to act pre-emptively in coordination with the navy. Vice Admiral Alfred Ryder of the British navy's China Squadron in Hong Kong and Parkes wrote to London on 20 July 1875 and proposed that Britain should occupy Port Hamilton, a small island off the southern coast of the Korean Peninsula. Ryder observed straightforwardly: 'Russia is rapidly encroaching. A German vessel is surveying west coast of Corea. Japanese vessel the east coast. Both with a view to occupation'.⁵⁴ Parkes brought in everything he could think of to buttress the case for occupation. He pointed out that Britain did not have a port north of Hong Kong in case of a war between Japan and Korea and if China remained neutral. He enclosed an American newspaper article that speculated on the Russian intention to occupy Korea. The article asserted that Russian officers in the ports of Japan and China were gathering information on Korean ports.⁵⁵ Parkes even referred to the possibility of Russo-Japanese joint occupation of Korea, though without mentioning the source. 'The plan of a joint occupation of that country might be looked forward to as promising even greater

⁵³ Parkes to Derby, 17 July 1875. Tokyo. TNA FO46/192 no91.

⁵⁴ Ryder to Admiralty, 20 July 1875. Yokohama. Copied in TNA FO46/200.

⁵⁵ For the text, see 'Russia and Corea,' *The New York Times*, 3 June 1875. The original article that Parkes enclosed was *Acta California*, 29 May 1875, which the *New York Times* reprinted.

advantages to Russia than those which she has desired from the joint occupation of Saghalin,' he wrote.⁵⁶

London was not impressed. While they busied themselves wondering how they could defend India from Russian intrusion through Afghanistan, they had no time for the Far East, which could not compare with India in strategic importance. Lord Augustus Loftus, the British ambassador to St. Petersburg, dismissed the scare raised by Parkes and Ryder. He observed that the area was too remote and the tsarist government's financial situation would not allow any hasty action in the Far East when it had more pressing issues in Europe. The 15th Earl of Derby, the foreign secretary, thus concluded that the occupation of Port Hamilton, which could trigger a general scramble for territory in East Asia, was not necessary. He wrote back to Parkes on 3 August: 'H.M's govt do not think it desirable to set to other nations the example of occupying places to which Great Britain has no title.'⁵⁷ Parkes and Ryder were ten years ahead of the time, for this was the course of policy Britain carried out in 1885, when war with Russia was thought to be ever more imminent. But at this point, Britain chose not to be the first country to tip the balance around Japan.

Conclusion

Although the outside observers of the Russo-Japanese negotiations learnt of the signing of the Treaty of St. Petersburg by late May through a trickle of information by newspaper reports, the negotiations were actually not over. This was because Enomoto and Stremoukhov did not have up-to-date information on the situation in Sakhalin and could not decide on the amount of monetary compensation for the Japanese properties in Sakhalin that were to be purchased by Russia. Occasionally the negotiators received newspaper articles sent from their colleagues in the Far East, but they could not sign treaty terms based solely on such

⁵⁶ Parkes to Derby, 20 July 1875. TNA FO46/192 no92.

⁵⁷ Derby to Parkes, 3 August 1875. London. TNA FO46/189 no76.

information. Telegrams were available in Tokyo and Vladivostok, but not anywhere in Hokkaido, Sakhalin or the Kuril Islands. Enomoto and Stremoukhov agreed that an investigatory mission needed to visit Sakhalin and the Kurils before determining the exact manner of the transfer. Therefore the negotiations on the transfer were handed over to Terashima and Karl von Struve, the Russian minister in Tokyo. The talks in Tokyo mainly concerned the specificities of the transfer, including the value of the Japanese properties, and the rights of fishermen around the islands. On 31 July 1875, Struve told Terashima that he wanted to remove a clause that guaranteed life-long tax-free status for Japanese fishermen. He feared that such a clause would become grounds which other states could use to demand the same rights. As was the case with the negotiations in St. Petersburg over opening a consulate in Vladivostok, here again the issue was not only bilateral. This put a strain on the talks, but Struve found a way out. On 4 August, he proposed to ‘acquiesce (*mokkyo*)’ to the Japanese fishermen without explicit mention. This was something that Enomoto had initially thought would be written into the annex.⁵⁸ When Terashima asked why, Struve replied:

If we have a treaty we have to give the permission to foreigners. This hunting is something we allow only to your nation. Therefore it is better not to have a treaty...

Our people will be retreating from fishing in this area.... and *the treaty text reads Sakhalin and not Okhotsk*, therefore if [we] sign the treaty we have to grant it to other nations and so I would like to conclude this with an exchange of letters.⁵⁹

This statement does not fully square with the final text of the annex signed by Terashima and Struve on 22 August, for this said that Japanese fishermen enjoyed most-favoured nation treatment for fishing in the Sea of Okhotsk and around the Kamchatka Peninsula. Neither this annex nor the main treaty mentions fishing rights in Sakhalin, contrary to what Struve stated on 4 August. It looks as though the reference to the fishing rights around Sakhalin was

⁵⁸ Loftus to Derby, 19 May 1875. St. Petersburg. TNA FO65/908 no163.

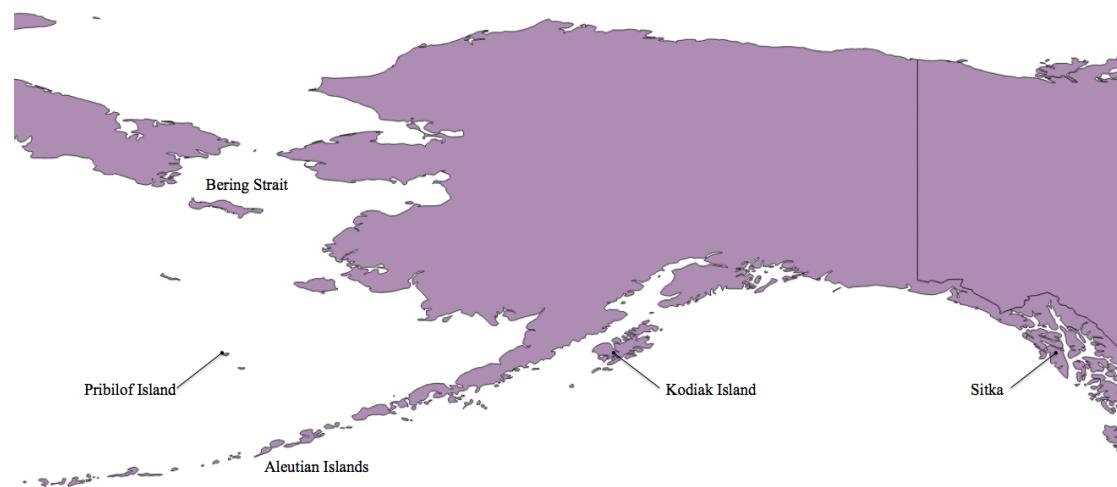
⁵⁹ Dialogue between Terashima and Struve. Tokyo. DNGM8: 253-254. Emphasis added. I am yet to find these letters of understanding.

deleted from the draft of the annex. Though their discussion ostensibly pertained to fishing, it is possible that Struve had in mind a strategic concern about the British navy's or possibly American vessels' access to the Kuril Islands, as Stremoukhov had told Buchanan five years previously. Yet at least one can observe here Struve's recognition of the subtle balance of favour in the Okhotsk Sea region. However unlikely from a practical viewpoint, Russia probably could not run the risk of allowing a British presence in the Kuriles. Another possibility is that he feared convicts getting help from foreign ships, either for mutiny or escape. Its inaccessibility to the outer world was the sole point of having a penal colony on the island. For Russia, therefore, the signing of the Treaty of St. Petersburg was the final piece for this project. In parallel with the Great Game mindset, domestic considerations affected Russia's decision to sign the treaty with Japan with substantial compromise. The seemingly bilateral negotiations of Russia and Japan never existed in isolation from other foreign policy issues, while Britain watched the situation with great care, at least from Tokyo. Enomoto understood that the alleged Russian threat was not immediate and was not directed towards Hokkaido. The key decision makers in the Meiji government did not see the viability of the Japanese outposts in southern Sakhalin, and they sold it for maximum gain to the only bidder.

It is important to note the difference between the perceptions about Russia held by the hardliners within the government, who comprised the majority, and the best informed few. The former remained alarmist until well into the 1870s. The latter, however, had come to a realisation sometime around 1872 that Russia's territorial aims in the Far East did not extend to Hokkaido. In other words, the Japanese foreign affairs experts realised the existence of a balance of favour based on power politics as well as legal structure, including international law in general and the specific treaties that Japan had signed with the Western powers. This led the Meiji government to assume that it had a fair chance of survival on the diplomatic front.

Chapter 5 The Kuril Islands

The existence of the contemporary territorial dispute has naturally led historians interested in the Kuril Islands to portray its history exclusively in the context of Russo-Japanese relations. From the perspective of the border history of Japan in the late nineteenth century, however, the Kuril Islands need to be placed in the broader regional framework of the North Pacific. The nineteenth century was a period when the human extraction of resources in this region greatly intensified: whales, seals, and sea otters were the main targets. The main actors in this process around the Kuril Islands were American merchants from San Francisco, who extended their operations from the newly acquired state of Alaska after 1867. The intensification of their commercial activities led to increased attention on the administration of cross-border activities by the Meiji government, especially the Kaitakushi (Hokkaido Colonial Office). The islands therefore became a contact point for various political and commercial opportunists who risked the difficult voyage for the prospect of handsome profit.¹



Map 4: Aleutian Islands and Russian America

¹ As the titles of the books by Stephan, Akizuki, Hasegawa, and Kimura all suggest, the history of the Kuriles has been understood as a Russo-Japanese story. The brief accounts of Stephan, Hasegawa and Kimura on the 1870s including the Treaty of St. Petersburg make little or no mention of Americans. Stephan, *The Kuril Islands*, 90-91; Hasegawa, *The Northern Territories Dispute*, vol.1, 26-7; Kimura, *The Kurillian Knot*, 30-31. Akizuki has written at some length on the American hunters, but does not discuss the Japanese response to them. Akizuki, *Chishima Rettō*, 231-5.

Russia's 'thin' rule

The first phase of the integration of the Kuriles into a sovereign political entity took place in the 1730s when a Russian expedition headed by Vitas Bering visited the area. At this point no one had complete knowledge of the geography of the islands, nor was it clear where they were located relative to Japan or Sakhalin. However, Russian attention towards the North Pacific was heightened in 1740 when Bering brought back a pile of fur skins (sea otters and seals) taken in the Aleutian Islands. This commercial success became the catalyst for a Russian rush into the region. The 1740s thus saw Russian tax collectors chasing Ainu fur hunters southwards along the Kuriles, starting from the Kamchatka Peninsula, in the same way as they collected the *yasak*, or tribute in fur, in Siberia.² This process increased Russia's knowledge of the Kuriles, and the conquered aborigines (Ainu) were forced to adopt various aspects of Russian culture: language, clothing, names, and religion.³

The Russian government learnt about the sea otter population in the Urup Island, north of Etorofu in the southern Kuriles, through a tax collector's report in 1769. The report prompted Russian exploitation and a clash with the Ainu hunters. Since the Ainu had been in trade relations with the Matsumae domain, which had established settlements in the southwest of Hokkaido (then called Ezo), Russia and Matsumae began to see each other as potential trade partners as well as foes. In 1779 the first official, ceremonial exchange of goods between Russia and Matsumae took place in Akkeshi on the southeastern coast of Hokkaido.⁴ Matsumae never reported this encounter to the shogunate as it feared losing the trading opportunity.⁵ In 1795 the first Russian settlement appeared in Urup, and five years later Japanese samurai arrived in Etorofu under the order of the shogunate to guard the island

² On the clash between the Russians and the Ainu in Urup in 1770 and 1771, see Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*, 162-3.

³ Akizuki, *Chishima Rettō*, 61-2.

⁴ Ibid., 67-72.

⁵ Ibid., 73.

against the Russians. This set the foundation of the border to be drawn six decades later.⁶

Russia's eastward advance through the northern rim of the Eurasian continent in the seventeenth and the eighteenth century was primarily led by the search for fur animals in order to finance the empire. Thus it took little interest in creating political institutions among the peoples they conquered beyond ensuring the steady supply of fur.⁷ This 'thin' rule based on *yasak* came to change when competitors emerged and Russia felt the need to establish a monopoly over the furs that the indigenous peoples in Alaska produced. The Russian American Company (RAC), established on 8 September 1799, received imperial protection and a monopoly over hunting rights in Alaska for twenty years, but no mention of specific support from the government was made. The activities of the company were left up to individual merchants and hunters, because the Russian Imperial Navy and Army lacked the ability to send troops if and when the RAC ships clashed with foreign ships (this proved particularly relevant in the Crimean War). Initially the company's activity concentrated on North America, where it competed with Boston merchants who repeatedly engaged in an underground trade with natives on the Russian America's coast. Worse from the Russian perspective, the Americans sold guns to the natives in exchange for fur, threatening the sustainability of the hunting. As overexploitation soon led to a sharp drop in the number of furs produced there, the RAC began to turn to the Kuriles.⁸

In the spring of 1828 the RAC dispatched twelve Russian labourers and forty-nine Aleuts, natives of Kodiak Island off the southern coast of Russian America and the centre of fur trade then, to Urup.⁹ The mission proved to be successful. The Aleuts managed to catch otters and spend the winter in Urup without incurring casualties from malnutrition and scurvy as had been the case during previous hunting operations in the Kuriles. Two years later the RAC moved some of the Russians and the Aleuts from Urup to Shimshir, the next island to the north, where another hunting ground was found on the northern tip. The introduction of

⁶ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁷ Bassin, *Imperial Visions*, ch.1; Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 75-6.

⁸ Akizuki, *Chishima Rettō*, 182-3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 183-5.

settlers employed by the RAC changed the nature of political rule in the Kuriles. Instead of the collection of fur tributes, the employment contract with the RAC became the bulwark of the relations between the people and the state. The biggest difference from the *yasak* system was that now the Aleut hunters were no longer able to store their surplus catch and sell them to other buyers than the RAC. All furs had to be given up. The contract forced the Aleuts and the Russians in the Kuriles to pay one-third of their annual wages to buy provisions from the RAC. Yet this still fell short of the exercise of sovereignty under the nation-state system; the relations between the state, represented by the RAC, and the people were primarily commercial. No administration was introduced in the Kuriles beyond what was necessary for the hunting operations.

The American arrival

After the settlement of the Aleuts by the RAC in Urup and Shimshir, the sea otter population in the Kuriles plummeted. Part of the decimation was caused by hunting vessels unaffiliated to the RAC - or poachers, seen from the company's perspective. By 1844 the RAC abolished its Kuril division, though the Aleuts remained on the islands.¹⁰ By the beginning of the 1860s the RAC was a lost cause, and Tsar Alexander II chose not to renew the company's rights to Russian America in 1861.¹¹

The 1867 sale of Russian America meant the liquidation of the RAC, but no concerted retreat was made from the Kuriles. It remained Russian territory according to the Russo-American treaty.¹² The Aleut hunters were simply left to their own devices. According

¹⁰ Ibid., 188.

¹¹ Morinaga Takako, *Roshia no Kakudai to Kegawa Bōeki* (Tokyo: Sairyūsha, 2008).

¹² See Article I of the Treaty concerning the Cession of the Russian Possessions in North America by his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias to the United States of America. Reprinted in Library of Congress, *A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1875* (Washington, D.C: Library of Congress, 1998), 539-41. The article states that the new border is to be drawn 'so as to pass midway between the island of Attou [spelled Attu today, the westernmost island of the Aleutian Islands] and the Copper island of the Kormandorski couplet or group in the North Pacific ocean'. Here 541.

to interviews carried out by Japanese officials who visited Urup in the summer of 1875, a Russian official stationed in Sakhalin had visited the island in 1870 and told the Aleuts that they were now allowed to trade furs with whoever they wanted. Thus the relationship between the Aleuts and the Russian state was rescinded. The Kuriles between 1868 and 1875 became a political vacuum where no state exercised sovereignty.

In December 1867 an American merchant from San Francisco named Hayward Hutchinson arrived at Sitka, the former base of the Russian governor in Alaska, to bid for the RAC's liquidated assets, including huts, boats, nets and various other hunting equipments scattered around the North Pacific. However what made Hutchinson and other merchants from the western coast of the U.S. rush to Sitka was the rumoured existence of piles of furs stocked in the RAC huts.¹³ In Sitka he met with Prince Dmitrii Maksutov, the last chief manager of the RAC and the effective representative of the Russian government in Alaska. Hutchinson managed to purchase the assets, which included the right to hunting operations on Pribilof Island, some 320 kilometres away from the southwestern coast of Alaska and roughly on the same longitude as the Bering Strait, where the Aleuts clubbed fur seals on a massive scale.¹⁴ By mid-March, Hutchinson merged his business with another company in San Francisco owned by William Kohl that also had purchased other RAC assets. This was the beginning of Hutchinson, Kohl & Company (HKC). Another merger took place on 10 October when HKC and others formed a new company called the Alaska Commercial Company (ACC).

The ACC appears to have become a multi-national cartel formed by those who had managed to snatch a stake in the fur-sealing business around Alaska and the neighbouring islands. It rigorously defended its business by exerting political influence in Washington D.C. When in 1869 the U.S. government entertained the idea of limiting the scale of seal clubbing over Pribilof for fear of overexploitation, the company partners successfully lobbied Congress

¹³ Molly Lee, 'Context and Contact: The History and Activities of the Alaska Commercial Company, 1867-1900', 22.

¹⁴ Ilya Vinkovetsky, *Russian America: An Overseas Colony of a Continental Empire, 1804-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 23.

and the government to maintain their position. On 3 August 1870 the ACC received an exclusive, twenty-year lease of Pribilof from the U.S. government for fur seal hunting for an annual rent of \$55,000 and \$2.625 per skin. In return the company was to provide food, housing, fuel, education and health care to the indigenous Aleut residents in Pribilof. Armed with this lease the ACC began slaughtering sea otters, seals and foxes in the region, which lasted for the next two decades, excluding all competitors. During the twenty-year lease of Pribilof, the U.S. Congress held four investigations into the company's business but each time found no fraud. The lease survived the intended period of twenty years, but when it expired in 1890 it was given to a competitor company in San Francisco.¹⁵

Meanwhile in the Kuriles, Alexander Philippeus, a Russian merchant based in Petropavlovsk, on the southeastern coast of the Kamchatka Peninsula, inherited the RAC's business in 1871 with a three-year contract lasting until 1 January 1875. The available records suggest that he entered into a partnership with HKC sometime in 1874. The reason for this business alliance is not clear, but he likely shared the interest of HKC in suppressing other vessels' activities in the North Pacific which could challenge their monopoly and bring down the profit.

The year 1872 was a turning point in the fur trade in the Kuriles. A lone American vessel from San Francisco led by a certain Captain Kimberley, unaffiliated with Philippeus or the HKC, wandered into the southern Kuriles and discovered a large population of sea otters, which the crew caught easily until the ship's storage filled up. The vessel then came to Hakodate, one of Japan's treaty ports located on the southwestern part of Hokkaido, where it processed and sold the fur.¹⁶ Their choice of selling the fur in Hakodate was an astute one because it enabled them to escape the obstruction from the HKC or Philippeus that they would have faced in San Francisco or Petropavlovsk.

As soon as the news reached San Francisco, where strong opposition against the ACC

¹⁵ Molly Lee, 'The Alaska Commercial Company: The Formative Years', *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* (Spring 1998), 63.

¹⁶ Henry James Snow, *In Forbidden Seas: Recollections of sea-otter hunting in the Kurils* (London: E. Arnold, 1910[1897]), 52-3.

monopoly in Alaska had existed since almost immediately after the company's birth, shipowners who were not part of the ACC saw a tremendous commercial opportunity. At least two of the vessels that went to the southern Kuriles in the mid-1870s had previously gone to Alaska for fur seal hunting in 1869, but after 1870 had been denied access due to the ACC's lease.¹⁷

Kaitakushi meets the Americans

The Japanese rule over Ezo (Hokkaido) and the Kunashiri and Etorofu Islands resembled that of the Russian American Company. It was a 'thin' rule known as the *basho ukeoi sei* (contract fishery system or zone commissioning system) that had developed in Ezo under the rule of the Matsumae domain during the Tokugawa period, and it covered most of the coast of Ezo. The shogunate granted Matsumae exclusive rights to trade with the Ainu, and the Matsumae lord in turn divided up among his subordinates the rights to engage in annual trade with the various corners of Ezo. Over the course of the seventeenth century the trade came to be undertaken increasingly by merchants from the mainland who had more capital and experience. Therefore the samurai of the Matsumae domain sold licenses to mainland merchants to trade with the Ainu in the designated areas.¹⁸

These trading posts across the coast of Ezo established by Matsumae and administered by mainland large-scale merchants transformed the life of the Ainu and made them dependent on the Japanese for daily necessities. The Ainu entered the monetary economy and their dependence on Matsumae was so great that the latter could threaten the Ainu into starvation by refusing to trade.¹⁹ Forced into a subordinate position the Ainu mounted an armed resistance, known today as the Menashi-Kunashiri War (1789). After the

¹⁷ Anti-Monopoly Association of the Pacific Coast, *A History of the Wrongs of Alaska* (San Francisco, 1875), 34.

¹⁸ Tanimoto Akihisa, 'Ainu no "jibun kasegi"', in Kikuchi Isao, ed., *Ezogashima to Hoppō Sekai* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003), 200-1. Tanimoto points out that some independent business (*jibun kasegi*, or self-employment) by the Ainu took place in parallel with the forced employment under the Japanese.

¹⁹ Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*, Ch.3.

Ainu were defeated the shogunate put Ezo under its direct control. The Ainu in Kunashiri and Etorofu were cut off from the maritime trade network of the North Pacific and drawn closer to the Japanese economy, toiling in Japanese-controlled fishing sites. Authority over affairs at ground level switched hands a couple of times between the shogunate and the Matsumae domain in the first half of the nineteenth century, but the Ainu position remained the same.²⁰

The Meiji government's development of the Kuriles up to 1873 was predicated on two assumptions: that it needed to get rid of the *basho ukeoi sei* and that it must guard the area against potential Russian aggression – a natural conclusion from their experience until the mid-nineteenth century. The 1855 Treaty of Shimoda was the first to demarcate the Russo-Japanese border in the southern Kuriles. The Japanese had initially in these talks asserted their rights over the whole archipelago, but before long settled on a border drawn between Etorofu and Urup. In 1869 the Meiji government installed an administrative structure in Ezo and gave it a new name: Hokkaido. The government divided the island into eleven provinces (*kuni*) and ordered the mainland domains, temples, and individuals to assist with the administration of the provinces.²¹ Etorofu and Kunashiri islands, which had been confirmed as Japanese territory by the Treaty of Shimoda, were given the name Chishima and made up one of the eleven provinces. The Kaitakushi itself took charge of Kunashiri, while Etorofu was divided into four and Hikone, Saga, Sendai and Kōchi domains were assigned to look after its defence and development.²² However financial difficulties forced Kōchi and Saga to give up their assignments within one year. Sendai took them over, though shortly afterwards the abolition of the domains resulted in the extension of Kaitakushi administration to Etorofu.²³

Meanwhile, by the autumn of 1873 it was clear that the Kurile sea otters had become accessible to anyone willing to risk the voyage. In July the Kaitakushi officials received a warning from Charles Walcott Brooks, the Japanese consul in San Francisco, that some ships

²⁰ Ibid., Ch.6.

²¹ This scheme of collective rule by domains ended in 1871 following the abolition of domains. The entire islands then came to be administered by the Kaitakushi. *Shinsen Hokkaidoshi*, vol.3, 113.

²² Ibid., 96-7.

²³ Ibid., 113.

had left for the southern Kurils for sea otter hunting in the early summer.²⁴ The Japanese officers proved utterly unprepared to meet the hunting vessels. In the summer of 1873 at least seven foreign ships went to Urup and Etorofu to hunt otters.²⁵ Some of them ended up landing on Etorofu due to shipwreck, which was Japanese territory under the 1855 Russo-Japanese treaty and not open to foreigners according to the treaty terms. On 1 June officers in Etorofu reported to Hakodate that four foreigners had landed on the island. The Japanese did not have an interpreter, but managed to communicate with one of the foreigners who understood some Japanese. They had run away from a hunting vessel on which they had found employment because of harsh treatment by the ship's captain. The Japanese pointed out that Etorofu was not open to foreigners and told them to leave. The foreigners said they could not because they did not have a boat. Eventually they were sent to Hakodate for investigation.²⁶ In November the Kaitakushi officers in Nemuro captured twenty crew from the British ship, *Swallow*. Eleven of them were foreigners, including the captain Henry James Snow. This twenty-five-year-old British man had heard the story of sea otters the previous winter in Yokohama and bought a ship to come to the southern Kuriles for hunting. On his way north the ship had been damaged and had to spend three weeks in Sendai, in northeastern Japan, for repairs. After hunting for three months around Etorofu, the ship was no longer navigable and the crew had to abandon it on the coast near Nemuro.²⁷

The Kaitakushi and the Japanese government, embroiled over the Korea debate within the leadership in Tokyo throughout the summer, failed to take a quick, concerted response to the intruders. Internal communications indicate that at this point some of the Kaitakushi officials did not share the sense of urgency of those who had directly dealt with the foreign castaways.²⁸ The discussion within the Kaitakushi over what to do with the sea otter hunters around Etorofu began only in the autumn of 1873. Enomoto Takeaki, having spent three years in prison in Tokyo on the charge of leading the rebellion against the imperial

²⁴ Kuroda Kiyotaka to Ueno Kagenori, Sapporo. 14 July 1873. AH Bosho/1184.

²⁵ Eusden to Parkes, 24 July 1874. Hakodate. TNA FO262/258 no11.

²⁶ AH Bosho/1184.

²⁷ Ibid.; Henry James Snow, *In Forbidden Seas*, 53-71.

²⁸ Matsumoto to Sugiura, 7 August 1873. AH Bosho/1184.

force in the Boshin War of 1868-9 but lately released with a special pardon by the emperor, had found employment with the Kaitakushi and was at the time in eastern Hokkaido investigating its mineral resources. In Nemuro, the easternmost port of the island facing Kunashiri, he met Japanese sailors who had worked on Snow's hunting vessel. Based on these accounts, Enomoto sent a detailed report on sea otter hunting to the headquarters of the Kaitakushi in Sapporo. Enomoto urged the Kaitakushi to guard the coast as well as to begin hunting sea otters by themselves, for 'it will be difficult to prevent them when we are not hunting'.²⁹ The Kaitakushi decided to send two steamships, the *Genbu-maru* and the *Capron*, which it had just purchased from New York and received in Hakodate in May 1873, to guard the coast in the next season.³⁰

Along with these measures on the frontline, Japan brought the Kuriles up as a diplomatic issue. In May 1874 the government announced to the foreign representatives in Japan a set of guiding principles on what they described as 'illegal fishing in Hokkaido and the adjacent areas', in an attempt to protect their fishing rights but also to establish stricter border control in the northern edge of the country.³¹ The proposed rules claimed that Japan's jurisdiction covered the sea three miles from the coastline. The Kaitakushi officials borrowed the basic idea that a state's legal jurisdiction could extend to its coastal waters from *Elements of International Law*, an influential text on international law written by Henry Wheaton.³²

The regulation stated that if foreigners were found engaged in hunting within this limit, the Japanese authorities would capture them and send them to Hakodate for a trial in the consular court. Due to the right of extraterritoriality, Western citizens in Japan were not subject to the local legal procedure when they were accused by the Japanese. Consuls served

²⁹ HULNSC Kita-920-Eno. Enomoto Kaitaku Chūhangan Hōkokusho, 29 November 1873.

³⁰ *Hakodate Shishi Tsūsetsuhen* vol.2, 831-5.

³¹ Terashima Munenori to Foreign Ministers, 17 May 1874. Tokyo. AH Boshō/1184.

³² Sugiura to Kuroda, 29 December 1873. AH Boshō/1184. The correspondence does not specify the title or that author of the book that Sugiura simply referred to as 'The Law of Nations (*Bankoku Kōhō*)', but the section as well as the content he mentioned matches with those of the part titled 'Maritime territorial jurisdiction' in Wheaton's book. Wheaton stated that the maritime territory of every state extends 'a distance of a marine league, or as far as a cannon-shot will reach from the shore, along all the coasts of the State'. Henry Wheaton, *Elements of International Law*, eighth edition (Boston: Little, Brown, and company, 1866), 255. Other staff in Hakodate asserted that in the 'general rule (*ippan no seiki*)' states' jurisdiction extend for three miles from the shore. Nishimura and Zusho to Sugiura, 17 January 1874. AH Boshō/1184.

as judges, however perfunctory their handling of legal matters might have been.³³ If they resisted, proportionate use of force was permitted. Terashima Munenori, the foreign minister, was careful to distinguish poachers from ships in distress and in need of procurements, for which there was a different procedure to follow.³⁴

This announcement met with staunch opposition from the ministers. Harry Parkes, the British minister in Tokyo, attacked the trial of Henry Snow which took place based on this regulation because in his view:

Japanese jurisdiction cannot extend to three Ri [miles] from the shore, and until they have made and proclaimed distinct laws on the subject they have not the right to seize foreign ships which may engage in fishing off the Japanese coast. A foreign ship cannot be charged with the breach of a law that does not exist.³⁵

Terashima replied by saying that ‘the thing about within three miles is the world’s conventional law (*sekai ippan no hō*)’ and thus required no prior legislation.³⁶

On 7 October, the Japanese government wrote up general regulations on fishing and hunting around Hokkaido that would formalise the guiding principle announced in May into law. It aimed at exacting fines from the transgressors, with the amount ranging from 400 yen (for disobedience to the consular court procedure) to ‘not less than 1,000 yen’ (for fishing or hunting within the Japanese waters). The foreign ministers again resisted, because they saw the specification of the penalties as a backdoor approach by the Japanese for curtailing extraterritoriality. Changes of this nature, they argued, ‘ought to be submitted to their respective governments for instructions, pending which the further discussion of the question

³³ James Hoare has noted that the legal expertise of the foreign government officials in Japanese treaty ports was severely limited. James Hoare, *Japan’s Treaty Ports and Foreign Settlements: The uninvited guests, 1858-1899* (Folkestone, Kent: Japan Library, 1994), 57-8.

³⁴ Terashima Munenori to Kaitakushi, *Gaikokusen Torishimari Kokoroe*, 17 May 1874. Tokyo. AH Bosho/1184.

³⁵ Parkes to Eusden, 11 June 1874. Tokyo. TNA FO262/259 no15.

³⁶ Dialogue between Parkes and Terashima, 23 September 1874. DAJP 3.5.8.1 ‘Honpō Enkai ni okeru Kaijūryō Torishimari Ikken’, vol.1.

should be postponed'.³⁷

The summer of 1874 is usually remembered in Japanese history as the time of the Taiwan Expedition and the following negotiations with the Qing on the 'punishment' of Taiwanese aborigines over the killing of Ryukyuan men. In the beginning of June, as the former samurai fought with the Butan clan of the Taiwanese aborigines, at the other end of the Japanese archipelago the Kaitakushi officers struggled with a 'wild goose chase' for poachers off the coast of Etorofu.³⁸ Brooks wrote from San Francisco that at least ten hunting vessels had left the port for Japan by mid-April.³⁹ Henry Snow, whose ship the *Swallow* had been lost in Nemuro in the previous summer, fitted out a new ship in Hakodate and came back to the hunting ground.

Because this was the first season in which the Kaitakushi introduced coastal patrol by steamships, the foreign hunters were unaware that the Japanese officers began looking for them. Thus finding foreign vessels turned out not to be the most challenging part for the Japanese. The two steamers of the Kaitakushi, *Genbu-maru* and *Capron*, caught six ships between May and June. The real difficulty for the Japanese unfolded after the officers boarded the foreigners' vessels for inspection and interrogation, at which point they faced the hunters' various excuses and counter-arguments. One captain shocked the Japanese officials by remarking that 'fish or sea otters arising from the ocean cannot be ruled to be any country's possession, [therefore] it is permitted to hunt them'. The Japanese officials claimed that international law stated that a country possesses rights to products within three miles from a country's coast. The captain replied: 'As I said before, the premise that things arising from the ocean of the earth belong to a government concerned is wrong'.⁴⁰ Other captains of the hunting vessels complained to the Japanese that Japan's vice consul in San Francisco had

³⁷ Bingham to Fish, 18 December 1874, Tokyo. Reprinted in *FRUS 1875-1876 (Japan)*, 779-80.

³⁸ Eusden to Parkes, 24 July 1874. Hakodate. TNA FO262/258 no11.

³⁹ Brooks to Terashima, 18 April 1874. AH Bosho/1184.

⁴⁰ AH Bosho/1184. My translation.

told them that there was no prohibition to hunting around Etorofu.⁴¹ Others simply claimed, for the sake of convenience, that they had been hunting outside Japanese waters, which of course was impossible to prove or disprove. Snow, when he was caught for the second time in 1874, confronted the inspectors through a struggling Japanese interpreter on the *Capron Maru*, with the argument that he had ‘never measured the distance from off shore where we had killed them [i.e. otters], and that if they got any of our skins they would have to take them by force’.⁴² When the Japanese found out that they had otter skins on board, the interpreter said: ‘then you are robbers, and we will confiscate your vessel and everything belonging to it’. One of Snow’s colleagues replied that Japan’s jurisdiction could not extend beyond three miles. He also pointed out the ship did not receive prior warning from the Japanese. The interpreter asked if they had hunted within three miles from the shore last year. Snow answered ‘very possibly’. Interpreter then said: ‘Then we will take you to Hakodate. The others may go, but having admitted that you may have hunted last year within three miles of our coast is sufficient to show that you have been defrauding the Japanese Government’. After some more wrangling, both verbal and physical, the Japanese side said they would give them ten hours to leave the Japanese waters and let Snow and his crew go back to their ship.⁴³

Much like this case with Snow, the Japanese had to take satisfaction from making the captains of the ships sign a written notice that they had been told to leave within ten hours. Only on one occasion did a foreign vessel acquiesce to Japanese confiscation of the sea otter skins. The lack of ability to enforce such regulations was apparent. At least three of the vessels came back within the same season and were caught again.⁴⁴

The only possible course of deterrence that the Japanese could resort to was confiscation of skins. The inspectors succeeded to do so in some cases, but under the principle of extraterritoriality, they could only follow this up by handing the hunters over to

⁴¹ ‘Sanfuranshisuko nihon ryōji Dan shi yori Etorofu to shuryō kinshi no jōyaku naki mune denbun no mōshitate’, 10 June 1874. HULNSC ‘Etorofu to rakko mitsuryō ni tsuki gaikoku senchō seiyakusho’ 009.

⁴² Snow, *In Forbidden Seas*, 78.

⁴³ Alexander Allan, *Hunting the Sea Otter* (London: Horace Cox, 1910), 83-87.

⁴⁴ HULNSC, Etorofu Tō Rakko Mitsuryō ni tsuki Gaikokusenchō Seiyakusho, document 1 to 10; AH Bosho/1184.

consuls in Hakodate where they were put on trial and received a nominal fine. In August 1875 the American consul in Hakodate tried four hunters who had spent the winter living on Etorofu Island and caught fifty-three otters. The consul found them guilty of entering an unopened Japanese port, and ordered them to pay a fine of 100 dollars.⁴⁵ Given that each skin they obtained was sold for between thirty and sixty dollars in Hakodate,⁴⁶ the existence of the consular court had no power to stop the hunters.

Otter hunting in the north of Japan was a lucrative business, but also a dangerous one. Shipwreck was so common that it looked more a matter of when rather than if. Five American ships were wrecked in the area in eighteen months up to August 1875.⁴⁷ Many hunters were stranded, as a result, on the shore of Etorofu or on the east coast of Hokkaido, typically near the port town of Nemuro. This, however, did not mean the stranded crew needed to look for employment in another vessel passing by in order to go home. Once the sailors were transferred to Hakodate by Kaitakushi to face investigation and, if unlucky, trial in a consular court, an American mail steamer operated by the Pacific Mail Steamship Company (PMSC) had agreed to take wrecked sailors on board for a small fare of ten dollars, paid by the American government, and the ship would take them to a destination of their wish, be it Yokohama or San Francisco. This was an agreement that the PMSC had concluded in exchange for receiving subsidies from the American government for the mailing service.⁴⁸ Thus the danger of wreckage had only a limited effect in deterring the reckless and avaricious hunters.

All this created a frustrating situation for the Kaitakushi. With the 1874 season ending with only partial success in deterring the foreign intruders, Kaitakushi asked the navy to offer support. Next year one of the navy's steamships, the *Teiyūkan*, went to guard Etorofu in addition to the two Kaitakushi vessels, but the ship was soon lost. The navy understandably

⁴⁵ Bingham to Fish, 4 August 1875. Tokyo. Reprinted in *Foreign Relations of the United States 1875-1876 (Japan)*, 820-821.

⁴⁶ Eusden to Parkes, 24 July 1874. Hakodate. TNA FO262/258 no11.

⁴⁷ Bingham to Fish, 4 August 1875, no389. Tokyo. *FRUS 1875-76 (Japan)*, 820-821.

⁴⁸ Diary entry by Charles A. Longfellow, 10 September 1871. Hakodate. Reprinted in Charles A. Longfellow, *Ronguferō Nihon Taizaiki* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2004), 58.

grew wary of sparing any ship for the northern border and took the attitude that the Kaitakushi should be solely responsible for anti-poaching operations.⁴⁹

After the territorial ‘expansion’

In this light the acquisition of the entire Kuriles, with the signing of the Treaty of St. Petersburg in May 1875, might not have been welcome news to the Kaitakushi officers. When the Charge d’Affaires of the American legation in St. Petersburg, Eugene Schuyler, learnt of the conclusion of the negotiations, he said to Enomoto Takeaki, Japan’s chief negotiator, that the deal would benefit both Russia and Japan. On the Kuriles his comment was ‘something is better than nothing’.⁵⁰ Many among the Japanese public saw the territorial swap as uneven and were infuriated by the terms of the treaty.⁵¹ Why did Enomoto take the Kuriles then? An obvious answer is that he followed government instructions to that effect. But he was willing to contradict them and in the course of the negotiations had once asked for Russian battleships as compensation for abandoning Japan’s claims on southern Sakhalin.⁵² One could argue that it was a geopolitical manoeuvre in pursuit of denying the Russian fleet easy access to the Pacific, which was a major concern for the Russian Pacific fleet as seen in chapter 4. This view has some plausibility considering Enomoto’s insistence on taking over the entire island chain, but it is unclear to what extent Enomoto thought Japan could impose the containment with its underdeveloped navy. He would have also understood that the lack of good ports and rough weather in the Kuriles gave it no clear military advantage. The language of geopolitics, as far as the Kuriles were concerned, was probably more symbolic than substantial.

⁴⁹ AH Bosho/10740/25 Kawamura Sumiyoshi (navy minister) to Sanjō Sanetomi, 10 November 1876.

⁵⁰ Enomoto Takeaki to Terashima Munenori, 28 March 1875. St. Petersburg. DNGM 8: 193.

⁵¹ Stephan, *The Kuril Islands*, 94n76. One newspaper argued that even this treaty would not be enough to prevent the Russians from advancing southwards. *Tokyo Akebono Shimbun*, 18 September 1875. Reprinted in *Shinbun Shusei Meiji Hennenshi*, vol.2, 338.

⁵² See chapter 3.

Another feasible explanation for Japan's north-eastward territorial 'expansion' – if not stretch – is that it was an attempt to put a semblance of reciprocity on what would otherwise have looked like a diplomatic defeat to the Japanese observers, who felt they had the right to possess southern Sakhalin, if not all of it. This view was not shared beyond the best informed within the government, such as Enomoto, Terashima, Kuroda and some other officers in the Kaitakushi, who understood that the main purpose of the settlement on the Sakhalin question was to remove the future risk of war with Russia. Shortly after the signing of the treaty Enomoto wrote to his brother and sister in Tokyo, reporting that he had received personal notes of congratulations from Terashima and Kuroda, while warning them that 'there will be people saying various things [about the territorial swap], but please do not worry about it'.⁵³

Regardless of the motivation behind it, Kuroda Kiyotaka, who headed the Kaitakushi, was now tasked with the development of the entire Kuriles with a budget that had been fixed until 1884.⁵⁴ The task of the Kaitakushi in the Kuriles was threefold: to determine the status of its inhabitants, including those wishing to leave for Russia; to design an anti-poaching scheme; and to develop the Kuriles as a viable part of the Hokkaido economy.

The supplementary article to the Treaty of St. Petersburg, signed in Tokyo in August 1875, stated that the indigenous peoples in the Kuriles had to choose, within three years, between remaining in the Kuriles as Japanese nationals or leaving for Russia as Russians.⁵⁵ Until then their fishing and hunting rights would be preserved as before. In 1875 the only Russian residents in the Kuriles were three agents of Philippeus, who took charge of trading fur and daily necessities based on the contract.

Shortly after the news of the territorial swap signed by Enomoto reached Japan, Kuroda sailed to Petropavlovsk to investigate the current situation in the Kuriles. The

⁵³ Enomoto to Yamanouchi, 23 May 1875. NDL-ETKM 6-6; Enomoto to his brother and sister, 20 June 1875. NDL-ETKM 4-1-23.

⁵⁴ HULNSC A4/303 Chishima Shotō Shisei Junjo Ukagai.

⁵⁵ Stephan, *The Kuril Islands*, 238-9. This was the same arrangement for Russian and part-Russian residents in Alaska when the American purchase was agreed in 1867. See Molly Lee, 'Context and Contact: The History and Activities of the Alaska Commercial Company, 1867-1900', 21.

Japanese officers were not impressed with the rugged lives of the Russians in the port town, and were surprised to find out that the Russian officers in Petropavlovsk did not even know the exact population of the Kuriles, leaving everything up to Philippeus. The business transactions did not appear to be entirely clean. Kuroda's delegation learnt that the HKC, of which Philippeus was now a partner, was supposed to pay forty dollars per sea otter skin. However it was rumoured around the town that because the Aleuts and the Ainu were illiterate the HKC did not pay the full amount and subjected the indigenous hunters to a minimum level of subsistence and forced them into debt.⁵⁶ For instance in Shumushu, the chief of the Ainu told the Japanese officials in 1876 that all the foxes they had caught last year had been bought by the agent.⁵⁷ One report quipped that 'the method of sinister merchants suppressing moronic people through debts is the same everywhere'.⁵⁸

Before discussing the Japanese development of the Kuriles after 1875, it is necessary to reiterate that access to the Kuriles by sea was extremely difficult. Floating ice blocks the route in the winter – many whaling ships had been trapped and abandoned in the Okhotsk Sea – and frequent fog complicates summer voyage. The surviving records show that Japan sent eight ships in the years between 1875 and 1884, but never landed on all the islands. No officials stayed permanently on the islands north of Etorofu. The Kaitakushi ships focused on the administration of the inhabited islands, while for the others it sufficed to observe the terrain from the sea.

In the summer of 1875, Kuroda and others of the Kaitakushi went to Petropavlovsk and met up with a Hakodate-based Russian consular officer. Together they sailed southwards from Petropavlovsk and visited the Kuriles in order to notify the indigenous peoples about the territorial swap. The party identified five islands as inhabited: Shumushu, Onekotan, Shaskotan (by the Kuril Ainu), Simshir, and Urup (by the Aleuts). Agents of Philippeus also lived on Shumushu, Simshir, and Urup and took charge of buying fur skins and providing daily necessities. The indigenous people on each island had a population of between sixteen

⁵⁶ NDL-KKKM, 83-3.

⁵⁷ HULNSC CHI-915-Ha Chishimashū Kankeisho.

⁵⁸ Ibid..

to fifty-nine. The total population of the indigenous inhabitants, in their count, was 164.⁵⁹ Even though all of them had a contract with Philippeus, which compelled them to sell all their catch to his agents, occasional raids by American vessels took away some of their furs. In addition to forcing the indigenous hunters into giving up furs, the sailors also shot sea otters by themselves. The sound of gunfire, which had not been heard before in the Kuriles because the Aleuts and the Ainu had not used guns, scared the otters away and made the indigenous hunters' operations more difficult. The Aleuts in Urup were especially badly hit. Their catch decreased by half between 1874 and 1875 and they were forced into further financial debt with Philippeus's agent.⁶⁰

The Ainu people in the northern three islands told the Kaitakushi officers in 1875 that they would decide what to do about nationality after they meet up in 1876. The Aleuts in Simshir and Urup expressed a desire to leave for Russia. When the Japanese visited the island in 1876 they were waiting for a Russian vessel to take them, and in Urup the chief of the Aleuts asked the Japanese to take a letter explaining their situation to the Russian consul in Hakodate. The records suggest that they left their respective island in 1877. In Shumushu, twenty-two people in the end opted to stay on the island and live under the Japanese rule.⁶¹ The Japanese official suspected that their destitution had been partly due to American vessels' raids.⁶²

While Kuroda and others were getting their first glimpse of this newly acquired territory, in Tokyo the foreign ministry was in the process of negotiating revised regulations for fishing and hunting around Hokkaido. When they drafted the new regulations Terashima asked Parkes to give his comments. In July 1875 Parkes and Terashima met a few times to discuss the subject. Parkes suggested that a boundary be set using latitude and longitude: 'for instance make the 42nd parallel the boundary, the rule applies north of this [line], and not

⁵⁹ 'Kuriru shotō uketori tetsuzukisho narabini bekki', document 4. DAJP B.1.4.1.3 'Karafuto Chishima Kōkan Ikken' vol.2.

⁶⁰ 'Kuriru shotō uketori tetsuzukisho narabini bekki', document 4 and 5. DAJP B.1.4.1.3 'Karafuto Chishima Kōkan Ikken' vol.2.

⁶¹ Fumoto, 'Kakutei sareru kokkyō', 149-50.

⁶² Ibuka Motoi to Tokitō, 22 August 1878. HULNSC CHI-915.17-Ifu Meiji 11 nen Chishima Junshisho,

south'. Terashima was reluctant as he thought it would be 'difficult to make degrees [of latitudes or longitudes] a boundary', and announced the regulation without making the changes suggested by Parkes.⁶³ Parkes then pointed out that there was a possibility that a cargo ship unrelated to hunting activities might be forced to submit to inspection utilising this regulation. Terashima admitted that that would be 'a difficult case'.⁶⁴ But Terashima in the end insisted that only fishing and hunting vessels would pass the areas referred to as 'around Hokkaido'.⁶⁵

With its limited budget on the one hand and the anticipated arrival of poachers every season as long as there were fur animals on the other, Kuroda faced two options for the development of the Kurils. One was to follow the RAC's approach and give out exclusive hunting rights to a private company, which would for its own interests ensure that no one breached the border and interrupted their business. This was not dissimilar to the Tokugawa shogunate's *basho ukeoi sei*, under which merchants were given their slots in Etorofu where they hired the Ainu in the same way the Americans and the Russians did elsewhere in the North Pacific. The second approach was, as the Kaitakushi was beginning to attempt in Etorofu, to suppress foreign poachers on its own and simultaneously encourage the Japanese to raise profits from the business of fur animal hunting as well as to create settlements where the land conditions allowed. With the limited resources and the difficulty of preventing the poachers completely, there were opinions within the Kaitakushi that called for the first option. In Sapporo, Yamanouchi proposed to Kuroda that 'these islands are not the place where national interests should be enhanced; therefore we should suffice it to take proportionate measures, economise on expenses and avoid losing the substance of protection'.⁶⁶

There was no shortage of foreigners who would take up the contract if the Kaitakushi decided to offer it. In the spring of 1875 Enomoto in St. Petersburg received an offer from a

⁶³ Dialogue between Parkes and Terashima, 23 July 1875. DAJP 3.5.8.1 'Honpō Enkai ni okeru Kaijūryō Torishimari Ikken', vol.1.

⁶⁴ Dialogue between Parkes and Terashima, 3 August 1875. DAJP 3.5.8.1 'Honpō Enkai ni okeru Kaijūryō Torishimari Ikken', vol.1.

⁶⁵ Dialogue between Theodor von Holleben (German minister) and Terashima, 29 September 1875. DAJP 3.5.8.1 'Honpō Enkai ni okeru Kaijūryō Torishimari Ikken', vol.1.

⁶⁶ Yamanouchi to Kuroda, 1 November 1875. AH A4/314 Hokkaido Kengensho.

powerful Boston merchant for the lease of Simushir while he was still negotiating the territorial swap. Meanwhile, Henry Snow, the British businessman who went to Etorofu in 1873 and 1874, discussed with the Kaitakushi in Tokyo during the winter of 1875 his possible employment by the Kaitakushi as an agent in charge of sea otter hunting. One U.S. government officer in Washington D.C. also privately advised the Japanese minister there that signing a lease would be more cost-effective than trying to enforce border control at its own cost.⁶⁷ Despite all this Kaitakushi chose the second option. Instead of selling the lease, it encouraged the Japanese to engage in fishery and fur animal hunting in the Kuril Islands by giving them a tax break of five to ten years (the duration varied from one island to another). It was in essence an extension of the development programme it had introduced in Hokkaido.

Why did the Kaitakushi choose this seemingly more challenging approach? As noted earlier the security concern with Russia was not on their mind by this point. The Kaitakushi officials, especially Kuroda, understood the challenge they faced was with from the San Francisco poachers, not the Russian fleet. The Kaitakushi seems to have been driven by the idea that it had to break away from the *basho* system introduced under the Tokugawa shogunate, which they saw as a symbol of the old rule in Ezo that they had overturned.⁶⁸ In addition to this, the experience of dealing with rough-mannered Western sailors, inept Russian officials in Petropavlovsk, aggressive Russian soldiers and convict-exiles in Sakhalin, as well as drunken, dirty and destitute Ainu seems to have convinced them that the Japanese under the Meiji government were the ones to bring civilisation to this part of the world. One report from Etorofu stated in April 1876, noting the vulgar behaviour of the sailors who had come on shore with the excuse of procuring water and firewood, ‘they claim to be the civilised country, the civilised race, [but] the behaviour of the lowly boatmen is most

⁶⁷ Yoshida (Japanese minister) to foreign ministry, 12 June 1876. AH Boshō/5913 ‘Kaitakushi kōbunroku Meiji kunen’.

⁶⁸ Kaiho Yoko argues that the abolition of gift-giving on the basis of hierarchical relationship between the Matsumae domain and the Ainu by the Kaitakushi in the early 1870s represented the latter’s desire to ‘civilise’ the Ainu by denying them their custom. Kaiho, “Iiki” no naikokuka to tōgō’, in Kurahara and Gabe (eds.), *Ezochi to Ryukyu*, 132.

questionable'.⁶⁹ One Kaitakushi officer urged Kuroda in the immediate aftermath of the territorial swap to create an inhabitants' register as the first step of administration, for:

the inhabitants in these islands, whether they are Russians from the Kamchatka region, the Manchu settlers, or those comprising a village on its own without national affiliation, or the mixture of these three, their number is not clear; even though [their number is] extremely small, it goes without saying that we cannot put them aside and regard them as animals (*kinjū*).⁷⁰

While on the rhetorical level Kuroda remained committed to the idea that Japan had to bear the burden of development in the Kuriles, the discussions within the Kaitakushi in the summer of 1876 also reveal his keen attention to cost-effectiveness. When Kuroda received proposals for the development of the Kuriles his comments concerned mostly the financial plausibility of the suggested measures such as tax breaks for the new settlers and the provision of food and other daily necessities by government vessels. He then told the authors of the proposal to give a concrete estimate of annual sales from fur production in the islands concerned. To him, the sequence of the islands to be developed and the total cost were the two focal points of the enterprise.⁷¹ However, throughout the rest of the 1870s, his initiative did not bear much fruit. Foreign vessels continued to roam around Etorofu and mostly got away with it. Japan's own efforts to create a sea otter skin industry did not lead to anything substantial. Administrative integration of the Kuriles to the mainland, or even to Hokkaido, remained minimal.

On 10 April 1876 the Meiji government in Tokyo announced its general regulations on fishing and hunting in Hokkaido. It prohibited foreign vessels from fishing and hunting 'within the distance reachable by a cannon shot from various parts of Hokkaido and other

⁶⁹ AH A4/303 Chishima Shotō Shisei Junjo Udagai.

⁷⁰ AH A4/314 Hokkaido Shokengensho, Sugiura Makoto to Kuroda, 25 October 1875. Notice that the Russians and the indigenous peoples are put in the same category here.

⁷¹ Kuroda to Orita Heinai, Tokitō Tametomo, and Hasebe Tatsusure. August 1876. AH A4/314 Hokkaido Kengensho.

[adjoining] islands', going back to the language used in Wheaton's text. Japanese officials would inspect transgressors, if found, and take them to a treaty port and ask for due punishment judged by the consul.⁷² The Kaitakushi, however, opposed this regulation because it judged it to be impracticable. Bringing an entire group of poachers to a consulate in a treaty port in reality was 'deemed to be extremely difficult', because they would do everything to protest against such legal measures having come from thousands of miles away. Their counter-proposal therefore was to take one of the crew onto the Japanese vessel and take him to the consulate while expelling the vessel.⁷³

As the Kaitakushi failed to devise any effective measures to guard the coast of the Kuriles, the onslaught on fur animals by foreign vessels continued. In 1879 hunters found fur seals on the Ushishir Island and its neighbouring rock reefs. By this time the number of sea otters had plummeted to the extent that one rather thick-skinned American shipowner, who himself had hunted sea otters for five years in the Kuriles, warned the Kaitakushi that, if the current pace of exploitation continued, 'in a very few years none will be left'.⁷⁴ Some hunters switched their main target to seals. One of them was Henry Snow, who recorded that he caught some 3,200 seals in 1881.⁷⁵ The same pattern of weak regulation and overexploitation was emerging for seals. A Japanese cook who worked on a Russian hunting vessel that went to the Ushishir from Yokohama told the Japanese officials that if unregulated the entire seal population there would vanish within several years.⁷⁶

The Kaitakushi, which the Meiji government had created in 1869 as a temporary measure to develop Hokkaido partly with a view to emulating Russia's activity in Sakhalin, ran its course and was abolished in 1882. Hokkaido was then divided into the three provinces of Sapporo, Hakodate and Nemuro (which included the Kuriles). In 1884 the governor of Nemuro, Yuchi Sadamoto, went to Shumushu to persuade the Kuril Ainu there to relocate to

⁷² Sanjō Sanetomi to Kaitakushi, 10 April 1876. AH Boshō/10740/5 'Seishiroku Meiji 9-10 nen', document 6.

⁷³ Orita, Tokitō, Hasebe to Kuroda, August 1876. HULNSC A4/303 'Chishima Shotō Shisei Junjo Utagai'.

⁷⁴ Werner to Kaitakushi, 25 June 1879. HULNSC Werner, John C. 001.

⁷⁵ Akizuki, *Chishima Rettō*, 233.

⁷⁶ 'Chishima Junkō Yomon', HULNSC CHI-915-Ha Chishimashū Kankeisho.

Shikotan so as to facilitate the Japanese rule. When he arrived in Shumushu he found out that some fifty Ainu had moved to Shumushu from Rashowa.⁷⁷ The Japanese had had no knowledge of this group of people. Fumoto Shinichi's recent work has cited a Hakodate-based newspaper to claim that the Rashowa Ainu had not known that the Kuriles had become Japanese until 1883,⁷⁸ but the record of a conversation between Yuchi and Yakov, the chief of the Rashowa Ainu, shows that the latter had heard about the transfer in 1878, which made him think that 'as our plan was to permanently live in that island of course we thought we would be Japanese nationals'.⁷⁹ What seems more striking is the fact that the Japanese had failed to realise Rashowa had inhabitants nine years after the transfer of the Kuriles, which goes to show the limitations they faced in the islands' administration. Meanwhile the task of chasing the poachers remained as daunting as before. Yuchi admitted that it was 'just like chasing flies over smelly food'.⁸⁰

Conclusion: The Kuriles' nominal end as a border zone

The sale of Russian America and the liquidation of RAC left the Kuril Islands in an ambiguous status. They were the territory of the Russian Empire, but in practice a hunting ground **run** under contract by a private business. After the Japanese acquisition of the entire Kuriles in 1875, the Kaitakushi struggled for nine years to introduce a modern political institution in the island chain. Yet it should be remembered that this was not the reason why the Japanese acquired the Kuriles. For Enomoto, who negotiated the Treaty of St. Petersburg, the acquisition of the Kuriles was a second best scenario that he only acquired after failing to purchase Russian battleships in return for abandoning southern Sakhalin. Because he negotiated from a weaker position, in the sense that the Japanese community in Sakhalin was already in a fatal decline, Japan had to suffice with the acquisition of the largely useless

⁷⁷ For the location of Rashowa, see Map 3 on p. 88.

⁷⁸ Fumoto, 'Kakutei Sareru Kokkyō', 151.

⁷⁹ 'Rasawotō dojin jinmon chōsho', 2 July 1884. HULNSC CHI-915-Ha 'Chishimashū Kankeisho'.

⁸⁰ Nemuroken keisatsu honsho, *Chishimakoku shotō mitsuryo ni kansuru shorui*, 14 November 1884. HULNSC 'Rakko ryō enkaku'.

island chain.

Kaitakushi tried to develop the Kuriles after 1875 with the same methods used for the development of Hokkaido: giving tax breaks for fishermen and hunters so as to encourage Japanese settlement and entrepreneurship. The reason behind adopting this approach was the issue of prestige or the nation's external image. However, not much progress could be observed by the end of the 1870s. Foreign vessels with multinational crews – including many Japanese – sailed along the island chain and hunted sea otters and seals or forced the indigenous hunters to give up their catch with *de facto* impunity. For the Kaitakushi inspectors, the natural conditions proved to be formidable challenges considering the technology available to them in the late-nineteenth century. This meant that the poachers got their way as long as they were not shipwrecked – and even if they were, the laxity of the consular court based on extraterritoriality and the subsidised return tickets to San Francisco from Hakodate guaranteed the profitability of the enterprise.

The case of boundary making in the Kuriles was driven by the fur animal hunters from San Francisco, who were partly driven to the area as a result of the monopolistic administration of the Alaska hunting grounds, and the Kaitakushi's ultimately failed effort to suppress them. Thus as far as the Kuriles constitute a part of the emergent Japanese territory in the 1870s and the early 1880s, what was in the process of emerging should be seen more as a U.S.-Japan boundary and less a Russo-Japanese one as has been assumed so far. Also important is to note the role of commercial actors. The story cannot certainly be reduced to one of imperialism, but needs to include resource extraction by private businesses as an important factor that impacted the way in which the boundary emerged in the Kuriles.

It is abundantly clear that the financial capital and technology available to Kaitakushi in the 1870s fell far short of what was necessary to introduce strict border controls and thus render the Kuriles part of the Japanese territorial sovereign state. Moreover the nine years between the Treaty of St. Petersburg and the relocation of the Kuril Ainu from Shumushu to Shikotan makes it clear that the Japanese effort bore little fruit. They failed even to recognise the presence of the Kuril Ainu in Rashowa until they encountered them in Shumushu in 1884.

The suppression of poaching by foreign vessels remained imperfect. Especially the fur seal hunting escaped the attention of the Kaitakushi completely. No diplomatic measures seem to have been taken by the foreign ministry vis-à-vis the United States. The removal of the Ainu from Simushir to Shikotan in 1884 signified the Kaitakushi's acknowledgement that the introduction of 'thick' rule in the Kuriles had failed.⁸¹

Overall the Japanese in the Kuriles had a stronger sense of international law as a binding force than the Western sailors or bureaucrats. They were more eager to introduce regulations based on international law because they did not have the military or economic prowess to buttress their claims. This is where the oft-told image of Japanese modernisation needs revisiting: at times the Japanese went ahead of their Western counterparts in adopting international law as the guiding principle to co-ordinate different interests between nations. Holding the Westerners accountable for international law was their tactic. In the Kuriles, international law was a weapon of the weak – but without the power to enforce it, it proved to be a weak weapon.

The Kuriles were thus a place where the Japanese rule over Ezo, the Russian rule of its Far East, and the American rule of Alaska encountered one another. In terms of where the sovereignty lay the entire island chain became a Japanese possession after 1875, but the reality was far more complex than the language of the treaty suggested. The 1867 sale of Alaska and the liquidation of the RAC meant that from then on Russian rule over the Kuriles was non-existent. It became a playground of American vessels searching for fur animals who were excluded from the commercial opportunities in Alaska by the ACC which had inherited the RAC's assets and firmly guarded its monopoly with the help of the U.S. government, which was probably keen on ensuring a steady flow of profits from this controversial purchase by William Seward, secretary of state. The American vessels reached Etorofu in the early 1870s, prompting some Japanese response. After the Russo-Japanese swap of Sakhalin and the Kuriles, the Japanese, and specifically the Kaitakushi, took charge of bringing the Kuriles into the modern state structure based on the principle of territorial sovereignty.

⁸¹ Fumoto, 'Kakutei sareru kokkyō', 152.

However their insistence on the extension of territorial sovereignty three miles from the coast met diplomatic opposition from Parkes, was laughed at by hunters, and proved simply impracticable. After a decade of futile attempts to exercise border control and develop the island chain into an economically viable and culturally advancing part of the Meiji state, the Japanese government in 1884 acknowledged their loss by vacating the Shumushu and Rashowa islands where the Ainu people had resided and leaving the entire area north of Etorofu unmanned. The technological standards of the nineteenth century, its politically subordinate position fixed in the unequal treaties, and the financial constraints collectively prevented the Japanese from overcoming the natural conditions and fully incorporating the Kuriles into their emerging territorial sovereign state. The Kaitakushi's struggle over these commercially minor (from the government's perspective) and militarily unimportant islands under the nominal Japanese sovereignty shows that the 'thin' rule continued to exist until the 1880s, without much changes from the time of the Russian control.

Chapter 6 The southward swing

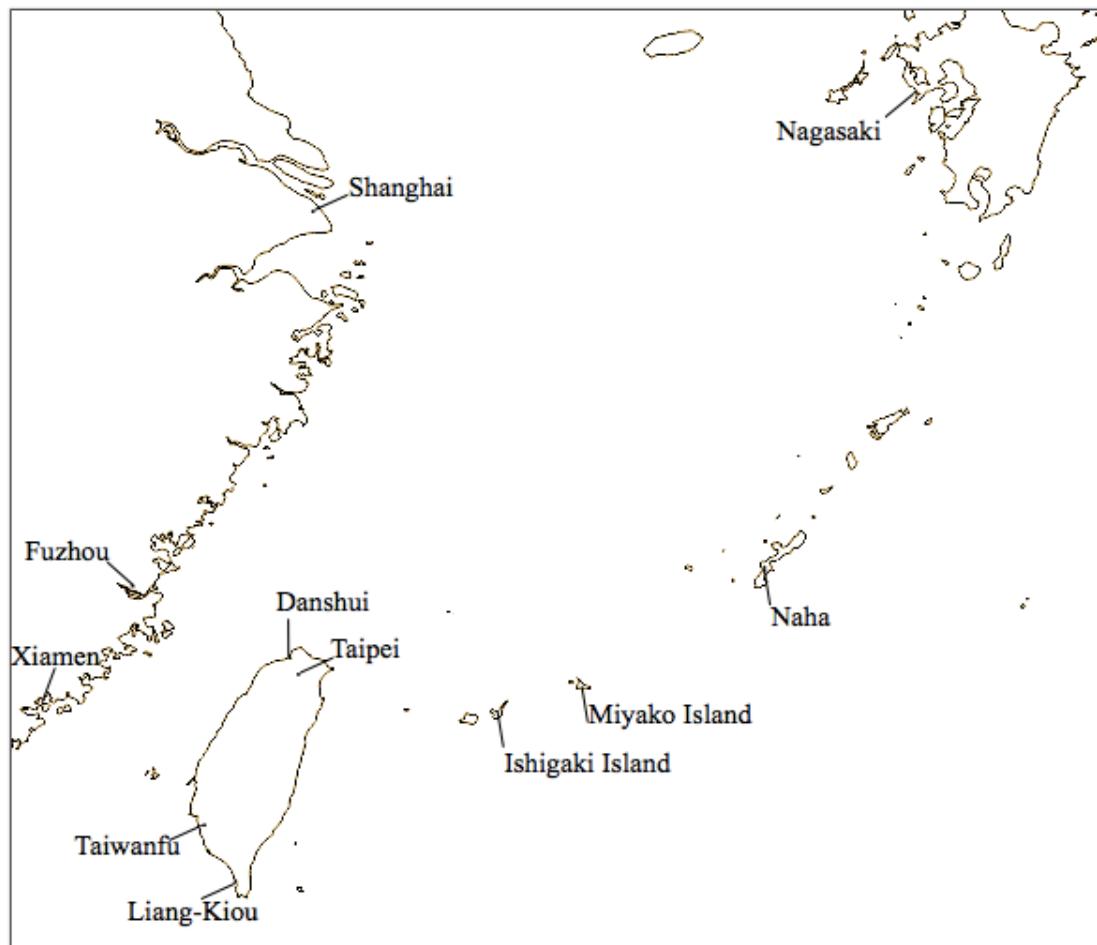
As the Meiji leaders slowly came to realise that the Russian threat to Hokkaido may have been exaggerated, they turned their attention to the southern border zones. This chapter deals with Taiwan, the Bonin Islands, and the Ryukyu Kingdom. Japan's attitude to these border zones and how and why it tried to incorporate them varied. The situation observed within the border zones was equally divergent. It is especially important to treat the cases of Taiwan and the Ryukyu Kingdom separately, since conventional historiography too often lumps them into a single narrative of nascent Japanese imperialism, assuming Japan's policy towards the southwest border zone to be an expansionist response to the impact of the arrival of the Western countries.¹

The varied response by the Meiji government that this chapter tries to portray collectively opposes the interpretation that there was a single 'southern policy' within the Japanese government – the image that implicitly emerges from the above-mentioned interpretation. The situation in each of the three cases dealt with below differed to the extent that a tailored response for each was necessary. If there was any commonality among the three southern border zones, it was the lack of a short-term security threat in the way that Russia was perceived as posing on the northern border. This made it easier for the Meiji government to take bolder measures in the Bonins and the Ryukyu Kingdom, while the border zones themselves did not have other sovereign states to play Meiji Japan against. Taiwan was a difficult issue for the Meiji government precisely because of the danger that collision with the Qing's claim could lead to a war.

This chapter aims to demonstrate the varied nature of the border zones' incorporation into the territorial sovereign state system in the East China Sea and the Pacific, and to show that the Japanese government's boldness was to a great extent driven not by the existence of

¹ Kim, *The Last Phase*; Suzuki, *Civilisation and Empire*.

competing claims, but by the fear of losing the balance in other edges of the archipelago as a result of losing out in the south. The cases are examined in the way that the critical moment for each appear in rough chronological order: Taiwan, the Bonins and the Ryukyu Kingdom.



Map 5: Taiwan and the Ryukyu Kingdom

The colonisation project of eastern Taiwan

Between 6 and 14 May 1874, some 1,100 Japanese troops in four vessels landed on the south-western tip of Taiwan named Liang-Kiou. On 22 May they were joined by 1,800 more soldiers on the *Takasago-maru*, under the command of Saigō Tsugumichi, the head of the

Japanese government's Colonisation Office (*banchi jimukyoku*).² One British surveying ship, HMS *Dwarf*, and two Qing battleships were present in the port at the time of the second Japanese' arrival. On the next day several Chinese officers went on board the *Takasago-maru* and met with Saigō. Asked about the purpose of the fleet's visit, Saigō replied that they had come to 'punish' the Taiwanese aborigines over the killing and robbing of Ryukyuan and Japanese men when they had been stranded on the shore of Taiwan. Several days before this meeting Japanese soldiers engaging in reconnaissance on the island had skirmished with Taiwanese aborigines, killing about thirty of them. According to Saigō's dispatch, on 26 May seven heads of the Taiwanese clans in the area wearing Chinese garb and Manchu-style queues visited Saigō. Through communication by writing in Chinese, it transpired that these Taiwanese clans had been harassed by the Butan (Paiwan) people, on the south-eastern coast, whom Saigō's troops had meant to attack. Thus these clans agreed to guide the Japanese troops to the Butan territory. Saigō gave them swords, guns, and garments, and received ten cows in return.³ On 1 June the soldiers headed eastwards on three different routes, and by the 3rd they attacked and conquered the Butan people who mounted only sporadic sniper attack from the bushes. Saigō reported to Tokyo his troops 'completely burnt down' their village.⁴

This expedition was no ordinary event, for no Japanese overseas expedition had taken place since Toyotomi Hideyoshi's invasions of Korea in the 1590s. Moreover, the Meiji government had just rescinded the decision to dispatch Saigō Takamori to Korea on a battleship, marking the defeat of the *seikanron* proponents in the leadership. How then did this expedition to Taiwan come about just half a year later? Historians have generally taken at face value the official explanation that Japan went ahead with the expedition in order to strengthen its argument for annexing Ryukyu – a kingdom that had signed treaties with foreign powers on its own, and had sent tributary missions to Beijing all the while under

² The literal translation of the Japanese term is 'administrative office for the land of barbarians', but the Meiji government used in its official documents the English title of Colonisation Office. See Eskildsen, 'Of Civilizations and Savages', 397.

³ 'Taiwan Jōkyō Kikitorigaki', WUL OSM I14_A0151. The account here is based on an interview by Miyagawa Fusayuki, governor of Nagasaki, with Nakao Yūkurō, an officer who had served on the *Takasago-maru*.

⁴ Saigō Tsugumichi to Ōkuma Shigenobu, 7 June 1874. WUL OSM I14_A0153.

Satsuma domain's military dominance. The report of an incident involving a Ryukyuan vessel wrecked in Taiwan, the argument goes, provided an impetus for the Meiji government, especially foreign minister Soejima, to take decisive action with regards to the status of Ryukyu. Akira Iriye has noted that:

if those fishermen, Ryukyu subjects, were to be considered Japanese citizens, it would be incumbent upon the government to seek satisfaction for their tragedy from the Chinese government, which had control over Taiwan, a province of China. If they were not viewed as Japanese citizens, Japan's claim to the Ryukyus would, of course, be destroyed.⁵

Accounts to this effect, which portray the Taiwan Expedition and Ryukyu annexation as two phases in the single story of Japanese expansion to the southwest, abound in the conventional historiography. In such narratives the invasion of Taiwan is seen solely as a stepping stone towards the annexation of the Ryukyu Kingdom. Sometimes the argument also goes the other way round; one historian has noted the reason that the Meiji government established 'the Ryukyu domain' in 1872 was 'because, needless to say, it [the Meiji government] needed to clarify that Ryukyu was part of Japan in order to justify the Taiwan expedition'.⁶ This last claim is problematic given that in 1872 the expedition to Taiwan had not become a concrete policy of the Meiji government.⁷ To say the move on Ryukyu from the beginning of the 1870s was a preparation for the Taiwan invasion is to mix up the chronology. It is true that after the abolition of the feudal domains in August 1871 there were opinions within the Meiji

⁵ Akira Iriye, 'Japan's Drive to Great-Power Status', in Marius Jansen (ed.), *The Emergence of Meiji Japan* (Cambridge, 1995), 288–89. Calling the victims of the killing 'fishermen' is problematic, because the account told by the survivors note that forty-eight out of the original sixty-nine passengers on the ship were officials of the Miyako Island. The ship was carrying annual tax from Miyako to Naha. Kabira Wekata, Kamekawa Wekata, Ginowan Wekata and Yonagusuku Wekata to Satomura Tōdayū, Toyomigusuku Wekata, Ikegusuku Wekata, July 1872, DAJP 1.1.2.1.

⁶ Maehira Fusaaki, 'Bakumatsu ishinki ni okeru Ryukyu no ichi', in Meiji Ishinshi Gakkai (ed.), *Meiji Ishin to Ajia* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2001), 196.

⁷ Mōri Toshihiko, *Taiwan Shuppei* (Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1996), 17–18. Namihira Tsuneo has raised a slightly different opposition by arguing that the Meiji government's designation of Shō Tai as *Ryukyu han'ō*, the lord of Ryukyu, never included an explicit declaration to establish a Ryukyu domain. See Namihira, *Ryukyu Heigō*, ch.2.

leadership calling for the reconfiguration of relations with the Ryukyu Kingdom. But these do not explain sufficiently *why* it decided to send troops to Taiwan – a major undertaking for a six-year-old government mired in internal strife. Nor do they acknowledge the variety of opinions within the Japanese government as to what the expedition should aim for. With this in mind, Japan’s internal politics and the Sino-Japanese talks over Taiwan in 1873-4 need to be revisited.

The exact development of the killing of the Ryukyuans is difficult to reconstruct because one has to rely on the accounts told by the survivors, and each version offers a slightly different explanation to the other. However the gist of the events can be summarised as follows. On 30 November 1871, four vessels from the westernmost islands of the Ryukyu Kingdom, namely Miyako and Ishigaki, left Naha, the main port of Okinawa Island, after having carried the annual tax rice there. The ships lost their way before getting home and two of them, both from Miyako, got stranded on Taiwan. One of them reached the south-western coast and was immediately caught by the Qing authorities. The other ship was less fortunate. It landed on the south-eastern coast, controlled by the aboriginal Paiwan people (referred to as Butan or Bootan in the writings of the time), with sixty-six surviving crew out of the original sixty-nine; three people had drowned. In the next several days the survivors wandered in the mountains in search of refuge, during which the Butan people robbed them of their belongings and killed fifty-four of them. The rest managed to escape into the Qing-controlled part of the island with the help of Chinese residents. The survivors were then sent to Taiwanfu, where they reunited with those who were from the other ship. The Ryukyuans were then collectively shipped to Fuzhou where they had a trading house, according to China’s standard procedure for treating Ryukyuan castaways at this time. They went back to Ryukyu in early June 1873.⁸

The expedition plan with multiple faces

⁸ DAJP 1.1.2.1.

Historian Mōri Toshihiko has argued that the initial news of the Ryukyuans' deaths received only minor attention in Tokyo. It was only after a Japanese officer in Beijing, Yanagihara Sakimitsu, learnt the potential significance of the situation through a conversation with the British minister in Tianjin that the foreign ministry began to consider responding on behalf of the Ryukyuans' plight.⁹ What decidedly changed the Meiji government's attitude was the coincidental visit of Charles LeGendre, a former American consul in Amoy, to Tokyo. DeLong, the American minister, introduced him to Soejima in late October 1872.

A civil war veteran who had fought under General Ulysses Grant, LeGendre served as American consul in Amoy (Xiamen) from 1866 and had been through the experience of negotiating with the Taiwanese aborigines as well as the Qing court over the killing of American sailors who had got stranded in Taiwan. LeGendre stopped at Tokyo on his way home, after finishing his term in Xiamen. During two meetings with Soejima in October 1872, LeGendre provided detailed information about the ethnic demography in Taiwan and Beijing's policy towards control of the island, and insisted that Japan should take the eastern part where the Qing did not exert authority over the local aboriginal communities. LeGendre recommended that Japan build an arsenal for the protection of future stranded sailors as well as a lighthouse to mitigate the problem of navigation along Taiwan's coast. Soejima said that, before the meeting with LeGendre, his initial plan on the handling of the Ryukyuans' incident was to send 10,000 soldiers to the island. But he was worried about the reaction from Beijing. LeGendre assured to Soejima:

It seems that China regards Formosa as being in the hands of other countries. Whichever country controls it would be fine, but if Japan among the Asian region

⁹ Mōri, *Taiwan Shuppei*, 3-4.

could own it that would be appropriate, so I encourage you to do so. I will do my little part to help you.¹⁰

Thus Soejima hired LeGendre as his adviser.¹¹ The two lost no time in devising a concrete plan for an expedition, in which LeGendre proposed colonisation of the eastern part of the island. LeGendre's plan rested on the assumption that the Qing would dissociate itself from the acts of the Taiwanese aborigines on the eastern part of the island and thus deny any claim to sovereignty.¹² It was at this point that the Meiji government began to see eastern Taiwan as potential Japanese territory, and the possibility of somehow carving out the entire island for itself. Soejima told Ōkuma Shigenobu on 17 February 1873 that he could obtain half of Taiwan through negotiations with the Qing, and if that materialised the rest of the island would fall into the Japanese hands within four or five years.¹³

¹⁰ Conversation between Soejima and LeGendre, 28 October 1872. DAJP 1.1.2.1 'Taiwan Seito Kankei Ikken'. My translation. The same document is reprinted in DNGM 7: 14, with slight variation in wording.

¹¹ DNGM 7: 15-6.

¹² Eskildsen, 'Meiji nananen Taiwan shuppei no shokuminhiteki sokumen', 72.

¹³ Quoted in Mōri, *Taiwan Shuppei*, 46.



Figure 1: LeGendre's Map of southern tip of Taiwan, November 1872. Aside from the site of the Ryukyuans' arrival in December 1871, the map shows several wreckages around the southern peninsula. It also notes the places LeGendre has visited.

NAJP 177-0051 'Taiwan Nanbu Seiban Chizu'.

In the spring of 1873 Soejima had a chance to confirm LeGendre's assumption about the weak Qing position on Taiwan, when he travelled to Beijing for the exchange of ratification of the Sino-Japanese treaty that the two countries had agreed two years before.¹⁴ One of Soejima's men, Yanagihara, received the word from the Qing officials on 21 June that the Taiwanese aborigines were 'beyond the purview [of the Qing Empire]'.¹⁵ To the Japanese delegation this confirmed LeGendre's assertion that the Qing would not intervene in any Japanese war with the Taiwanese aborigines on the eastern coast. Even though this conversation between Yanagihara and the Qing officials became the main foundation of the Japanese government's position until the end of the expedition, from Beijing's perspective this was far from giving a green light to the Japanese troops to attack Taiwanese aborigines on the east coast. The Qing government did not accept that a territory's ownership should be determined by the presence of effective rule. The remark was made only verbally and the Qing officials did not mean to say eastern Taiwan did not belong to its territory. However, for the Japanese government that had begun an assimilation policy towards the Ainu in Hokkaido, not engaging with the indigenous peoples was tantamount to abandoning the territorial claim. For instance, in 1872 Kuroda Kiyotaka wrote that 'through development projects [Hokkaido] will become a developed area like the mainland, so I want there to be no difference between them and us [the Ainu]'. Here, Kuroda writes as though the development of land and assimilation of Ainu people were interchangeable, or at least that advance in one aspect would bring about the same in the other.¹⁶ Soejima acted quickly once Yanagihara's conversation seemingly confirmed LeGendre's assertion about the Qing's response. From Beijing he instructed Saigō Tsugumichi to gather a battalion from Kagoshima.¹⁷ Upon

¹⁴ Hagiwara, *Daibunretsu* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 2008), 154-7. Also see Kunaichō, *Meiji Tennōki* vol.3 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1968).

¹⁵ DNGM6: 178.

¹⁶ Quoted in Siddle, *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan*, 61.

¹⁷ Saigō Takamori Zenshū Sensan Iinkai (ed.), *Saigō Takamori Zenshū* vol.3 (Tokyo: Yamato Shobō, 1978).

returning to Tokyo he told Parkes that Japan would send a fleet to Taiwan ‘in the next month’.¹⁸

Not all people in the Meiji government bought into the logic provided by LeGendre, Soejima, and Yanagihara for the justification of Japan’s action in eastern Taiwan. Erasmus Peshine Smith, a lawyer from New York and the first legal adviser to the foreign ministry, took a more cautious view. Smith’s memorandum, which was written sometime before Soejima’s delegation departed for Beijing in the spring of 1873, predicted that the Qing would not withdraw its claim to eastern Taiwan. His recommendation was that Tokyo should persuade Beijing that Japanese control of eastern Taiwan would be more desirable than Western control of the same. This tactic of emphasising the threat of other imperialist powers in an attempt to protect and promote one’s own political or commercial interest was a familiar line of argument for diplomats in the late-nineteenth-century East Asia.¹⁹ In this example, Smith suggested that Japan present itself as a friendly power to the Qing with whom it could jointly resist Western imperialism. Of course for the Qing, the recognition that Japan was a friendly nation took a serious blow as a result of its expedition to Taiwan. Smith and LeGendre both started from the assumption that effective control over the population was the necessary condition for claiming sovereignty over a certain territory. The two Americans differed, however, on the prediction of the Qing’s response. Whereas LeGendre argued that his experience showed that the Qing would not intervene and that Japan should have freedom of action in eastern Taiwan, which included building a colony, Smith thought that the Qing would stick to its claim on eastern Taiwan. Yanagihara’s conversation seemingly proved LeGendre right, but that was not the case.

From early 1873 to right before the expedition, several Japanese went to Taiwan for reconnaissance. Some of them received government’s instructions, while others were students

¹⁸ Parkes to Granville, 25 August 1873. Hakodate. FO46/167 no67 incl.1, 20 August 1873.

¹⁹ Recall Townsend Harris’s strategy in concluding a US-Japan commercial treaty in 1858, where he referred to the British attack on China as indicating a possible course of events for Japan in the near future if it failed to open itself for trade. See William Beasley, ‘The foreign threat and the opening of the ports’, in Marius Jansen (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Japan vol.5: The Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 259-307. Here 278-9. In Russia, Pëtr Stemoukhov stressed the expedience of Russian presence in southern Sakhalin in the 1867 negotiations with Koide Hidemi. See chapter 3.

in Hong Kong. They stayed in various parts of Taiwan for months, and wrote reports on how the expedition should be carried out. Their reports present different plans from that of LeGendre and illustrate a more diverse picture of how the Japanese perceived the purpose of this expedition. Kabayama Sukenori, Fukushima Kyūsei, Narutomi Seifū, and Kodama Toshikuni were army officers, while Mizuno Jun and Kurooka Yūnojō were language students in Hong Kong. Their inspection focused on the northeastern part of the island, as opposed to LeGendre's knowledge of the southern tip. Their reports were based upon up-to-date and direct information from their personal experience, and their contact with the Soejima delegation in China as well as the employment of many of them by the expeditionary force suggest that the government took them seriously.

Fukushima, who stayed in Taiwan for the first time from June to July 1873, recommended that Japan should start contacting aborigines in the northeast where Qing rule was tenuous and begin trading with them.²⁰ His plan resembled the Meiji government's policy towards the Ainu in that he saw Japan's role as providing them with daily necessities and 'bringing them up to civilisation'. Here his focus was on raising profits from trading with the aborigines and not on sending settlers from Japan. Fukushima's vision is clearer in his second memorandum in December 1873 that he wrote after his second visit to Taiwan. In this report he argued that retaliating to the aborigines who killed the Ryukyuans is only to 'gain acclaim today' but if Japan 'nurtures (*buiku*)' the aborigines that would be the path towards controlling the entire island and securing economic profits for the future. Therefore Fukushima proposed that Japan should claim the punishment of the Butan people as the outer motive, while in reality aiming at subjugating the aboriginal areas of the island. What is also noticeable is his recommendation that such a job should be taken up by a private company.²¹ Thus his vision was heavily skewed towards making profits as opposed to creating Japanese settler colonies with which to buttress Japanese control of the island. Fukushima wrote two

²⁰ Robert Eskildsen has mentioned Fukushima's report, but he has wrongly surmised that Fukushima's source of information was Japanese spies such as Kabayama. In fact Fukushima himself went to Taiwan twice. Eskildsen, 'Meiji nananen', 73; DAJP 1.1.2.1-1.

²¹ Fukushima to the foreign ministry, August 1873; Fukushima's memorandum, incl. to Ueno to Iwakura, 5 December 1873. DAJP 1.1.2.1.

more memoranda in January and February 1874 and stuck with his position that Japan should gradually develop trade relations with the Taiwanese aborigines without being noticed by the Qing government. Up to February 1874, he did not show any recognition that Japanese rule of Taiwan would require large-scale migration from Japan or that their action will show Japan's advance towards civilisation to the Western countries.²²

In contrast to Fukushima's mercantilist approach, Kabayama, Narutomi, and Kodama took a more hard-line position. Kabayama, who first brought the issue to the Meiji government from Kagoshima in August 1872, was in favour of immediate military action. He regarded half of Taiwan as outside Qing control and believed therefore that Japan should at once send troops from Ryukyu.²³ Narutomi's memorandum in December 1873 recommended Japanese migration, the transfer of agricultural technology and infrastructure development. Kodama wrote to Tokyo in January and February 1874 both times from Danshui in northern Taiwan. He had been waiting for the Japanese troops there all through the latter part of 1873, without knowing that the government had been shaken up by the leadership split. Kodama's proposal was different from the others in that he argued that the Japanese expedition of Taiwan and the subjugation of the aborigines would eventually lead to safer maritime transport, which Japan could then use to send merchant ships to 'China and India' and build a path towards development. The second memorandum contained further details of his plan, and his vision was more long-term than Fukushima or Narutomi. Importantly, he regarded the development of Taiwan following the expedition as a southern counterpart of the Kaitakushi in Hokkaido. He argued that Japan should establish a 'Taiwan Kaitakushi' once the expedition was over; and introduce the *tondenhei* system that was being implemented in Hokkaido from that year.²⁴ He also suggested that 800 Kagoshima men who had served in

²² NDL 'The Selected Archives of the Japanese Army, Navy and other Government Agencies, 1868-1945', Reel 34; WUL OSM I14_A0126.

²³ NDL Kensei Shiryōshitsu Shūshū Monjo 243-7. Kabayama Sukenori to Kirino Toshiaki, 11 October 1872.

²⁴ Tondenhei, translated as 'soldier-farmer', was a system that originated in ancient Japan and was revived by the Meiji government when carrying out migration projects in Hokkaido. Applicants received necessary equipment, annual stipend in rice and cash, and a piece of land that they would cultivate. They also engaged in military training. Michele Mason has noted that the hidden purpose of

Hokkaido should be a good fit for the job in Taiwan since they had the experience of starting a settler colony.²⁵ He proposed that the compensation for labourers in Taiwan should be in accordance with that of labourers in Hokkaido under the Kaitakushi. Kodama put together a blueprint of Taiwan Kaitakushi including its expected budget, which included expenses for food for six months.

These memoranda had one important difference from LeGendre's recommendations. They were of the opinion that Japan was in competition with the Qing in 'bringing up' the aborigines. A similar perspective has been observed among the Japanese and Russian officials in Sakhalin in regards to the Ainu and other indigenous residents. For the Japanese inspectors, the question over Ryukyu was not the ultimate reason why the Taiwan expedition was necessary. Many of them came from Satsuma and, as Ryukyu had been under their domain's control for over two centuries, they naturally believed that Japanese control was already an undisputed notion that did not need any further strengthening. In their minds, Taiwan was the real prize. The official position of the foreign ministry was different, but it is important to take note of the former-Satsuma officers' view as they played key roles in developing the plan for the Taiwan expedition.²⁶

After Soejima left the government in the leadership split in October 1873, the idea of building a colony in eastern Taiwan was passed on to Ōkuma Shigenobu and Saigō Tsugumichi. Yet the government's view of the Taiwan expedition was in a confused state. Yanagisawa wrote up a plan for the expedition in late January 1874, in which he insisted that the aim should be the colonisation of eastern Taiwan. But the nine-article proposal drafted by Ōkubo and Ōkuma based on Yanagihara's draft omitted any mention of colonisation and stated that the aim was to bring redress for the distressed Ryukyuans. There is, though, an indication that colonisation as a formal aim re-emerged as official policy, for on 13 March

the *tondenhei* was to disarm domestic unrests in the early Meiji period, and for that purpose the project needed a paretic and militaristic discourse aimed at Russia. See Mason, *Dominant Narratives*, 40-44.

²⁵ Kabayama was on the same ship with these 800 men on his way from Tokyo to Kagoshima in the autumn of 1872. Saigō Totoku Kabayama Sōtoku Kinen Jigyō Shuppan Iinkai (ed.), *Saigō Totoku to Kabayama Sōtoku* (Taipei: Saigō Totoku Kabayama Sōtoku Kinen Jigyō Shuppan Iinkai, 1936), 157.

²⁶ Among the inspectors, Kabayama and Kodama came from Satsuma.

LeGendre's memorandum to Ōkuma Shigenobu, the colonial minister who was to be formally appointed on 4 April, stuck with the line he had been advocating together with Soejima. It stated that 'the ostensible object of the expedition will be simply to punish the Boutans and prevent the recurrence of their evil practices in the future, while in fact, its real object will be the annexation of Aboriginal Formosa.'²⁷

Robert Eskildsen has argued that colonisation remained government policy at least until the middle of April 1874. He has also argued that the connection with Ryukyu was made in order to avoid criticism from the Western nations about the colonial project.²⁸ But the instruction containing the colonisation clause was changed once again shortly before Saigō Tsugumichi was appointed to lead the troops to Taiwan. In the draft instructions to Saigō written sometime in late March for the approval of prime minister Sanjō Sanetomi, the following clause appeared (showing the original strikethrough):

After the war it is to be the purpose that ~~(we establish government offices in strategic points and build soldiers' colonies in various places)~~; [and that we,] with administration and education, gradually guide and enlighten the barbarians (*dojin*) and establish a fruitful enterprise between the barbarians and the Japanese government.²⁹

This draft shows that the Meiji government had in fact abandoned the colonial aspect of the Taiwan expedition before the dispatch of Saigō and replaced it with a project of bringing civilisation to the Taiwanese aborigines. It is not known who initiated the change, but Sanjō explained to Ōkuma Shigenobu, who was appointed as colonial minister soon afterwards, on 28 March:

²⁷ LeGendre to Ōkuma, 13 March 1874. NAJP A03030002600 'Naikaku Tankōsho Banchishori'.

²⁸ Eskildsen, 'Of Civilization and Savages', 388-418, here 397; Eskildsen, 'Meiji nananen'.

²⁹ The author of the document is unknown, 'Taiwan chihō jimu totoku ininjō an narabini setsuyu an', March 1874. WUL OSM I04-A0128. The parentheses and the strikethrough are as in the original.

it is not that the issue of colonisation and land appropriation (*shokumin ryakuchi*) have been finalised in the discussion hitherto held ... it would be inconvenient if we did not have a discussion once again. But when we actually visit and see [Taiwan] for the purpose of regulation (*torishimari*) and if [we decide that] we take the above action as appropriate for the purpose of appeasing and nurturing the barbarian residents (*banmin*), then [further] discussion will not be needed. However all of us have agreed yesterday on the point of conducting the expedition for punitive purpose only. Thus if we are going for land appropriation, there might be disagreement on doing so without having some discussion.³⁰

The government agreed that the revised version of the instructions, with the reference to colonisation removed, should be sent to Saigō Tsugumichi on 5 April.³¹ The plan conceived by Japanese inspectors and LeGendre to create a Japanese colony in north-eastern Taiwan was thus thrown out, at least for the time being. The complication was that this did not mean that all parties concerned understood or accepted the revised purpose of the expedition. Iwakura expressed concern to Sanjō on 16 April by saying that

Even though the instruction was revised, the mood on the ground has already been bent on colonisation, and the commander [Saigō]'s execution would undoubtedly look like colonisation. In this case [difficult] relations with other countries would arise, ... I am terribly worried.³²

The ensuing controversy among historians over what caused Japan to invade Taiwan in 1874 has not been settled, and the upshot might simply be that different people in the decision-making process had different ideas and believed in their own version of the state's motivations.

³⁰ Sanjō to Ōkuma, 28 March 1874. OSM I14_B0022_0004.

³¹ DNGM 7: 19-20.

³² ITKM vol.6, 41. Reprinted in Kawabata Megumu, 'Taiwan Shuppei ni Tsuiteno Ichikōsatsu', 273.

With the complicated motives and varied explanations given by different parties, the policy did not go down well on the diplomatic front. It is true that the Japanese assertion of its role as ‘civilisers’ in Taiwan garnered some support from the Western diplomats, such as the Italian Chargé d’Affaires, Comte Litta, who told foreign minister Terashima Munenori that ‘there will be some benefits if [Japan] could send migrants [to Taiwan] in the future’. Terashima queried if there would be benefits in migration. Litta replied: ‘In the East your country is the beacon of enlightenment [*kaika*]; you should guide the barbarians and make them proceed to humanity’.³³ Nevertheless the Meiji government failed to gain support from the two most important foreign governments, Britain and the United States. On 18 April the United States minister, John Bingham, retracted his support after reading an article in *Japan Gazette*, a local English newspaper, that criticised him for violating the obligation for wartime neutrality. He rather belatedly told the foreign ministry that the Sino-American treaty bound his country to assist China in case of diplomatic difficulties; that Taiwan in its entirety was under Qing control; and therefore the Japanese purported action in Taiwan compelled the U.S. government to stop American vessels and personnel from taking part in the expedition.³⁴ Terashima gave Bingham the official explanation that the purpose of the expedition was ‘only to punish’ the aboriginal peoples,³⁵ but the latter was undeterred and promptly ordered neutrality for American citizens and vessels. On the same day Parkes sided with Bingham and argued that the planned action would amount to an invasion of Qing territory.³⁶ Their opposition forced the Meiji leaders in Tokyo to halt the mission on the following day. However, the soldiers who had gathered in Nagasaki waiting for the green light did not adhere to the new mission directive or the government decision to suspend the expedition.³⁷ Defying the order from Tokyo, the ships still went off to Taiwan. The fact that the expedition took place in spite of British and American opposition poses a question about Shogo Suzuki’s

³³ Conversation between Terashima Munenori and Comte Litta, 10 April 1874. IHAA Hanabusa Shishakuke Monjo 6, ‘Taiwan Ikkensho’.

³⁴ Conversation between Ueno and Bingham, 18 April 1874. DAJP 1.1.2.1 ‘Taiwan Seitō Kankei Ikken’.

³⁵ Conversation between Terashima and Bignham, 18 April 1874. DAJP 1.1.2.1-1 ‘Taiwan Seitō Jiken’, 311.

³⁶ Parkes to Tenterden, 7 April 1874. Cited in Hagiwara, *Pekin Koshō*, 133-4.

³⁷ Ochiai, ‘Meiji shokino gaiseiron to higashi Ajia’, 103.

interpretation that, ‘[h]aving engaged with the notion that “civilized” states had the “duty” to “enlighten” the “barbarous” peoples, Japan sent military expeditions to “pacify” the Taiwanese “savages” and carve for themselves a “civilized” identity...’.³⁸

Having won a quick victory over the Butan, the Japanese soldiers began building roads and barracks while suffering from the heat and the spread of malaria, which caused many deaths among the troops. The real diplomatic conundrum began when the Qing protested, contrary to the earlier anticipation by Soejima and LeGendre. Qing opposition in writing reached Terashima in Tokyo on 4 June.³⁹ The Qing also dispatched troops to the western coast of Taiwan. On 22 June Saigō Tsugumichi received Shen Baozhen, the imperial commissioner for negotiations with Japan, and Pan Wei, the magistrate of Fuzhou, on his vessel.⁴⁰ The Qing representatives suggested they assume the responsibility for catching the Taiwan aborigines who were responsible for the killing of the Ryukyuans. Saigō declined to engage in negotiations and asked them to talk to Yanagihara, the Japanese minister residing in Shanghai. The same argument went back and forth in the next three meetings, and on the 26th the two sides became a little more forthcoming when they conversed over lunch. Saigō told the Qing representatives that Japan could not give up the task of getting redress to the Qing having committed so much money and soldiers. The Qing representatives laughed and told Saigō that the Butan clan, with a population of just around 200 and ‘possessing merely livestock and rice paddies’, could not possibly pay the reparations. He then asked Saigō how much the Japanese had spent so far for the expedition. Saigō said it was around 1.2 million *ryō*. The Qing representative said he would write to Yanagihara in Shanghai and asked Saigō to refrain from landing any more troops on Taiwan or making any further advance with the existing soldiers, to which Saigō agreed. The Qing representative left Taiwan on the next day.

³⁸ Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*, 180.

³⁹ DNGM 7: 72-7.

⁴⁰ Records of conversation reprinted in DNGM misrepresent the Chinese inspector as Pan, but it was in fact Shen. This elementary error makes one wonder to what extent the Qing and the Japanese officials managed to understand each other. This might also explain why the accounts of the same event vary from one another. See *ibid.*

On 8 July negotiations ensued between Yanagihara and the Shanghai magistrate. The conversation soon arrived at deadlock because the two sides had a conflicting understanding of what had been agreed between Saigō and the Qing representatives in Taiwan. While the Qing claimed that Saigō had agreed to the swift withdrawal of troops now that the retaliation was complete, Yanagihara thought the Chinese side was distorting the records of the conversation. In mid-July the Qing sent an official protest to Tokyo, arguing that Japan's expedition breached the Sino-Japanese treaty. Thus Ōkubo Toshimichi, the interior minister and the effective head of the government after the split of the leadership in the previous year, arrived in Beijing on 10 September in order to negotiate a settlement with the Zongli Yamen and Li Hongzhang. The talks circled around the same old point of whether the Qing exercised sovereignty over eastern Taiwan, but without seeing either side compromise. The collapse of the negotiations and the possibility of war as a result were avoided only because of the mediation of Thomas Wade, the British minister to Beijing, who feared that any conflict might disrupt British trade in China. Wade managed to get the two parties to finally sign a protocol on 31 October. In the carefully phrased agreement the Qing acknowledged that the Japanese action was 'a moral action for protecting citizens' (*homin no gikyo*); the Qing would pay 100,000 taels as compensation for the families of those killed by the Taiwanese aborigines; and Japan would withdraw its troops by 20 December, after which the Qing would pay 400,000 taels.⁴¹

After the news of Ōkubo's departure to Beijing appeared in newspaper headlines and the rumour of war with the Qing grew bigger and bigger, former samurai from across the country rushed to take part in what they saw as the long-awaited opportunity to fulfil their responsibility to their master. Facing such reforms as the abolition of the domains and the conscription act of January 1873, the samurai felt that they had lost their place in the Meiji society. Hundreds of petitioners wrote to the army ministry in September and October, picturing themselves as fighting for the country against the Chinese. They pleaded with the

⁴¹ Hagiwara, *Pekin Koshō*, 325-6. For the full text of the agreement see DNGM 7: 316-7. For a detailed account of the Taiwan expedition and the following negotiations in Beijing, see Eskildsen, 'Of Civilizations and savages'; Hagiwara, *Pekin Koshō*, 128-46, 163-82, 212-338.

government, at this critical moment, to let them ‘atone the sin of having been fed in peacetime without merits (*heizei sosan no tsumi wo tsugunai*)’, and ‘serve even as a bearer’. The fact that only a few months ago the Meiji government was the target of their disgruntlement all but evaporated.⁴²

In sum, the rhetorical interpretation of the Taiwan Expedition as a way of advancing the Japanese annexation of Ryukyu cannot fully explain the reason why Saigō Tsugumichi, defying the government’s order, landed on Taiwan. The English School explanation of Japan’s showing its civilising face to the Westerners also falls short as it reads too much into the government’s rhetoric and cannot account for the execution of the expedition taking place in the face of British and American opposition.⁴³ What led to the Taiwan expedition was a combination of contingent events. The killing of the Ryukyuans in December 1871 and LeGendre’s assertion about the limits of the Qing sovereignty provided the initial impetus. Soejima and many other leaders in the government too easily believed LeGendre’s interpretation and misread the Qing response. Incepted by Soejima and LeGendre, the Taiwan colonisation project aimed at creating a breathing space for the former samurai class within the country, whose social displacement would have caused a serious problem to Tokyo. Yanagihara’s confirmation of the limits of the Qing’s control was at best a half-baked statement, but the army officers and students jumped on it and helped the leadership in Tokyo to put together concrete plans for the expedition, with the final goal of setting up a colony in Taiwan and achieve economic development for the benefit of mainland Japan. In doing so, the Meiji leadership walked a fine line between having to fight a war with China and risking an emergence of violent opposition against the government at home – the example of which already appeared in Saga prefecture in early 1874.⁴⁴ The attempt to push its boundary onto

⁴² NAJP A01100079100. ‘Ehimeken shizoku Seike Sadatora hoka shijū shichimei negai’, in ‘Seishin jūgun negai meibo’ vol.1.

⁴³ See, for instance, Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*, 154.

⁴⁴ For the Saga rebellion, see Stephen Vlastos, ‘Opposition movements in early Meiji, 1868–1885’, in Marius Jansen (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Japan* vol. 5: *The Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 367–431. Here 388–91.

Taiwan was an act of testing the Qing's position and the feverish desires of the former samurai class to grab the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to fulfil their obligation.

After Soejima was gone, the assumed audience for the Taiwan policy in the minds of the Meiji leaders such as Ōkubo and Iwakura seems to have been more domestic than international. What they really feared was not so much maintaining face vis-à-vis Western observers or colonisation of Taiwan by a foreign country, but the escalation of opposition movements led by the disenfranchised samurai class against their government. Although the leadership decided to omit the establishment of colonies from the purpose of the expedition, and British and American opposition forced them to halt the mission altogether at the last minute, pressure from the soldiers who gathered around Saigō Tsugumichi in Nagasaki, and the possibility that they could turn against the government if the mission was cancelled, left Ōkubo with no choice other than to endorse their dispatch. The Ryukyu connection was a pretext in the beginning, but Ōkubo in Beijing had to claim that it had been the Japanese aim all through the mission. The departure of Saigō's *Takasago-maru* for Taiwan in April 1874 was merely six years after taking Edo castle, where the shogunate had ruled for over 250 years. The government's foundations were far from perfect.⁴⁵ Iwakura admitted in February 1875 that he had been unsure of the country's future until very recently.⁴⁶ As Parkes observed and was picked up by earlier scholarship in the 1970s, the Taiwan Expedition served to address the main source of such uncertainty: the jobless ex-samurai.⁴⁷ The way to do so, as they envisaged in the spring of 1874, was not only to give former samurai an opportunity to fight a war, but also to give them a new place to live, far away from mainland Japan, especially the new capital. By then the Meiji leaders concluded that there was no point in

⁴⁵ Parkes wrote in the midst of the Sino-Japanese standoff in Taiwan that it was not determined how long the current government would last. Parkes to Derby, 16 June 1874. Cited in Hagiwara, *Pekin Koshō*, 201.

⁴⁶ Parkes to Derby, 1 February 1875. Cited in Hagiwara, *Pekin Koshō*, 210.

⁴⁷ This 'safety valve' argument was put forward by Marline Mayo, Ian Nish, Wayne McWilliams and others. Mayo noted that the Taiwan expedition was 'not for glory, prestige, or securing so much as for diversion of *shizoku* rancor'. Marline Mayo, 'The Korean Crisis of 1873 and early Meiji foreign policy', *Modern Asian Studies* 31:4 (August 1972), 793-819. Here 818; Ian Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy, 1869-1942: Kasumigaseki to Miyakezaka* (London [etc.]: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 23. Wayne McWilliams, 'East Meets East: The Soejima Mission to China, 1873', *Monumenta Nipponica* 30:3 (Autumn 1975), 237-275.

fighting against Russia in southern Sakhalin, where the Japanese had little chance of succeeding in settling anyway. Turning south, the Meiji Japan saw Taiwan as a place that could have given the nation a breathing space, but Qing opposition denied this possibility. During the six-month-long stay in Taiwan, 538 Japanese men out of the total 3,658 perished. Ninety-eight per cent of them died of disease, mostly malaria.⁴⁸ The Taiwan expedition thus was a policy disaster for a Meiji government that never controlled the entire policymaking process, and was only narrowly saved from an even bigger catastrophe – a war with China – by British arbitration in Beijing.

The Bonins: Japan's encounter with the Pacific

If you went to a port town in the north-eastern coast of North America in the first half of the nineteenth century and asked a sailor on a street if he had been to Japan, many would have said yes. From Nantucket, New Bedford, Boston and other places, numerous ships headed for the Western Pacific and passed by Japan. Yet the 'Japan' that sailors had in mind was not the Tokugawa shogunate in Edo; it was a maritime space which American whaling ships frequented. This area, roughly surrounded by the Japanese archipelago in the north, the Ryukyu island chain in the west, Saipan island in the south-western corner and the Bonin islands on the south-eastern corner, constituted 'Japan ground', which offered tremendous opportunities to catch sperm whales. While roaming the Pacific, whalers replenished their ships with food, water and coal, added new crew or left those who were unfit, exchanged letters and information, typically in the Sandwich Islands or the Bonin islands. These tiny islands scattered in the Pacific were indispensable for the whalers' long journeys at sea, often stretching to several years without calling at their home port.

⁴⁸ Yasuoka Akio, 'Taiwan Shuppei: Seiban to taishin kaisen junbi', *Gunji Shigaku* 10:1&2 (June 1974), 98-107. Here 102; Saigō Totoku Kabayama Sōtoku Kinen Jigyō Shuppan Iinkai, *Saigō Totoku to Kabayama Sōtoku*, 471.

The impact of the whaling industry is what is unique about the formation of the boundaries around the Bonins. The arrival of the settlers and the frequent visits by whaling ships created the perception among those who crossed the Pacific that this would become an important connection point. The rise of whaling in the ‘Japan ground’ raised the necessity to formulate some sort of governance in the Bonins where there had previously been none. Between the 1820s and the 1870s three countries emerged as the possible guarantor of law and order in the islands – Britain, the United States and Japan – but no formal agreement was signed among them in the end to settle the question of to whom the Bonins belonged. Finally at the end of 1875 Meiji government officials sailed to the Bonins and declared that they would be formally incorporated into Japan, to which neither the settlers, who were mostly of European or American origin, or the British and American diplomats in Tokyo voiced strong opposition. If this was imperial expansion, it was an unusually quiet example. There was no kingdom to be absorbed or conquered. There was no treaty that settled the status of the Bonins, unlike in the case of Japan’s northern border. As will be discussed later, the Japanese once sent migrants in 1862, but all of them left the island after just one year. Despite all this, from 1876 the Bonins were kept under Japanese rule until defeat in the Pacific War, and then were put under the American control. The United States returned them to Japanese sovereignty in 1968.⁴⁹

Why did Meiji Japan, despite its tenuous legal claim and limited financial and military resources, establish territorial control over the Bonins? This needs to be understood in the context of the gradual but steady territorial scramble in the Pacific that had already begun by the mid-1870s. The United States controlled the Midway Islands since 1867, and American residents in Hawaii, then called the Sandwich Islands, were already debating over the possibility of U.S. annexation of the island kingdom.⁵⁰ Meanwhile the German navy, a

⁴⁹ On the return of Ogasawara to Japan in 1968, see Robert Eldridge, ‘Prelude to Okinawa: Nuclear Agreements and the Return of the Ogasawara Islands to Japan’. Paper Presented at the Society for the Historians of American Foreign Relations Annual Conference, June 23, 2007 Washington, D.C., USA.

⁵⁰ Isabella Bird, a British traveller, stayed in the Sandwich Islands for half a year in 1874 and recorded the scenes of meetings convened both by the proponents of the U.S. annexation and by those who

relative latecomer in the imperial competition in the Pacific, sought to possess naval bases and colonies in various places around the Pacific in the 1860s, including small islands off the western coast of Japan, the eastern coast of Taiwan, New Guinea, and the Sulu islands in the Philippines.⁵¹ In the spring of 1875 Britain's China squadron, as well as its minister in Tokyo, proposed the occupation of Port Hamilton, a small island off the southern coast of the Korean Peninsula.⁵² In short, the maritime space around the Japanese archipelago in the mid-1870s was gradually waking up to the pressure of imperial competition and entering a transformative phase into the sovereign state system. But what determined the relative passivity of the Bonins' shift into becoming Japanese territory?

As noted in the introduction, the legalistic discourse of the existing scholarship cannot serve as an adequate history of the emergence of this territorial boundary. It needs to be noted that although the settlers wanted someone to provide law and order⁵³ and diplomats did engage in legal debates, neither determined the eventual territorial delimitation. Japan took the Bonins not because of the relative merit of its legal claim, but because the United States and Britain did not want territorial control, while Japan feared the side-effect that disinterest might have on its other border zones. The United States and Britain, in turn, condoned Japanese rule while trying to preserve their privileges of extraterritoriality. Although the two powers, especially the United States, had an interest in the islands in the middle of the nineteenth century, their appetite had dissipated by the 1870s.

Bonins before 1862

The Bonins were not destined to be marginal in the mid-nineteenth century. People

advocated territorial lease for U.S. naval station. Isabella Bird, *Six Months in the Sandwich Islands* (London: John Murray, 1906 [1876]), 184-6.

⁵¹ Ōi Tomonori, '19 seiki matsu doitsu teikoku no Kōshūwan kakutoku', *Seijigaku Kenkyū Ronshū* 27 (2008 February), 47-67.

⁵² See chapter 4.

⁵³ Here my interpretation differs from Ishihara, who emphasises the unilateral incorporation by the Meiji Japan based on the fact that the naturalised Japanese of European or American origin in the island did not receive the same rights as mainland Japanese. My point is that unlike the Ryukyuans and the Taiwanese aborigines, the Bonin settlers did not seek to remain on their own. See Ishihara, *Kindai Nihon to Ogasawara Shotō*.

who had knowledge of the islands expected that they would before long develop into a transportation hub for trans-Pacific trade and commerce. This naturally led to the question of who would control them. If one were to determine the islands' ownership by the principle of 'official' discovery it was the British who had the best case. The first person to make any kind of claim under the name of a state on the Bonins was a British naval captain Frederick William Beechey of HMS *Blossom* who came across the islands during his Pacific expedition in 1827. He raised the British flag and left a copper plate stating that he had claimed the islands for the British government. He found two Europeans who had been shipwrecked and remained there for months.⁵⁴ But no settlement or effective show of control ensued, and the two stowaways Beechey encountered left the island the next year on a Russian Pacific expedition's ship. Fjodor Petrowitsch Lütke, who picked up the stowaways, noted of the Bonins in his visit in March 1828: 'These islands may become very useful and important to Kamchatka. The climate is extremely fine, and the plants and fruits of the torrid and temperate zone flourish equally well'.⁵⁵

The first settlers came to the Bonins on 26 June 1830. They consisted of two Americans, two Britons (one was originally from Genoa), one Dane, and twenty-five Sandwich Islanders.⁵⁶ They had heard flattering rumours about the Bonins, in which the living conditions were evidently glorified, as the last paradise on earth. The two British citizens named Matteo Mazarro, around fifty years old, and his long-time sailing company Richard Millinchamp,⁵⁷ about twenty years younger, took the initiative and employed Nathaniel

⁵⁴ 'CAPTAIN BEECHEY'S EXPEDITION'. *The Standard* (London, England), Saturday, October 04, 1828; Issue 432. *19th Century British Library Newspapers: Part II*.

⁵⁵ 'Russian voyage of discovery', *The Morning Post* (London, England), Tuesday, January 13, 1829; Issue 18122. *19th Century British Library Newspapers: Part II*.

⁵⁶ William Ruschenberger, *Narrative of a Voyage Round the World During the Year 1835, 36, and 37; Including a Narrative of an Embassy to the Sultan of Muscat and the King of Siam* (London: Richard Bentley, 1838), 439. Also see Lionel Berners Cholmondeley, *The History of the Bonin Islands: from the Year 1827 to the Year 1876 and of Nathaniel Savory, One of the Original Settlers to which is Added a Short Supplement Dealing with the Islands after Their Occupation by the Japanese by Lionel Berners Cholmondeley, M.A., of St. Andrew's Mission, Tokyo, and Honorary Chaplain to the British Embassy* (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1915), 17-19.

⁵⁷ Some of the sources, including Cholmondeley, noted him as John Millinchamp. Here I followed the name seen in the newspaper classified ad that he put in 1847 upon Mazarro's death. *Polynesian*. (Honolulu [Oahu], Hawaii), 06 Nov. 1847. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib.

Savory and Alden Chapin, both from Massachusetts, and Charles Johnson from Denmark, under a one-year contract agreed in Honolulu. The Sandwich Islanders were also contracted to Mazarro and Millinchamp for three years. The contract was such that Mazarro and Millinchamp would supply daily necessities as well as vegetable seeds for farms, and the labourers would work on the land. When the harvest came, the whole produce would be sold by Mazarro or Millinchamp to visiting vessels, and the labourers would receive half of the sales. This was known by the islanders as 'going upon halves'.⁵⁸ About six months later, one British naval vessel visited the island and provided the settlers with supplies. It is not certain whether this was done in any coordination with Richard Charlton, the British consul in Honolulu, who encouraged the migration of the first settlers and provided them with a Union Jack, but it is likely that this visit aimed to check on the settlers' development. Next year HMS *Churchill* stopped at the Bonins. Lieutenant Cole, who headed the vessel, was concerned about what might happen in the future in regards to the competitive claims for control with the United States. The two principal settlers, Mazarro and Millinchamp, were British (or at least they claimed to be), but Mazarro was getting old and Millinchamp could easily find opportunities elsewhere.⁵⁹ This would leave the Americans in a better position.

Cole wrote:

when the only settlers will be Americans, if they continue & prosper they will no doubt soon increase, the proximity of these islands to Japan & northern parts of China, may induce many of that enterprising country to come out, in hopes that some day they might be of consequence they having been taken possession of by us - & the present settlers having the British flag flying, a little now might save much trouble

of Congress. Accessed at <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015408/1847-11-06/ed-1/seq-3/>> on 2 August 2015.

⁵⁸ Patrick John Blake, 'Visit to Port Lloyd, Bonin Islands, in Her Majesty's Sloop "Larne"', *Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society* vol.3 (1840), 107.

⁵⁹ Millinchamp eventually moved to Guam.

hereafter, they are certainly fine Islands but not what I expected from the description I have had of them.⁶⁰

In short Cole suggested Britain may need to strengthen its claim now if it were to hold on to the islands in the future. As the whaling industry underwent a dramatic expansion in the first half of the nineteenth-century, people began to realise its commercial impact on the Pacific region, including the Bonin Islands. In 1832 a British merchant named Thomas Horton made an appeal to his government to establish a proprietary government in the Sandwich Islands and the Bonins.⁶¹ Three years later another British naval officer Alex Johnson spoke of Port Lloyd, the main port in Chichijima, the largest island in the Bonins, that it was said to 'afford shelter to about 40 ships and might be of great benefit to (men of war) or other if any thing was to be done along the coast of China.'⁶²

As a set of tiny islands in the middle of the ocean, the Bonins presented no commercial opportunity in themselves. Seen from the perspective of British officials, as well as Americans, it was the islands' location relative to East Asia that mattered. Alexander Simpson, the British Consul in the Sandwich Islands, wrote to the Admiralty in 1842 that the Bonin Islands' location '—so near Japan, that mysterious empire, of which the trade will one day be of immense value—gives them a peculiar importance and interest'.⁶³ In the same year Simpson appointed Mazarro, who had visited Honolulu from the Bonins, as the head of the settlers.⁶⁴

Americans also saw the potential value of the Bonins as a transportation link. In October 1850 the Honolulu-based newspaper *Polynesian* reprinted an article from *San Francisco Herald* that pointed to the necessity of setting up a coal depot on the Bonins, while

⁶⁰ Cole to Marjoribanks, 4 April 1831. RGS JMS18/2.

⁶¹ 'MISCELLANY'. *The Sheffield Independent, and Yorkshire and Derbyshire Advertiser* (Sheffield, England), Saturday, September 15, 1832; Issue 610. 19th Century British Library Newspapers: Part II.

⁶² Johnson to Maconochie, 6 October 1835. Royal Geographical Society Archive JMS18/2.

⁶³ Report by Alexander Simpson, 27 December 1842. Cited in Lionel Berners Cholmondeley, *The History of the Bonin Islands from the Year 1827 to the Year 1876, and of Nathaniel Savory, One of the Original Settlers*, 18–9.

⁶⁴ Mazarro's move to seek official support from the British consul is an interesting one, for it goes against the initial motivation for the migration, namely going beyond the reach of state authority. His apparent backtrack might have been related to the challenge he had faced from newer settlers.

estimating that the shortest trans-Pacific route was from San Francisco to Shanghai if the ship went via Hawaii and the Bonins, taking an average steamer 'thirty-two and a half days, without including stoppages'. It said that 'from San Francisco to Honolulu is twenty one hundred miles, and the next most desirable stopping place by this route [to China] would be the Bonin Islands.... This division of distances would make the shortest stages, and- furnish fine harbors.... The convenience of Honolulu is well known, and Port Lloyd in the Bonin Islands is quite equal to it.'⁶⁵

It was probably Commodore Matthew Perry who was the most optimistic among the Americans, or indeed any Westerners, about the future of the Bonins. His mission to Japan in 1853 and 1854 aimed not only to open Japan to treaty relations, but also to survey the trans-Pacific routes for commerce between California and the China coast. Two routes were under consideration: the Great Circle route, travelling along America's west coast and the Kamchatka Peninsula, the Kuril Islands and then down the Japanese archipelago; or closer to the equator line, via the Sandwich Islands and Nagasaki.⁶⁶ If the latter were chosen, the commercial opportunities for the Bonins would be tremendous. Perry predicted that if a ship crossed the Pacific via Hawaii and the Bonins, travel between Shanghai and New York could be as quick as the Shanghai-London route.⁶⁷ Before the Perry expedition, an American commander James Glynn had written of the necessity for a coal depot around Formosa, the Ryukyu Islands or the Bonins.⁶⁸ Perry was convinced of the superiority of Port Lloyd over Naha after his return from the expedition. Perry stated that the Bonins would be the only supply point for coal west of Hawaii in the Pacific.⁶⁹ He predicted that American, British and French ships would come to the Bonins in great numbers for refreshments and supplies. He even dreamed of establishing 'a religious and happy community' from which missionaries

⁶⁵ *Polynesian*. (Honolulu [Oahu], Hawaii), 26 Oct. 1850. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. Assessed at <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015408/1850-10-26/ed-1/seq-1/>> on 2 August 2015.

⁶⁶ Cole (ed.), *Yankee Surveyors*, 4.

⁶⁷ Tanaka Hiroyuki, *Bakumatsu no Ogasawara* (Tokyo: Chūkō shinsho, 1997). 93-96.

⁶⁸ Commander James Glynn to Thomas Ap. Catesby Jones, Commodore of the Pacific Squadron. Benicia, California. 21 February 1850. Cited in Cole (ed.), *Yankee Surveyors*, 7.

⁶⁹ John Curtis Perry, *Facing West*, 84.

might visit neighbouring non-Christian countries.⁷⁰ Perry took Glynn's plea one step forward by purchasing a piece of land from the inhabitants and setting up coal depots both in Naha in the Ryukyus and in Port Lloyd on Chichijima (called Peel Island by the American navy).⁷¹

Perry's act irked the British who had regarded their position in the Bonins as uncontested. When Perry's book on his Japan expedition came out, the British media disapproved of his conduct. After quoting a section on the Bonins where Perry questioned the validity of Beechey's proclamation and thus British sovereignty, the London-based newspaper *The Spectator* wrote that readers of his memoir would criticise Perry's 'highhanded' conduct, disregarding Japanese and Ryukyuan laws, 'trespassing on their regulations and rules, and using "constructive" force', unless they 'maintain the doctrine that peoples have no right to put themselves out of "comity of nations", and ... think that the end justifies the means...'.⁷² When Captain Beechey died later that year, an obituary published in *The Athenaeum*, a London-based literary magazine, made sure to point out that it was him who took formal possession of the Bonin Islands in the name of the Crown.⁷³

If Perry's visit to the Bonins raised British concerns about its claim to the island, the Crimean War made the British realise the vulnerability of their possessions in the Pacific in general, be they Australia or Singapore, and the importance of strengthening their defences. One newspaper in London opined that

the possession by Great Britain of those stations [in the Aleutian and Kurile Islands], and of the Bonin Islands (admirably situated upon the south-east coast of Japan, and which of right belong to England), would assist the carrying out of that which has

⁷⁰ Cholmondeley, *The History of the Bonin Islands*, 100-101.

⁷¹ Matthew C. Perry, William Gerald Beasley, and Roger Pineau, *The Japan expedition*.

⁷² 'THE AMERICAN EXPEDITION TO THE CHINA SEAS AND JAPAN (Book Review)', *The Spectator* 29, 1463 (12 July 1856): 748. Original emphasis.

⁷³ 'REAR-ADMIRAL F. W. BEECHEY'. *The Athenaeum* 1519 (Dec 6, 1856): 1497-1498.

long been a great national object with our statement - namely, a large and progressive extension of the British whale fishery.⁷⁴

This reference to the whaling industry, which was completely overshadowed by its American competitors who had a seventy-five percent share of the world's whaling vessels in the mid-1840s, might have been an exaggeration.⁷⁵ British interests in the Pacific emanated more from the perspective of naval strategy. In contrast, the United States was primarily concerned with business when it came to the Bonins. John Pendleton Kennedy, the U.S. secretary of the navy, explained in 1853 that the Perry expedition to the Far East was 'not for conquest but for discovery'.⁷⁶ Perry echoed this view when he spoke with George Bonham, the British governor of Hong Kong, when the latter inquired of American intentions toward the Bonins. While Perry disputed the British claim of sovereignty over the Bonins, he also stated that the coal depot he set up there was solely for the benefit of whaling ships and for the mail steamers, which 'sooner or later must be established between California and China'.⁷⁷ If the contemplated trans-Pacific route passed through the Bonins, that did not require American annexation of the Bonins. More important was safe access to the port and the capacity to resupply there. Therefore in the mid-1850s the Bonins were beginning to emerge as a point of contention between Britain and the United States with slightly different aims on each side.⁷⁸ Outside observers nevertheless painted the picture as an Anglo-American competition in which, as *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported, 'it is very probable that the British Government will reject the bargain [i.e. Perry's purchase of land for coal depot in the Bonins] and assert its exclusive right to the Archipelago'.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ RUSSIAN AMERICA, IN CONNECTION WITH THE PRESENT WAR. *The Morning Post* (London, England), Wednesday, 12 September 1855; pg. 2; Issue 25489. *19th Century British Library Newspapers: Part II*.

⁷⁵ John Perry, *Facing West: Americans and the Opening of the Pacific* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 92.

⁷⁶ Kennedy to Commander Ringgold, Washington, 28 February 1853. Cited in Cole (ed.), *Yankee Surveyors*, 7.

⁷⁷ Matthew C. Perry, William Gerald Beasley, and Roger Pineau. *The Japan expedition*, 146.

⁷⁸ Tanaka, *Bakumatsu no Ogasawara*, 242.

⁷⁹ 'WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS OF INDIA?' *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 - 1954), 23 Feb 1854, 5.

American nonchalance over territorial control of the Bonins was not mere rhetoric. Willis Williams, who accompanied Perry, noted in his diary on 17 June 1853: 'if the English would govern the island and let the coal depot be managed by the steam company, without taxation, the supremacy and interests of the two parties would be amicably managed'.⁸⁰ Perry's expedition report put it bluntly that whether the United States, Britain or the local islanders exercised sovereignty 'would be a question of little importance, so long as these ports were open to the hospitable reception of the ships of all nations seeking shelter and refreshment'.⁸¹

In sum, the British and Americans agreed on the important location of the Bonins. They also agreed on the unspoken assumption that whatever happened to the settlement in the Bonins it would not be prosperous on its own. The only difference lay in the reason why the Bonins' location was attractive. Whereas the British Navy wanted it as a refuge point for their compatriots in the China coast until the Opium War, and for the purpose of general defence of its overseas possession afterwards, American sailors saw its value in its potential as a transportation hub. Meanwhile in Edo, where some information on the Bonins had been gathered, intellectuals began to secretly discuss the desirability of sending migrants.

Japanese settlement of the Bonins, 1862-3

The Japanese during the Tokugawa era had at best a vague idea of this emerging Anglo-American attention on the Bonins. Among the Japanese during the Tokugawa era, folklore anecdotes about 'No-man's island (*Muninjima*)' were born as the result of a few episodes in which Japanese castaways had landed on the Bonins and somehow made their way back to the mainland Japan after as long as several years' away.⁸² The islands were

⁸⁰ Samuel Wells Williams and William Gerald Beasley, *A journal of the Perry Expedition to Japan (1853 -1854)* (Richmond: Japan Library, 2002).

⁸¹ Matthew C. Perry, William Gerald Beasley, and Roger Pineau, *The Japan expedition*, 146.

⁸² OK vol.3.

another border zone for Tokugawa Japan, not because they facilitated Edo's relations with foreigners – the islands did not lead anywhere – but because the shogunate banned its subjects from travelling there on purpose, despite its understanding of it as Japanese land.

By the 1840s the shogunate had learnt about the existence of settlers on the Bonins through the castaways' reports, and some people within the shogunate raised concern about the potential appropriation of the island by the British. But Edo did not take any countermeasures.⁸³ It was the news of Perry's visit in 1853 that finally brought Japanese attention to the Bonins. The initial response was mixed: one foreign magistrate proposed to 'lease' the Bonins to the United States so as to guard against the British and the French,⁸⁴ others suggested the need to develop the island by themselves.⁸⁵

At the beginning of the 1860s, the leadership of the shogunate leaned towards progressive foreign policies under senior councillors Andō Tadamasa and Kuze Hirochika; they had orchestrated the British intervention in Tsushima in the summer of 1861. It was under their orders that the shogunate sent the first official mission to the Bonins in over two centuries. The man who led the mission was Mizuno Tadanori, the most senior member among the foreign magistrates. Mizuno had initially been assigned to the delegation bound for Europe in March 1862 to negotiate the postponement of the opening of two ports and two cities as stipulated in the 1858 commercial treaties. However, he was removed from the delegation after opposition from Rutherford Alcock, the British minister in Edo, who mistrusted Mizuno due to his apparent reluctance or inability to punish the perpetrators of the recent assaults against foreigners (including Alcock himself).⁸⁶ Instead of going to Europe, Mizuno ended up leading a mission of 107 men to the Bonins, which left southwards from Edo Bay on 3 January 1862 on the *Kanrin-maru*, the steamship that had carried the shogunate's first envoy to the United States in 1860.⁸⁷

⁸³ OK vol.6.

⁸⁴ BGKM1: 569.

⁸⁵ Yasuoka, 'Ogasawara tō to Edo bakufu no seisaku', 311.

⁸⁶ Tanaka, *Bakumatsu no Ogasawara*, 130-1.

⁸⁷ Yamakata Ishinosuke (ed.), *Ogasawara Tōshi* (Tokyo: Tōyōdō, 1916), 142-4.

The *Kanrin-maru* arrived at Port Lloyd on 18 January after a difficult voyage. Mizuno met Nathaniel Savory, who by then was the effective head of the settler community. Mizuno carried a letter addressed to Savory from Anton Portman, the secretary of the U.S. legation in Edo, in which Portman spoke highly of Mizuno. Tanaka Hiroyuki has argued that the United States implicitly supported Japan's control of the Bonins as a way of preventing British control.⁸⁸

Having busied themselves in surveying Chichijima for a month, on 22 February 1862 the Tokugawa's mission announced a set of regulations that they intended to implement on the island. John Manjirō, a castaway-turned-interpreter read out the English translation to the settlers. The regulations stated that the shogunate would guarantee the foreigners' rights to the lands they had cultivated; no boundary would be made for fishing slots for Japanese or non-Japanese; the residents would receive permission from the shogunate to cut timber and mine mineral products; the residents should refrain from hunting animals beyond immediate necessity; and any births, deaths, marriages, arrivals, and departures should be reported to the shogunate.⁸⁹ According to the Japanese record, the residents answered 'that is very good'.⁹⁰ But a later report by Russell Robertson, the British consul at Yokohama who visited the island in 1876 and spoke to the residents, quoted part of the English translation which was 'somewhat unintelligible'.⁹¹ Given that most of the settlers were illiterate, it is doubtful how much the regulations were understood and remembered simply by oral presentation.

On the same day Mizuno's delegation also announced regulations relating to the port in the Bonins. It required any vessel entering the port to report to the local Japanese official; the shogunate would take no fees for arrival, departure or commercial exchange; if a ship's crew committed a crime the captain would pay a fine; if any member of the crew wished to settle in the islands he should report to the captain and follow instructions from the shogunate officials; and the same procedure should apply to those wishing to leave the islands. At this

⁸⁸ Tanaka, *Bakumatsu no Ogasawara*, 133.

⁸⁹ 'Ogasawaratō Torishimari Kisoku', 22 February 1862. OK vol.9.

⁹⁰ Meeting with Mizuno and Savory, 24 February 1862. OK vol.9.

⁹¹ Russell Robertson, 'The Bonin islands', *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* 4 (1876), 123.

point the settlers pointed out that the regulations had no clause on pilot fees. The shogunate officials asked them what they had been charging, and simply added those prices to the port regulations. The shogunate officials accepted this as a temporary measure until there was a rule on pilot fees in the three treaty ports in mainland Japan.⁹² Therefore both the island and port regulations remained only perfunctory, lacking substance or the power for enforcement. Robertson was probably right when he noted in 1876 that the rules and regulations 'appear never to have been enforced, and the present settlers seem for the most part ignorant of their existence'.⁹³

Meanwhile in Edo, on 12 March 1862 Alcock asked the senior councillors about the status of the Bonins, and claimed British sovereignty on the basis of first discovery. But he was not adamant in asserting the British claim. He told Kuze that if the port remained open for ships in distress and if residents lived 'in a state of mixed inhabitancy as in the United States, so to speak', he would not raise opposition. Kuze quickly concurred and the conversation moved on.⁹⁴

Mizuno spent six weeks in the Bonin Islands, surveying the landscape, topography and conversing with the Western residents. Two days before the mission's departure, an American whaler the *Cicero* entered Port Lloyd for procurement. The chronicler of the ship noted that 'the Japanese War Steamer had taken possession of the Bonin group'.⁹⁵ The captain, John Stivers, exchanged gifts with Mizuno.⁹⁶

The *Kanrin-maru* left Port Lloyd on 7 April but left behind thirteen people. On his return, Mizuno argued that foreign countries were inclined to possess the Bonins because of their strategic position and thus recommended that the shogunate should send around thirty

⁹² 'Ogasawaratō Minato Kisoku', OK vol.9.

⁹³ Robertson, 'The Bonin islands', 123.

⁹⁴ Andō, Kuze and Matsudaira's meeting with Alcock on 12 March 1862. OK, vol.10.

⁹⁵ New Bedford Whaling Museum Research Library ODHS 18, 'Logbook of the Cicero (Ship) of New Bedford, Mass., mastered by John R. Stivers, kept by first mate William J. Chadwick and mate Isaac Wrigley, on voyage 9 Oct. 1860-25 May 1865', 94. Accessed at http://www.whalingmuseum.org/explore/library/logbooks/digitized-logbook-cicero-odhs_18 on 24 April 2015.

⁹⁶ Tanaka, *Bakumatsu no Ogasawara*, 176.

men and women from Hachijō Island, some 170 miles south of Yokohama, to the Bonins.⁹⁷ The purpose of this migration would be to develop the island to raise profits, but also to add substance to the alleged Japanese claim as well as to alleviate overpopulation on Hachijō. On 14 June 1862, Mizuno appointed Oguri Tadamasa, a former foreign magistrate who had been the chief negotiator with the Russian navy in Tsushima in 1861, to take charge of the migration project.⁹⁸ The selection of Oguri gives some clue for the shogunate's attitude, as he was the man who had resigned from the post of foreign magistrate apparently over the disagreements with Mizuno as to how to deal with the Tsushima issue. Oguri, who had travelled to the United States in the shogunate's 1860 mission, was known to be a progressive and the evidence suggests that he had been in favour of opening a treaty port in Tsushima. His appointment for the Bonin migration mission therefore at least suggests the shogunate was ready to engage with the Western settlers on the island with a view to formulating some sort of working agreement for the governance of the Bonins.

This positive attitude towards the development of the Bonins was also present among the best informed and liberal Japanese intellectuals. Abe Rekisai, a doctor and a member of the Edo-based community of scholars of Dutch studies, petitioned the Tokugawa shogunate on 8 June 1862 that he be allowed to visit the Bonins. Abe predicted, like his contemporary observers in Britain and the United States, that the Bonins would become a hub for inter-Pacific commerce and that there was money to be made in developing the islands, including building a medical facility, which would further increase the traffic. As a botanist he saw his role in that prospect as opening a clinic and providing medical services, which he thought would help to bring the British to accept the Japanese territorial claim.⁹⁹ His appeal was successful. Four days after Abe's letter, the shogunate decided to send a group of migrants to the Bonins from Hachijō Island, and added Abe to the mission. The Japanese migrants arrived at the Bonins on 19 September.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Mizuno and Hattori to the senior councillors, June 1862 (ca.). OK, vol.11.

⁹⁸ OK vol.10. 14 June 1862.

⁹⁹ Abe Rekisai to Mizuno Tadanori and Hattori Munekazu, 8 June 1862. OK vol.10.

¹⁰⁰ OY vol.2, 35.

The migration project lasted less than a year due to events developing far away from the Bonins. In Edo Andō was attacked by an anti-foreign samurai in early 1862 and his injuries forced him to step down on 9 May. Kuze, the other senior councillor, left his position on 28 June. Their successor, Matsudaira Shungaku, took a more conservative approach to foreign affairs and focused on consolidating the domestic standing of the Tokugawa regime. The shogunate's slow response to the British demand for reparations for the Namamugi incident in September 1862, in which a British merchant had been slain, brought the two countries to the verge of war. The British squadron gathered in Edo Bay. The shogunate ordered the evacuation of civilians from central Edo. In the midst of these deteriorating Anglo-Japanese relations, the shogunate called back the migrants from the Bonin Islands on 28 June 1863, once again leaving Savory, Webb and other non-Japanese settlers as the only residents for the next twelve years.¹⁰¹

Decline of the Japan ground

The positive prospects that had once been prevalent among the British and the Americans about the Bonins also began to fade away around the same time as the Japanese retreat for two reasons. Firstly, the whaling around the Bonins peaked sometime around the mid-1850s, due to the depletion of whales in the Japan ground. In the spring of 1859, only one out of the 117 whaling ships that departed from Honolulu declared the Bonin Islands as its destination. All the rest, except for a few that did not specify the destination, headed for the Gulf of Alaska, the Arctic, or the Okhotsk Sea. Of course those from Honolulu were not the only whalers, and with no surviving local records, the exact numbers are difficult to reconstruct. Yet Savory told the Japanese officials in 1862 that in the first years of his residence thirty or forty ships used to appear in one year, while in the last few years the

¹⁰¹ For discussions on the reasons for the withdrawal, see Tabohashi Kiyoshi, 'Ogasawaratō no kaishū (2)', *Rekishi Chiri* 39:6 (1922), 454-455; Tanaka Hiroyuki, *Bakumatsu no Ogasawara*.

number was around three to five, indicating the general downward trend.¹⁰² To make matters even more difficult for the whalers, in 1859 an oil well was discovered in Pennsylvania, which placed whale oil in a fierce competition.¹⁰³ The change of the tide is apparent. In addition, the whaling industry sharply declined due to the Civil War in the United States. Upon the outbreak of the war, insurance prices for ships spiked, forcing the owners to let go of their fleets in a hurry. Destruction in the war and the sale of the ships both contributed to the downfall of the American whaling industry, which up to that point was by far the largest in the world.¹⁰⁴ The number of whaling ships in the United States fell from 569 in 1860 to 276 in 1865, thus losing half its capacity in five years.¹⁰⁵ It is undeniable that the depletion of whales in the surrounding seas and the Civil War contributed to the general decline of the traffic around the Bonins. Apart from the whalers, the islanders saw only sporadic visits by American or European naval ships.

The second source of doubt over the future of the Bonins arose in that the trans-Pacific shipping turned out not to be beneficial to its economy, betraying the expectation of many observers outside the island and the residents. A letter from a merchant in Shanghai, dated 21 May 1865, conveyed the sense of disappointment to Nathaniel Savory:

The Mail Route will be established in the course of another year, but I think it will do you no good as the projected route is from San Franc: via Sandwich Islands and north part of Japan. ... I saw a gentleman the other day upon whose veracity I can rely and he told me the contemplated route is Yokohama, so that will do you no good.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Conversation between Nathaniel Savory and Mizuno Tadanori, 26 January 1862. OK vol.8. Savory's memory seems to exaggerate the contrast, for other records suggest that the annual visitors to the Bonins never exceeded fifteen. See Langron, *Where the Whalers Went*; Michael Quin, 'Notes on the Bonin Islands,' *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 26 (1856), 232-235.

¹⁰³ Creighton, Margaret S. *Rites and Passages: The Experience of American Whaling, 1830-1870*. Cambridge University Press, 1995.

¹⁰⁴ Perry, *Facing West*, 117.

¹⁰⁵ Walter Sheldon Tower, *A History of the American Whale Fishery*, Publications of the University of Pennsylvania. Series in Political Economy and Public Law no. 20 (Philadelphia: Pub. for the University, 1907), 121.

¹⁰⁶ E. Brand to Nathaniel Savory, Shanghai, 21 May 1865. Cited in Lionel Berners Cholmondeley, *The History of the Bonin Islands from the Year 1827 to the Year 1876, and of Nathaniel Savory, One of the Original Settlers* (London: Constable & Co., ltd, 1915).

As the letter anticipated correctly, the commercial route began to connect Yokohama and San Francisco in 1867 in just twenty-four days. John Perry has noted that the ships of the PMSC could sail for a month without resupplying coal. The company had a coal base in the Midway Islands, but never had to use it.¹⁰⁷ As the Pacific transformed from a sea of whaling into that of commerce and migration, the necessity for coal depots in the Pacific declined. In short, the commercial opportunities bypassed the Bonins and with that the American interest declined.

The Japanese move for formal control

Having withdrawn the migration project in 1863, the Japanese became detached from the Bonins for a full decade. It was only in the early 1870s that the Meiji government returned its attention to the Pacific in earnest. On 17 March 1872, the German minister Max von Brandt asked the Meiji government whether the Bonins were Japanese, referring to an entry in the British Admiralty's publication *The China Pilot* which stated that the Bonins were 'formally taken possession of by Captain F.W. Beechey, H.M.S. Blossom, in 1827'.¹⁰⁸ Although the Japanese denied this, von Brandt pointed out the necessity of clarifying the ownership of the islands.¹⁰⁹ The question caught Tokyo's attention again when the *Japan Herald*, an English-language newspaper printed in Yokohama, reported in April 1873 an incident of a missing sailor in the Bonin Islands and described the latter as American territory. Clearly no agreement existed on the Bonins' status and anarchy prevailed.¹¹⁰ Since no one in the Meiji government argued for the abandonment of the Bonins, the question to them was how to proceed in order to ensure a smooth re-establishment of authority. The crucial points

¹⁰⁷ John Curtis Perry, *Facing West: Americans and the Opening of the Pacific* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1994), 233–8.

¹⁰⁸ John W. King (ed.), *The China pilot: comprising the coasts of China, Korea, and Tartary; the Sea of Japan, the Gulfs of Tartary and Amîr, and the Sea of Okhotsk : and the Babuyan, Bashi, Formosa, Meaco-sima. Lu-chu, Ladrones, Bonin, Japan, Saghalin, and Kuril islands* (London; Admiralty, 1861), 321.

¹⁰⁹ OK vol.15.

¹¹⁰ *Japan Herald*, 19 April 1874. Also cited in OK vol.15.

were twofold: streamlining the boundary by rectifying the Bonins' special status as a border zone; and doing so without getting entangled in disputes with the Western governments.

Substantial discussion within the Meiji government began in January 1873, when a mid-rank officer in the finance ministry named Nakajima Nobuyuki expressed his concern about the fact that the current situation in the Bonins did not square with the treaty terms. He argued that it was 'inconvenient' that foreign ships were freely coming to the Bonins, supposedly a closed port. Nakajima also pointed out the lack of measures to collect tax from ships sailing between Yokohama and overseas via the Bonins, because this route allowed them to dodge custom procedures.¹¹¹ Since it was impossible for Tokyo to regulate foreign vessels' access to the Bonins without having local officers, the Meiji government first tried to address the situation by modifying the regulations. Between June and August, Ōkuma Shigenobu, the finance minister, Ueno and Soejima all raised concerns about potential tax evasion through the Bonins. Ueno argued that at the least the government should issue certificates for exports through the Bonins and then 'make it a fully open port when the treaty revision is done'.¹¹² Soejima suggested that Japan should establish a penal colony in the Bonins under the administration of the navy, but he resigned from the government over the *seikanron* split in October. Having gone through the first major reshuffle of the cabinet, it was only in December that Iwakura gave the green light to the foreign ministry.¹¹³

How did the British and American ministers respond to the Japanese renewed move on the Bonins? On 13 May 1873, deputy foreign minister Ueno Kagenori and Parkes discussed the question. Parkes took a more stringent position than Alcock and argued that the retreat of the Japanese migrants in 1863 had nullified Japan's territorial claim, to which Ueno did not have a good counterargument.¹¹⁴ After this conversation was reported to London, however, the British government was more hesitant than Parkes about taking a stand on the

¹¹¹ Nakajima Nobuyuki to Mutsu Munemitsu, 28 January 1873. DNGM 6: 392.

¹¹² Ueno to Sanjō, 18 June 1873. DNGM 6: 402-3.

¹¹³ Iwakura to the foreign ministry, 23 December 1873. DNGM 6: 404-5.

¹¹⁴ DNGM 6: 397-8.

Bonins. Lord Granville, foreign secretary, having discussed the issue with the colonial secretary, wrote to Parkes that

I consider the first step which should be taken is to ascertain whether the Japanese gov. are wishing to hold possession of the Islands. You will accordingly enquire whether this is the case, and you will state that H.M. gov. will not raise any opposition to the establishment of the authority of the Japanese Gov. in the Bonin Islands but that it is of importance that they should at once take some measures to enforce law and order among the settlers.¹¹⁵

Charles DeLong, American minister, turned out to be equally understanding. In April 1873, an American named Benjamin Pease turned up at DeLong's office in Tokyo and requested confirmation that the Bonins were American territory based on Perry's visit. Pease had been living in the Bonins for the last three years and was trying to consolidate his position on the island by acquiring government backing. DeLong forwarded the inquiry to Washington D.C., but Hamilton Fish, the secretary of state, denied American authority in the Bonins because Perry's act had not received approval from Congress. DeLong provided a copy of this letter to Soejima and urged him to confirm Japanese sovereignty over the Bonins.¹¹⁶

With at least one of the two contenders amenable to the Japanese control, the Meiji government began planning annexation. As the islands had little prospect for immediate economic benefit, the finance ministry balked at making a large financial commitment.¹¹⁷ Given the generally precarious financial situation, the government needed a plan to secure the Japanese claim with minimal expenditure. On 27 March 1874, the finance and interior ministry officials put together a proposal for the incorporation of the islands. They suggested that the Japanese government hire Pease as the administrator of the island. They also

¹¹⁵ FO to Parkes, 24 September 1873. Draft. TNA FO46/164 no 44.

¹¹⁶ Tanaka, *Bakumatsu no Ogasawara*, 241-2.

¹¹⁷ Tsukamoto Shōnaishi to Gaimu Daijō. 14 June 1873. DNGM 6: 400-1.

proposed that should he refuse to accept the role, attempts should be made to purchase the whole island within a budget of 10,000 yen.¹¹⁸

The foreign ministry fiercely opposed this idea of land purchase. It claimed that any act of land purchase would have a negative impact on the debate over jurisdiction of Japan's frontiers in general, and it feared especially that it might weaken Japan's position in its negotiations with Russia over Sakhalin. 'Even if it was a tiny piece, purchasing a land developed by foreigners will cause inconvenience; whether it is a small piece or the whole island does not make a difference.... this could give excuse for the Russians regarding Karafuto [Sakhalin]'.¹¹⁹ Two months later Sugiura Yuzuru, one of the two authors of the initial proposal, dropped the idea of appointing Pease as the island administrator. He instead suggested that the government appoint an interested merchant in Yokohama.¹²⁰ However, as interior minister Ōkubo Toshimichi argued, nothing could be decided until investigating the situation on the island.¹²¹ The foreign ministry's comprehensive policy plan in May only included the port dues and pilot fees, largely copying the Tokugawa government's rules announced in 1862, but put aside the issue of tax for future deliberation.¹²²

Then the entire Japanese government got bogged down in the much more imminent and important diplomatic dispute over Taiwan. It was only after March 1875 that the government resumed formal discussion of the Bonins question.¹²³ The final problem to resolve before the dispatch of a mission was whether and how to notify the foreign ministers. Should they be told that Japan was sending officials to establish its rule? Were they going to dispute it? The finance ministry disagreed with the original plan of describing the mission to the foreign ministers as surveyors. If they lost the faith of the foreign ministers by such petty lies, 'it is hard to know what inconveniences might arise'.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Kawase Kangyōnokami and Sugiura chirinokami to Foreign, Finance and Naval ministries, 27 March 1874. OY vol.1, 41-2.

¹¹⁹ Gaimu Daishōjō to Kawase Kangyōnokami and Sugiura chirinokami, 31 March 1874. OY vol.1, 43.

¹²⁰ Sugiura chirī no kami to Gaimu Daishōjō, 30 May 1874. OY vol.1, 46.

¹²¹ Ōkubo Toshimichi to Terashima Munenori. 12 April 1875. DNGM 8: 352-3.

¹²² Gaimu Daijō to Interior Ministry, 12 May 1874. DNGM 7: 450-6.

¹²³ Ōkubo Toshimichi to Terashima, Ōkuma and Katsu. 18 March 1875. OY vol.1, 49.

¹²⁴ DNGM 7: 353.

The Meiji government was well aware that the Bonin question did not exist in isolation. Terashima, the foreign minister, saw the Japanese action in the Bonins as something that the Qing had failed to do in Taiwan, namely giving substance to their claim of sovereignty over a remote island. He thought that Japan had no reason to tell the foreign ministers what it was going to do in the Bonins, just as the Qing had no reason to notify its action in Taiwan to anyone.¹²⁵ Two officers in the Yokohama custom office saw the Bonins question in the same way as Terashima did, that is in parallel with the recent expedition to Taiwan. The only difference was that Japan's role was reversed. In the Bonins it was in the position to act first in order to avoid intrusion by the foreign powers. These officers proposed to the Meiji leadership that Japan should avoid 'trailing the path of the Qing' and having to pay a huge price as the result of inaction.¹²⁶ Petitions sent from commoners to the government to take part in the development of the Bonins used similar language to the petitions for development of Hokkaido and the colonisation of Taiwan. One letter claimed that 'in the past the neglect in the northern border presented its negative effect today, if we worried about the southern islands today and repeat the mistake tomorrow, we should not abandon even a remote and useless island, since otherwise the imperial state's realm would inevitably become someone else's possession'.¹²⁷ Another letter sent in October 1875 by two former samurai pledged that they would 'crush bones and develop the entire island and then possess the south-western islands, thereby expanding the great imperial Japan's realm'.¹²⁸ While there was a slight difference between the understanding of the government and the general public, they agreed on the desirability to confirm Japanese rule by sending officials and migrants.

The final decision to notify the foreign ministers about the dispatch of officials was made on 8 October 1875, and the Japanese officials arrived on Chichijima on 24 November. According to the report by Russell Robertson, the British consul in Yokohama who landed on the island two days after the Japanese, as soon as they disembarked the Japanese told Thomas

¹²⁵ Terashima to Ōkubo, 19 April 1875. OY vol.1, 50-51.

¹²⁶ Furuya Yukitsuna and Nakao Toshikazu to Sain, 18 February 1875. OY vol.1, 52-4.

¹²⁷ Tani Yōkei to Shūgiin, 16 November 1869. OY vol.1, 57-8.

¹²⁸ Kawamura Keiichirō and Yoshioka Hajime to Ōkubo, October 1875. OY vol.1, 64-5.

Webb, one of the residents, to gather as many islanders as possible within a few hours. They then hastily read out in English a proclamation of their intention to administer the affairs of the island, knowing that, Robertson surmised, the British ship was on their heels.¹²⁹ The effect of this proclamation, however, met with a practical difficulty, for Robertson wrote that ‘Mr Webb informed me that from the manner in which the words were delivered in English by Mr Hayashi [one of the Japanese delegates], their meaning was almost unintelligible to him’.¹³⁰

One article read:

If any person or persons come on shore from any vessel that may be come into this port who shall have pleasure hunting and waste upon the land of any inhabitants and also committed any of such he or they shall be seized and transported to the Captain of their vessel.¹³¹

This was a repetition of the 1862 mission led by Mizuno, when a similar proclamation apparently had not achieved much. Yet the Meiji officials remained sanguine about their achievement, interpreting Robertson’s silence as ‘implicit acknowledgement (*mokunin*)’ of the Japanese rights.¹³² The delegation reported to their ministers in Tokyo that the residents welcomed Japanese rule and Robertson did not show explicit opposition.¹³³ To their minds, the ‘recollection’ project was successful. With the declaration of territorial sovereignty, Obana Sakusuke, the interior ministry official stationed in the Bonins, demanded that the settlers choose between their original nationality and Japanese. One British and one Spanish resident opted to switch to Japanese nationality in 1876, which Obana saw as ‘an honour for the country’.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Parkes to Durby, Tokyo, 27 December 1875. TNA FO46/195 no76 incl..

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Russell Robertson, ‘The Bonin islands’, *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* 4 (1876), 123. Article 5 of the port regulation.

¹³² OY vol.1, 86.

¹³³ Obana, Nezu, Hayashi and Tanabe to The Four Ministers. 19 December 1875. OY vol.1, 80.

¹³⁴ OY vol.2, 33, 53.

By the end of 1875, Parkes's lack of interest in the Bonins made a stark contrast to his obsessive proposal for the occupation of Port Hamilton.¹³⁵ Parkes wrote curtly of the Bonins on 27 December, after receiving the report from Robertson on the Japanese proclamation of control: 'The islands, though fertile, are so small in extent, and possess such indifferent anchorages that they can scarcely be regarded as a valuable acquisition'.¹³⁶ Having faced the deaf ears of the Foreign Office, Parkes had no reason to call for maintaining any presence on the Bonins.

The islanders largely welcomed the Meiji government's attempt to establish sovereignty. Since the 1840s they had suffered from piracy and bandits against whom redress seldom took place. Their very point in coming to the Bonins was to avoid having to deal with the state apparatus; they did not want to be governed. But they had learnt the hard way that not being governed also meant not being protected by law. It is all too well to point out the brutality and the vagaries of imperialism around the Japanese archipelago in the late nineteenth century and blame Tokyo for becoming mimetic imperialists, but that perspective cannot go far in explaining the complex, diverse nature of the boundaries that emerged as a result as well as their whereabouts. Japan's control of the Bonins in no way represents its successful expansion into the Pacific; it was primarily the result of a compromise between the Americans and the British who did not want to see the islands go to their rivals. London and Washington put Japan in place because they saw that the latter was so weak that they could give them the Bonins without worrying about the consequences. That was the way in which the balance of favour was maintained around the Bonins. In spite of the lip service they kept paying about protecting their nationals, Washington and London effectively disowned the Bonin Islanders, although some unofficial assistance for the residents' daily necessities kept coming from Lady Parkes after the Japanese incorporation.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ See chapter 4 for Parkes's proposal to occupy Port Hamilton.

¹³⁶ Parkes to Durby, Tokyo, 27 December 1875. TNA FO46/195 no76.

¹³⁷ Hodges to Lady Parkes, 22 February 1878. Yokohama. Cambridge University Library MS Parkes 20/3. The shipped goods included tea, coffee, sugar and soap, and clothes.

The Ryukyu Kingdom and its aftermath

The historical accounts of Japan's annexation of Ryukyu are extensive. They have typically explained it alongside the Taiwan Expedition and by doing so taken the view that the Meiji government extended its firm control over the island chain by claiming the homogeneity of the Ryukyuans and the Japanese. However, as was discussed above, many of the proponents of the Taiwan expedition did not consider Ryukyu to be the primary factor. The Taiwan Expedition and the resulting protocol signed by Ōkubo in October 1874 strengthened the 'Ryukyuans equal Japanese' thesis, but it was an outcome rather than a cause. Thus it is necessary to look at the Ryukyu Kingdom itself in order to understand how the Meiji government put Ryukyu within its boundary. Oguma Eiji has shown that Japan tried to assimilate the Ryukyuans by providing education in Japanese, whilst they themselves accepted Western technology and culture. However, his explanation deals mainly with the post-1879 period and as for the reasons why Japan annexed the Ryukyu Kingdom, despite the financial burden, Oguma, as well as other scholars, simply refer to Tokyo's fear of foreign occupation of Ryukyu.¹³⁸

As in other places around the Japanese archipelago, depicting Ryukyu as Japan's border zone is by definition a Japan-centred view that only begins to scratch the surface of the region's political order that developed over time. The question could be approached from another direction: why did Ryukyu fail to survive as an independent state? Why did it fail to define its own boundary around itself and to become a separate sovereign state from Japan and China, despite the fact that it signed treaties with the Western countries – a standard way to 'open' a country according to the eyes of nineteenth-century imperialists?

The first thing to note as a precondition is the kingdom's dual subjectivity to China and Japan. Ryukyu was a proactive participant in the China-centred tributary trade network,

¹³⁸ Oguma, 'Nihonjin' no Kyōkai, 20-27; Sims, *Political History*, 40; Kim, *The Last Phase*, 280; Suzuki, *Civilization*, 154.

sending by far the largest number of tributary ships to Beijing. It had a trading house in Fuzhou where Ryukyuan officials resided and handled business, just as Tsushima officials lived in the *waegwan* in Pusan. Even though the latter was much bigger in size, the Ryukyuans enjoyed greater freedom of movement in Fuzhou than the Tsushima officials did and the envoys travelled to Beijing for audiences with the emperor. The reason for this active participation was more political than commercial. Gregory Smits has noted that, in financial terms, tributary relations most likely ended up as a net loss for the Ryukyu Kingdom but that it maintained the relationship for political reasons, whilst bringing benefits to the Ryukyuan aristocracy and the Satsuma domain.¹³⁹ At the same time as it engaged in these ritual-based ties with China, Ryukyu accepted the Satsuma domain's military dominance and the terms under which it sent annual tribute tax to Kagoshima.¹⁴⁰ Ryukyu received envoys from the Qing, while Satsuma officials resided in Shuri, Ryukyu's capital.

Ryukyu in the seventeenth and the eighteenth century served as Satsuma's arm for foreign trade, an activity which the Tokugawa Shogunate banned the other feudal lords, aside from Tsushima, from engaging in. As Robert Hellyer has shown, by the early nineteenth century the Satsuma-Ryukyu trade route to and from China began to compete with the Shogunate's trade in Nagasaki. The backing from Satsuma, which provided part of the funding for the tributary trade, and its competition with Edo partly explain Ryukyu's active participation.¹⁴¹ Ryukyu and Satsuma thought it best to hide their ties to China so as to ensure the continuation of the tributary trade. For instance, the Satsuma men went into temporary hiding in the northern part of the Okinawa Island, taking all their ships with them, when the Chinese envoys visited Shuri.

The Ryukyu Kingdom, therefore, was entrenched in the regional trade network of the China Seas, dealing mainly with Japanese silver (later marine products) and Chinese silk and medicinal items. It was, in this sense, a border zone that connected Fuzhou and Kagoshima.

¹³⁹ Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, 34-5.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁴¹ Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, 130-2. Also see *Ibid.*, 23-7.

Its political and economic structure was under the heavy influence of the policies of and events in Satsuma and the Qing.

It was no surprise therefore that the political changes in China and Japan had ripple effects on the fate of Ryukyu. By the end of the eighteenth century the Qing had greatly reduced the tributary trade with Ryukyu, putting a severe strain on the latter's economy.¹⁴² Having no other choice, Ryukyu deepened its economic dependence on Satsuma.

Further complicating the economic situation of the Ryukyu Kingdom was its contact with Western countries. From the early nineteenth century onwards, Western ships had made sporadic appearances in Ryukyu, but their overtures to Shuri began with the end of the Opium War. Both Britain and France sent Christian missionaries and demanded a treaty to give their nationals safe access to its ports. Unable to ward them off by itself, Ryukyu asked for help from the continent. But in the meetings with the British and the French in Canton, the Qing officials failed to persuade them to withdraw the missionaries. Satsuma and the shogunate were alarmed by this development, but the shogunate refrained from getting itself involved and left the issue in Satsuma's hands.¹⁴³

Faced with the European and American demands for trade with the Kingdom, Satsuma's response was bold and ambitious. It attempted to seize this opportunity to increase its grip on the Ryukyus and expand international trade via the Kingdom. The order from the domain's reformist lord Shimazu Nariakira to his aide and the Ryukyu representatives in Satsuma in February 1857 included the expansion of Fuzhou trade, the creation of a depot in Taiwan, the commencement of trade with France and the Netherlands in Ryukyu, importation of steamers and arms from France, the export of old arms to China, and the dispatch of students from Satsuma and Ryukyu to Britain, France and the United States. Even though the Ryukyu officials were reticent about these changes, the aide that Shimazu sent to Ryukyu forced them to accept the terms and sacked the rebellious officials. Under Nariakira's instructions, Ryukyu held negotiations with the resident French missionaries and came very

¹⁴² Arano, *Kinseiteki Sekai*, 21; Tomiyama Kazuyuki, *Ryukyu Ōkoku no Gaikō to Ōken* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2004).

¹⁴³ Heller, *Defining Engagement*, 152-68; Namihira, *Ryukyu Heigō*, 74.

close to starting trading relations, with the signing of a contract for Satsuma's purchase of a French vessel in July. But things were turned around when on 2 September the news of Nariakira's death arrived in Ryukyu. Shimazu Hisamitsu, half-brother of Nariakira, came to power and cancelled the progressive policy. Three Ryukyuan officials who had worked under Nariakira's order to negotiate with the French and learnt their language were brutally interrogated over made-up charges and persecuted. The result was the death of one officer in prison, another sent off to exile after being tortured, and the last was incarcerated in a temple for 500 days.¹⁴⁴ The purge wiped out the mood of reform from the island. When in 1863, the Kagoshima bombardment by the British completely transformed Hisamitsu's view of Western military technology to the extent that he received Harry Parkes in Kagoshima in 1866, no officials with experience and training for negotiating trade pacts were left in the Ryukyus. The last officer who had worked under Nariakira apparently committed suicide by jumping off a boat when he had been summoned by the now reform-keen Hisamitsu.¹⁴⁵ Hisamitsu's turn toward reform was not followed in the Ryukyus, where conservative officials continued to suppress those who showed curiosity in Western languages and technologies, and instead maintained Confucian learning as the bulwark of bureaucratic training.¹⁴⁶

All told, the decline of the tributary trade and the negotiations with the Westerners under the whimsical leadership of Satsuma left Ryukyu economically hard-pressed and politically immobile, more reliant on Satsuma than ever before. In this sense Ryukyu's situation was similar to that of Tsushima, as discussed in chapter 1 and 2, which also suffered from chronic food shortages and piled up debts to local merchants, Osaka merchants and foreign financiers. Their collective demise speaks to the decline of the tributary trade network as a whole. The treaties that Ryukyu concluded with the United States, France, and the Netherlands spoke more to Satsuma's willingness to reap the benefits of trade by bypassing the restrictions imposed by Edo, than to the Westerners' imposition of their terms.

¹⁴⁴ Nishizato, 'Ryukyu shobun ron', 344-5.

¹⁴⁵ Namihira, *Ryukyu Heigō*, 74-82.

¹⁴⁶ Kerr, *Okinawa*, 347-52; *Okinawa Kenshi Kakuronhen* vol.4, 606-7.

By the end of the 1850s Ryukyu found itself in an uncertain dual diplomatic structure of treaty relations with the West on the one hand and the old ties with China and Japan on the other, though the latter were beginning to crumble. The following decade was a time of economic hardship for the Ryukyuans. In 1860 Satsuma, itself in a financial predicament, resumed exacting a sugar tax on Ryukyu that had been suspended since 1852. From 1865 onwards the Satsuma merchants in Kagoshima dealing with Ryukyu officials increased the interest rates on their loans. Furthermore Satsuma implemented drastic fiscal reform within its own domain including the revision of exchange rates between copper and iron coins. The Ryukyuans followed suit each time the exchange rate was revised for the sake of the smooth continuation of its economic ties with Satsuma, but this devastated the local economy with confusion, speculation and rampant inflation.¹⁴⁷ Another source of pressure on the Ryukyu economy was the reception of the Qing envoy who officially bestowed Shō Tai with the status of Ryukyuan king – a ceremony long overdue due to the Qing's domestic disruption by the Taiping Rebellion and the Arrow War. From August 1866 until the end of the year, the Qing mission, consisting of 434 men, stayed in Ryukyu. The cost of hosting them fell on the Ryukyuan royal house and drained what remained of its cash. It had to rely heavily on donations from local wealthy merchants and while the preparation of the embassy was taking place in Fuzhou the Ryukyuan officials pleaded with the Qing to limit the size of the delegation and the amount of the products for official trade. By 1872 Ryukyu was on the verge of bankruptcy, not unlike Tsushima around the same time.¹⁴⁸

What saved Ryukyu from this financial abyss was a loan of ¥200,000 from the finance ministry of the Meiji government. But at the same time the government in Tokyo began dismantling Ryukyu's bureaucratic structure, a harbinger of the eventual annexation in 1879.¹⁴⁹ After the abolition of the feudal domains the Meiji government tentatively put Ryukyu under the administration of Kagoshima prefecture, the former Satsuma domain. Yet this presented an inconsistency in the eyes of Meiji officials. Ryukyu could not keep sending

¹⁴⁷ Nishizato, *Shinmatsu*, 247-256.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 257-266; *Okinawa Kenshi Kakuronhen* vol.5, 20-21.

¹⁴⁹ *Okinawa Kenshi Kakuronhen* vol.5, 21.

tributary missions to China if it were to be under Tokyo's rule. The Meiji leaders, many of them from Satsuma, thought the government needed to have clear and complete jurisdiction over Ryukyu. The report of the killing of Ryukyuan men in Taiwan, which reached Soejima in September 1872, and LeGendre's arrival to Tokyo in October, was the catalyst for devising a policy to link the Ryukyu question with Taiwan. But the demotion of Shō Tai to being no more than a Japanese peer, widely seen as the first decisive act by the Meiji government to bring an end to the dual subordination of Ryukyu, took place before Soejima met LeGendre. The move for transforming Ryukyu had begun before the Taiwan issue emerged.¹⁵⁰

Japan did not have a free hand in this. Even though Ryukyu never resorted to armed resistance, its officials throughout the 1870s begged Tokyo to allow them to maintain the status quo. Progressive voices within Ryukyu called for reform by inviting Japanese officials. Some young officers worked with the foreign ministry official Matsuda Michiyuki — who took charge of the Ryukyu question and visited Ryukyu once in 1875 and twice in 1879 — to promote modernisation, but they never gained enough momentum to change Ryukyu's desire to stick to the old ways.¹⁵¹ The most drastic among their measures was the exile of high-profile conservative officials led by Kōchi Kōjō, a member of the royal family, to the Ryukyuan trading house in Fuzhou after 1876.¹⁵² Kōchi used this opportunity to go to Tianjin and contacted Li Hongzhang. The Qing then filed a protest through the newly arriving minister to Tokyo, He Ruzhang, over Tokyo's policy towards Ryukyu, but never exerted enough pressure to alter Japan's course.¹⁵³ The Qing foreign policy makers – the Zongli Yamen as well as Li Hongzhang in Tianjin – took a measured approach on the Ryukyu question vis-à-vis Tokyo, for it deemed cooperation with Tokyo as necessary to face the

¹⁵⁰ Ibid..

¹⁵¹ For the reformer Ryukyuan officials in the 1870s, see Tokuyama Kanzō, *Ryukyu Shobun: tanbōjin Ōwan Chōkō* (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1990).

¹⁵² Okinawa Kenshi Kakuronhen vol.5, 43.

¹⁵³ Nishizato, 'Ryukyu shobun ron', 351-2. Itō Teruo points out that the Qing's haphazard protest marked a contrast to its response to the imminent loss of Vietnam and Korea, in which cases it went to war. Itō, 'Ryukyu shobun to Ryukyu kyūkoku undō', in Kuwahara and Gabe (eds.), *Ezochi to Ryukyu*, 258-61.

Westerners, especially the Russians.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless as Li acknowledged in May 1878, the loss of Ryukyu would constitute symbolic damage to the Qing's status.¹⁵⁵

The takeover of Shuri castle by the Meiji government officials led by Matsuda took place on 30 March 1879. Since Ryukyu had not maintained a military force of its own, all it took was the presence of 400 Japanese soldiers and some 160 policemen.¹⁵⁶ Within two weeks the Meiji government declared the establishment of Okinawa prefecture, but the Ryukyuans continued their protest by appealing to the Qing for intervention. As Nishizato Kikō has argued, the Ryukyuans continued diplomatic resistance through 'exiles to the Qing' (*dasshjinjin*), who proved to be an important factor in the course of Ryukyu's last days.

The Qing could not ignore the *dasshjinjin* requests for intervention for fear of the snowballing effect on other tributary countries.¹⁵⁷ Yet the Zongli Yamen and Li could also not risk antagonising Japan at a time when China faced a potential conflict with Russia over the northwestern border in the Ili region. They thus sought diplomatic arbitration from the former American president Ulysses Grant, who happened to visit China and Japan on his way back to his country after a circumnavigatory tour. Grant arrived in Tianjin on 27 May 1879, and in the following two weeks he held discussions with Li in Tianjin and Prince Kung of the Zongli Yamen in Beijing. Prince Kung made an official request for American arbitration over the Ryukyu question on 3 June.¹⁵⁸

Grant delivered the Qing's message to the Meiji emperor and the Japanese politicians during his month-long stay in Japan. At his audience with the emperor in Tokyo on 10 August, Grant conveyed the Chinese perspective on the issue, and added:

She [the Qing] feels this more keenly now, because she feels that the case of Formosa was a humiliation. Suffering from that remembrance, she looks upon Japan's action as

¹⁵⁴ Nishizato, *Shinmatsu*, 300-308.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 304.

¹⁵⁶ Kerr, *Okinawa*, 378.

¹⁵⁷ Okamoto Takashi has argued that rather than the loss of Ryukyu itself, the Qing feared the aftereffect in Vietnam and Korea. Okamoto, 'Zokkoku/hogo to jishu: Ryukyu, Betonamu, Chōsen', in Wada Haruki et al., eds., *Higashi Ajia Sekai no Kindai* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2010), 154.

¹⁵⁸ *Okinawa Kenshi Kakuronhen*, vol.5, 53.

wanting in respect and friendship, and as indicating a disputation upon the part of Japan to again occupy Formosa and in doing so bar the channel between China and the Pacific Ocean. ... The importance of peace between China and Japan is so great that each country should make concessions to each other. I have heard it suggested, but I have no authority to speak on the subject, that a boundary line running between the islands so as to give China a wide channel to the Pacific would be accepted. I have no idea how true it is. I mention it to show that while in the minds of Chinese statesmen there is a feeling of anger, they are open to accommodation.¹⁵⁹

The wording was cautious, but the message was clear. The Qing was ready to compromise on a new arrangement for Ryukyu if Japan was willing. Li initially espoused the idea of splitting the Ryukyu Islands into three parts, with the northern Amami Group going to Japan, the middle Okinawa Island resuming independence as the Ryukyu Kingdom, and the western Miyako-Yaeyama group becoming a Chinese territory. However, in light of the necessity to maintain good relations with Japan in the face of the Russians on the northwestern frontier, by the end of the preliminary negotiations with the Japanese delegation led by foreign minister Inoue Kaoru and the Japanese minister to Beijing, Shishido Tamaki, Li accepted a two-way split.¹⁶⁰ This two-way division was a plan to cede the Miyako-Yaeyama group to the Qing on the assumption that Beijing would then give it back to the Ryukyuans for them to restore their kingdom, while the rest of the island chain would remain in the hands of the Japanese. The official negotiations between Zongli Yamen and the Japanese delegation began on 18 August 1880 in Beijing. As a *quid pro quo* for giving up the Miyako-Yaeyama group, Japan demanded MFN treatment in China, which would allow Japanese merchants to go beyond the treaty ports and access the Chinese interior just as Western merchants did.

The Chinese, in turn, demanded the extradition of the former Ryukyuan king Shō Tai and his family so as to restore him to the throne in the Miyako-Yaeyama group. The Japanese

¹⁵⁹ Yokoyama Manabu, *Ryukyu Shozoku Mondai Kankei Shiryo* vol.3 (Tokyo: Honpō Shoseki, 1980), 21-22.

¹⁶⁰ Fumoto, 'Kakutei sareru kokkyō', 163.

resisted this and pointed to the fact that Li had hosted an exiled family member of Shō Tai in Tianjin.¹⁶¹ By doing so the Japanese were implicitly giving a green light to the restoration of the Ryukyu Kingdom on a limited scale. For the foreign ministry in Tokyo, the abandonment of the logic that asserted Ryukyu to be a part of Japan and the loss of the westernmost part of the island chain were a price worth paying for a step forward in treaty revision and access to the Chinese market on an equal footing with the Western merchants. This pragmatic approach, led by Inoue, complicates the conceptual interpretation of some historians that Japan aspired to achieve the status of a ‘civilised’ nation by acting as a ‘civilising power’ towards other peoples.

The two countries agreed on the two-way division on 21 October. The Qing officials then asked for ten days before signing as they needed to report to the emperor. However when Li revealed the agreement to a Ryukyuan exile from the royal family, he refused to become a king in a curtailed kingdom. Moreover, the *dasshjin* group in Fuzhou hurried north to oppose the signing as soon as they heard the news. One of them committed suicide as a means of reprimanding the Sino-Japanese deal. Faced with these Ryukyuan protests Li recommended postponement.¹⁶² This last-minute change of mind on the part of the Qing government infuriated the Japanese and Shishido, the minister, left Beijing on 20 January 1881 blaming the Chinese for the collapse of the deal.

One month later the Qing managed to reach an agreement with Russia on the Ili border issue which gave the Guangxu emperor breathing space to stand firm on the Ryukyu question. In March, the emperor ordered the Zongli Yamen and Li to re-negotiate with Tokyo over the Ryukyu issue.¹⁶³ The Japanese grudgingly came back to the unofficial negotiations in Tianjin, due to their need to push treaty revision forward. Foreign minister Inoue, in his instructions to

¹⁶¹ *Okinawa Kenshi Kakuronhen*, vol.5, 53-61.

¹⁶² Nishizato Kikō has emphasised that this opposition from the Ryukyuans led the Qing court to reopen the debate. See Nishizato, *Shinmatsu; Okinawa Kenshi Kakuronhen*, vol.5, 63-6.

¹⁶³ Historians have begun to turn their attention to the link between Sino-Russian border issues and the Sino-Japanese disputes over Ryukyu. For instance Yamashiro Tomofumi has argued that Li Hongzhang had feared a Russo-Japanese coalition if the Qing failed to conclude an amicable solution with Russia over the Ili border question. But when the Sino-Russian negotiations made a breakthrough Li no longer had to worry about the potential danger of Russo-Japanese coalition. Yamashiro, ‘Nisshin Ryukyu kizoku mondai to Shinro Iri kyōkai mondai’, *Okinawa Bunka Kenkyū* 37 (March 2011), 58-66.

the Japanese consul in Tianjin, compromised to the point where he condoned the handing over of Shō Tai and the restoration of the Kingdom in the Miyako-Yaeyama Group with Shō on the throne. The problem, however, was that this was not the wish of the Ryukyuans. The exiled Ryukyu officials in China continued to plead for help from Beijing for the recovery of the entire Ryukyu Island chain as their kingdom and refused to accept anything less. It is true that the restoration of the kingdom in the Miyako-Yaeyama group would have been unrealistic because, as the *dasshjin* group pointed out, these two islands lacked sufficient space and agricultural capacity to sustain the population of the entire country. But by destroying this deal the Ryukyuans squandered the last chance to save their kingdom. After 1881 no outsiders would intervene on behalf of Ryukyu, not even the Qing. The movement of the *dasshjin* continued until the Sino-Japanese war in 1894, which, even though the Ryukyuans gathered in temples in Shuri and prayed for a Qing victory, ended in Japanese triumph.¹⁶⁴

This postscript to the Ryukyu Shobun suggests that the Japanese government had something more important than the territorial integrity of the Ryukyu Islands under its gaze. Their acceptance of the restoration of the Ryukyu Kingdom in Miyako-Yaeyama poses a question about the validity of the ‘fear of foreign encroachment’ theory to explain the Ryukyu annexation. If the government had been apprehensive about a possible foreign seizure of Ryukyu, it seems contradictory to agree to the restoration of the kingdom albeit on a smaller scale. The initial move in the early 1870s to strip Ryukyu of its diplomatic function might have originated in the fear of foreigners annexing the kingdom, but by the beginning of the 1880s such fear had abated. The transformation of Ryukyu into Okinawa prefecture therefore cannot be sufficiently explained solely by Tokyo’s perceived imperative to act before other governments. It was as much the result of the Ryukyuans’ intransigence as the Meiji government’s wish to annex the kingdom.

¹⁶⁴ *Okinawa Kenshi Kakuronhen* vol.5, 88-91; Namihira, *Ryukyu Heigō*, ch.5.

Conclusion: Japan's southward expansion?

What these case studies begin to tell us is that Japan's actions on its southern boundary were characterised by the lack of an imminent security threat (which nevertheless did not ameliorate the fear that Japan's inaction could lead to someone else's gain) and paradoxically by the weak position of the Meiji government vis-à-vis other foreign powers, namely the Qing, Britain and the United States. The border zones themselves were weak in terms of political organisation and financial sustainability.

The expedition to Taiwan met unexpected international opposition from Britain, the United States and the Qing, forcing the Japanese soldiers back home, many of them infected with malaria. Here the main reason that the Meiji government could not force the cancellation of the mission stemmed from the new Meiji government's need to overcome domestic unrest. This was evident to contemporary observers. Parkes thought that the expedition was 'foolish'¹⁶⁵ and the Japanese 'had no "case"', but they went in 'to satisfy samurai'.¹⁶⁶ Li Hongzhang, irked by the Japanese aggression in Taiwan and Ryukyu, noted to the emperor that Ōkubo's demand stemmed from the need to deal with domestic unrest.¹⁶⁷

The Taiwan expedition taught the Japanese policymakers a mixed lesson. On the one hand, Tokyo paid a high price for miscalculating Beijing's response to Japan's attempted seizure of eastern Taiwan. On the other hand, the fact that Ōkubo managed to win an indemnity from the Qing demonstrated that Japan should avoid leaving its own border zones unattended. Thus the Meiji leadership thought that it had to claim the Bonins, even though, in the words of Ōkuma Shigenobu, there was 'no gain in owning and no pain in losing' the islands.¹⁶⁸ The other contenders for sovereignty in Washington and London no longer had any enthusiasm about the economic prospects of the Bonins, and were happy to see Japanese rule as opposed to some other Western power gaining control.

¹⁶⁵ Parkes to D. Brooke Robertson, 14 April 1874. Cited in Frederick Victor Dickins, *The Life of Sir Harry Parkes*, 190.

¹⁶⁶ Parkes to D. Brooke Robertson, 23 June 1874. Cited in *ibid.*, 192-3.

¹⁶⁷ Cited in Nishizato, *Shinmatsu*, 292-3.

¹⁶⁸ Ōkuma to Sanjō, 12 January 1874. OY vol.1, 13-4.

The fall of the Ryukyu Kingdom represented the end of the commercial network that had been based on tributary trade and the Tokugawa's *bakuhā* system. There is a striking parallel between the case of the Ryukyu Kingdom and the Tsushima domain, both of which suffered from the long-term decline of the tributary trade and the resulting fall in revenue. They were also afflicted by internal strife, which prevented the reform-oriented voices from becoming dominant. The conservative faction of each polity appealed to the senior partner in the tributary relationship so as to maintain the status quo, but ultimately failed. By the time Japan took full control of these islands and nullified their special position within the regional order, they were effectively bankrupt and had no choice but to accept Tokyo's bailout.

Summarising this process of reorganisation into a singular shift from un-demarcated border zones to territorial sovereign state does not do justice to its complexity. To begin with, the starting point for each region was different; Japan was surrounded by diverse principles that enabled (or limited) inter-regional contacts. At one extreme there were places like Ryukyu, where there existed a delicately calibrated system of interaction created by the people who reconciled the opposing worldviews of China and Japan. Tsushima shared many features with Ryukyu and functioned as a buffer between Korea and Japan. On the other side of the spectrum were the Bonins and eastern Taiwan, where the settlers or indigenous peoples had no connection with modern political institutions. People from the surrounding regimes, including Japan, had had only a weak involvement with these 'frontiers', due to their relative commercial insignificance, small local population, and climatic difficulty. Hokkaido falls into this category to an extent, though it was unique in that the Tokugawa shogunate and the Meiji government had dominated the lives of the indigenous Ainu for a longer time. This was the Japanese effort to defend its realm by defining its nationhood – first by emphasising the difference between the Ainu and the Japanese; then later assimilating them into the Japanese nation.¹⁶⁹ But by the late-nineteenth century the political leaders such as Ōkubo, Parkes and Li who took up the task of bringing the modern state system into the region regarded these

¹⁶⁹ Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan*.

areas as potential sources of insecurity for their respective countries, where the vacuum of sovereignty could tip the balance of favour and trigger a territorial scramble.

These diverse places took equally varied paths to fall within or out of the Japanese boundary. It is impossible to reduce them to a sanguine narrative of Japan's successful defence of its territorial integrity and independence in the face of Western imperialism, or the result of Japan's mimetic imperialism. For the formation of Japan's boundary was also a story of the death of these small polities and the political systems that they embodied. It is the story of the confusion and adjustment that resulted from the interactions between different systems and principles for governance, which ultimately led to the convergence into territorial sovereign states and their dependencies.

Conclusion

This thesis has been an attempt to describe the pivotal decade and a half which saw the emergence of territorial boundaries around the Japanese archipelago in the late-nineteenth century and to investigate the regional mechanism as well as local environment that conditioned it. With the case studies of three border zones, it has introduced a two-layered argument: that the conditions for the transformation had local origins in each border zone, and that the establishment of Japanese sovereignty in these border zones was enabled by the balance of favour that deterred territorial acquisition by the Western powers.

At the peripheral level, most of the border zones experienced a fundamental reconfiguration of their existing political institutions. In Sakhalin, following the establishment of local settlements both by the Russians and the Japanese, the southern tip of the island turned into an ethnic mosaic. In addition to the few thousand indigenous peoples who had lived there, Russian convict exiles and soldiers in fact came from various parts of the tsarist empire, and so too did Japanese settlers. The result was racially diverse communities with an uneasy power balance, uncertain economic prospects and a tenuous rule of law. In the Kuril Islands, the Aleut and the Ainu hunters experienced only a nominal shift of rule from the Russian merchants to the Kaitakushi in the course of the 1870s and the 1880s. The island of Tsushima, once an integral piece of the intricate relationship between Korea and Japan, ran into a financial dead-end and became part of Nagasaki prefecture with no special status attached. Ryukyu followed a similar path in 1879, although royalists continued to yearn for the restoration of the kingdom well into the 1890s. Eastern Taiwan was confirmed to be part of the Qing Empire in the agreement between Beijing and Tokyo in 1874, though this would have meant little to the aboriginal population there. The Bonin Islanders, following a series of acts of violence by the crews of vessels that called on the islands, sought to have some legal order under Japanese sovereignty.

At the metropole level, what underpinned the international relations around the Japanese archipelago was the Western diplomats' fear of over-commitment and the potential

that they could ignite a territorial scramble against Japan, which was neither financially feasible nor strategically desirable to them. With that precondition, Britain's preferred method – free trade under the treaties that protected its merchants' rights – set the tone for the interactions between the Japanese and the Westerners. The key component of this scheme was the MFN status, because it gave the Western treaty powers an opportunity to push their interests in a coordinated manner. As seen in the 1864 shelling of Shimonoseki, the Western powers (barring Russia) saw the benefit of united action in pursuit of the fullest implementation of the treaty terms.

Yet the imperialists' pressure on Japan based on the treaty system had limitations in two ways. The MFN clause did not allow them to cooperate over territorial acquisition, and anything more than a few treaty ports did not seem to meet the cost. The acquisition of overseas territories in East Asia came with the costs of trade administration, provision of security, and the maintenance of a consular service. Few places around Japan were worth such trouble. If one indeed had striven for territorial concession from Japan, the inevitable consequence would have been demands by other treaty signatories for equivalents. The best scenario for the treaty powers in the border zones, therefore, was the Meiji government's exercise of sovereignty with all the treaty powers having equal access to Japanese ports.

By the early 1870s the Meiji government officers in various parts of the country began to notice the existence of this balance. The fear of a Russian invasion of Hokkaido, which had dominated the thinking of the top leaders in the summer of 1869 gradually faded away, though it had a much longer life among the psyche of the general public. Ōkubo, who wrote in 1869 that the Russian threat to Hokkaido kept him up in the night, no longer spoke of the risk of Russian advance beyond Sakhalin in November 1873, following the clash in Kushunkotan earlier that year.¹ Perhaps most tellingly, the Meiji government felt comfortable enough to send half of the top leadership overseas to negotiate treaty revision for an initially planned period of ten months (which ended up close to two years) by 1871.

¹ Ōkubo to Iwakura, 12 November 1873. Reprinted in *Ōkubo Toshimichi Monjo* vol.5, 145-6. On the series of incidents between the Russian and the Japanese settlers in Kushunkotan in April 1873, see ch.4.

That said, the Meiji government never freed itself from the fear that if the balance tipped in one place the dominoes might start to fall. The negotiators for the Meiji government knew that negotiations in one border zone would always have an impact on the others. In 1870 the Kaitakushi officers negotiating with the Prussian merchant Reinhold Gaertner over his ninety-nine-year land lease near Hakodate defended the government's demand for reclamation on the grounds that similar and escalated demands from other parties could ensue.² In 1872 in Tokyo, Soejima and Terashima refused a request from a Dutch consul general to hire Japanese soldiers for military service in Dutch East Indies, citing the fear of other countries bandwagoning.³ In 1875 the finance ministry opposed the land purchase in the Bonins based on the observation that it could harm the Japanese position in the negotiations over Sakhalin. The Japanese boundary negotiators could not back down anywhere unless, as in Sakhalin, the maintenance of their claim itself was impossible; but at the same time they observed that the Western diplomats did not have the capability or desire to barge in either.

Against the backdrop of this precarious balance in the 1870s, the Meiji officials confronted in the border zones a diverse group of people with varying motives, ranging from profit to protection to preservation of old practices. Not all of them were government officials. They were sailors, former sailors, soldiers, convict exiles, settler colonists, merchants, marine animal hunters, and indigenous peoples. The interests and the goals of the Meiji government were diverse from one border zone to another, but underlying those diverse interests was the shared recognition among the negotiators that they were all connected. If the balance tipped in one place, others may well follow.

All told, the balance of favour gave Meiji Japan a breathing space in which its confidence and ambition grew. Enomoto Takeaki, having negotiated the Treaty of St. Petersburg in May 1875, stayed on in the Russian capital and served as Japanese minister until 1878. He was proud of his achievements on the northern boundary. On 29 October he was honoured by Tsar Alexander II, with the First Class Order of Saint Stanislaus, Russia's

² 'Garutoneru Jisho Ikken Shorui', HULNC Dōshiryō 148.

³ Dialogue between Soejima Taneomi, Terashima Munenori and F.P. van der Hoeven (Dutch minister), 1 April 1872. DAJP B1.1.1.41 'Meiji Gonen Taiwasho'.

highest order for military officers, for his role in the boundary negotiations.⁴ The Japanese reciprocated by giving the tsar and a few high-ranking officials their decorations, as the result of which Enomoto thought things were ‘in good order (*kōtsugō*) both officially and privately, and [I am] filled with joy’.⁵

Enomoto, however, did not dwell on the memory of his achievements for long. Shortly after celebrating the Russian new year of 1876, his attention turned from Japan’s northern border to the south. He asked his colleague in Sapporo to report on any developments about the Bonin Islands because he had ‘written to Iwakura about the Ogasawara Islands and I am very *interesutetto* [interested]’.⁶ Having removed the potential source of tensions in the northern edge, Enomoto by this point was confident about the standing of the Meiji state and began to draw a wild, but eerily prescient, picture of Japan’s southward expansion:

If we think about the future of our country we cannot but adopt a somewhat *akkureshifū* [aggressive] policy. In fact [we] want to possess the area around the Pusan harbour, [we] want to possess from Ladoron [Mariana] Islands to parts of the New Guinea, [we] want in the future the Luzon Island as our possession too... [We] want to place Japanese residents from Annam to East Indies and conduct trade.⁷

Enomoto firmly believed in and advocated ‘expanding our territory by raking up islets in the southern ocean and by expanding our maritime transportation to India and Australia’, because that was the path to build a strong nation.⁸ For Enomoto, getting bogged down with arguments about morality or rights would hinder the nation’s spirit of enterprise.⁹ Having fought in the Boshin War for the legacy of Tokugawa rule in Hakodate less than a decade ago, Enomoto by the late 1870s had transformed himself into an unwavering Japanese

⁴ NDL ETKM 4-1-34.

⁵ Enomoto to Terashima, 21 May 1876. NDL TMKM 5-7.

⁶ Enomoto to Yamanouchi, 14 January 1876. St. Petersburg. NDL ETKM 6-1.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Enomoto to Yamanouchi, 16 May 1876. St. Petersburg. NDL ETKM 5-8.

⁹ NDL ETKM 6-1.

imperialist.

Not only did he draw wild plans about expanding Japanese territory but also he worked for their realisation. At his request Ueno Kagenori, who was then Japanese minister to Britain, visited Madrid and informally inquired about the possibility of purchasing the Spanish-controlled islands in the Pacific. On 13 April 1876 Ueno met with the Spanish minister of state, Fernando Calderón Collantes, and asked if Spain would sell the Mariana Islands, if the Japanese government offered to purchase them. The Spanish minister gave a positive answer.¹⁰ Enomoto thus proposed to Iwakura that Japan should purchase the Mariana Islands and the Peleliu Islands in Palau.¹¹ There is no evidence to suggest that the plan went any further, but it is indicative of the consequences of Japan's emergence as a latecomer territorial sovereign in the Pacific.

The quick transformation of Enomoto indicates that the balance of favour in East Asia was short-lived. Because it was predicated on the treaty system with unilateral MFN status, the treaty revision of 1894 may well be seen as its official end point. But even before that, the balance that had kept the imperialist powers at bay had begun to wane. One example is British occupation of Port Hamilton in 1885. Although it did not lead to a permanent lease or anything long-term, it is an illustrative example because the same idea had been promoted by Parkes and Ryder in 1875, but then London had rejected it. Ten years later, the instruction to occupy the island came from London – though not all of the Cabinet members might have approved the move.¹² As the Western countries fought to expand their commercial interests and geopolitical gains, Meiji Japan also began to embark upon expansion of its own. It was possible for Japan to do so because until the mid-1870s the competition had been relatively restrained, and the Japanese had taken advantage of this window of opportunity. The arrival of Japan as a modern state filled up a power vacuum in the Pacific and East Asia, intensifying the drive for what was still left untouched by imperialism.

¹⁰ Ueno Kagenori to Terashima Munenori, 7 December 1876. London. DNGM 9: 384-385.

¹¹ Yasuoka Akio, *Bakumatsu Ishin no Ryōdo to Gaikō* (Tokyo: Seibundō Shuppan, 2002), ch.10.

¹² On the British occupation of Port Hamilton, the most recent study is Yu Suzuki, 'Relationship with Distance: Korea, East Asia and the Anglo-Japanese Relationship, 1880-1894' (PhD dissertation, London School of Economics, 2016), 85-96.

Applicability of the balance of favour

If it was the balance of favour that underpinned the rise of Japan as a sovereign state what about China? Why did China's experience differ from that of Japan, if the same treaty-port system and MFN clauses existed?

This comparative question on the Japanese and Chinese experience with imperialism in the nineteenth-century has received attention from various scholars. Even if we focus on the first two decades of each country's experience with the treaty port system, there is no question that the treaties brought about different outcomes in the two cases. For China, the encounter with Western imperialism resulted in a more substantial curtailment of territorial integrity than that seen in Japan. The Treaty of Nanjing in 1842 already saw Hong Kong go to the British; in 1860 Russia acquired China's north-eastern area north of the Amur as well as the Maritime Region with the signing of the Treaty of Beijing.

In an attempt to account for this divergence, Katō and Auslin claim that military defeat made the terms of the treaty harsher for the Chinese. For Stephen Krasner, the divergence resulted from the existence of the Confucian ideology that buttressed the tributary trade.¹³ Tulan Kayaoglu has argued that whereas Japan achieved treaty revision through quick introduction of modern legal codes, China found it difficult to do so due to the lack of any tradition of positive law.¹⁴ These explanations, however, do not fully take into account the local origins of the transformation into a territorialised world.

The reason for this varying degree of compromise to Japanese and Chinese sovereignty seems to lie not in the treaty system itself, as many of the above-mentioned works seem to imply, but the domestic situation that existed in parallel to the foreigners' increasing

¹³ Krasner, 'Organized hypocrisy in nineteenth-century East Asia'.

¹⁴ Kayaoglu, *Legal Imperialism*, 98, 162.

presence in East Asia. As John Fairbank emphasised, the Qing negotiators had to give up many privileges to the foreigners in order to raise money for fighting the Taiping and other rebellious groups within its realm. For this purpose, it had to condone international trade because, if effectively administered by the hands of foreign officers, this could garner precious tax revenue.¹⁵ The situation was alarming. As the Qing signed the Treaty of Tianjin and the Treaty of Beijing, the Taiping Rebellion held Nanjing (which was renamed Tianjing), and went on to snatch Ningpo and Hangzhou the next year.¹⁶ In the southwest, in 1856 Muslims rebelled against years of misrule by the Manchus in Kunming in Yunnan province and were not completely put down by the Qing until 1873. In the northwestern province of Xinjiang, the autonomous regime led by Ya'qub Beg went so far as to sign its own treaty with Britain and Russia and survived until 1877. The operation to crush this movement cost the Qing one-sixth of its total annual expenditure in the late 1870s.¹⁷ Because the root cause of this plethora of domestic rebellions can be traced back to the devastation of the Chinese economy caused by the opium trade, it is not entirely fair to consider China's troubles to be home-grown. Still, it is apparent that in the 1860s and the 1870s it was the Qing's domestic situation which demanded the empire's keenest attention.

Japan in the 1860s and the 1870s went through a different experience. Most notably, the rebel forces against the Tokugawa regime led by Satsuma and Chōshū took power and formed a sovereign state. They were the ones who, after a military clash with the Western fleets, realised that the opening of free trade with Western merchants could strengthen their standing within the Japanese archipelago. Whereas it did not take long before foreign ministers in China realised that the pseudo-Christian Taiping could not be an alternative to the Qing and all they were prepared to do was to stay neutral and tacitly support the Qing, the

¹⁵ Fairbank, 'The Creation of the Treaty Port System', 251-4, 261.

¹⁶ Kindai Nicchū Kankeishi Nenpyō Henshu Iinkai (ed.), *Kindai Nicchū Kankeishi Nenpyō* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2005).

¹⁷ William Rowe, *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 209.

Western diplomats in Japan soon understood that the Japanese rebel forces were worthy of interest.¹⁸

What was the consequence of this divergent domestic situation? Aside from the territorial losses discussed above, the Western merchants in China in the mid-1870s had more privileges than their peers did in Japan. This meant, in turn, that Japan's position was less precarious when it tried to renegotiate the treaty terms as it had kept more cards in its hand. For Japan, allowing foreign merchants to travel to the interior and conduct business freely was the biggest *quid pro quo* it could offer in order to get the Western negotiators to agree to treaty revision. China on the other hand had already given this up in 1860.

In sum, although the encounter with Western imperialism needs to be part of the story when one tries to account for the emergence of territorialised Japanese state in the late-nineteenth century, how these treaty relations played out depended heavily on the country's internal situation. It would be too simplistic to argue that the territorial boundaries around modern Japan were the result of a Western threat and the Japanese response, however effective the latter might have been, when no one could tell that Japan would emerge in the shape it did. One needs to construct the narrative from the local level, including those of the border zones that became a part of a sovereign state but had previously operated as separate entities from Japan or other neighbouring states.

Implications for the historiography

As argued in the introduction, the current historiography on the bakumatsu and early Meiji Japan has tended to take for granted the analytical unit of territorial sovereign states that survived to this day, while largely overlooking the agency of such places and peoples as Ryukyu, Ainu, Taiwan, the Bonin Islands, Aleuts, and Tsushima. As historians begin to place

¹⁸ Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, sixth ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 236-8; Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, 152.

an increasing emphasis on international and transnational contexts, however, alternative frameworks for the understanding of these places/peoples should be of their interest. Local historians, too, will find it useful to further understand the connections between a specific geographic area and the broader international relations of the nineteenth century.

Another thing to add to the current historiography is that this thesis emphasises the wide range of geostrategic perceptions that existed among the residents in and around the Japanese archipelago in the late-nineteenth century. More specifically, at least two sets of two opposing views existed throughout the period under consideration. They were not mutually exclusive, and one person may have moved from one category to another over time. Yet it is vital that we recognise the differences among them in order to avoid selectively emphasising certain ideological inclinations as though they represented the entire country.

Cautious pragmatism with long-term calculations. This was primarily observed among elite officials in the Meiji government, including Enomoto Takeaki, Kuroda Kiyotaka, and Ōkubo Toshimichi. Opinions expressed by Oguri Tadamasa and Nonoyama Kanehiro during the Tsushima Incident fall into this category too. Agents with this view had decision-making power on Japan's foreign policy at various points in the 1860s and the 1870s, and more importantly access to information unavailable to the rest of the population through their contacts with foreigners or travels. This privileged position made them pragmatists with regards to the survival of the Japanese state. The prime example of that is that by the 1870s they realised that Russia's threat to the northern border was not immediate. This allowed Enomoto during the boundary negotiations in St. Petersburg to agree to the Russian possession of the whole island of Sakhalin, while pursuing compensation elsewhere.

Japan-centred jingoism. This attitude makes a pair with the first position. It was a continuation of the Japan-centric worldview during the Tokugawa period and was espoused by both officials and non-officials, most notably the former samurai class in the early 1870s.¹⁹ Examples are the hard-liners in Sakhalin such as Okamoto Kansuke and Maruyama Sakura, the advocates of gunboat diplomacy against Korea, and Kabayama Sukenori and his peers

¹⁹ Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan*, 24-5.

who led the colonisation project from Kagoshima to eastern Taiwan. Top officials such as Soejima and Yanagihara presented this perspective, too. By projecting themselves as a civiliser, they found a new way to push forward their vision of constructing a strong and dignified Japanese state. They were the most alarmist about the Western imperialists' policies towards Japan, in particular that of Russia's. it gave them an additional reason to support aggressive foreign policies towards the Asian neighbours.

Acceptance and promotion of reform. The latter two contrasting positions that make another pair were found primarily in the border zones. The first example of this liberal view within this thesis was the advocates of domain transfer in Tsushima in 1862. Those who worked with the Japanese foreign ministry in the early 1870s in an attempt to reform the communication with Korea, such as Oku Gisei and Ōshima Tomonojō, also belong here. The Bonin Islanders who accepted Japanese sovereignty may be included in this category as well.

Unwillingness for and resistance against reform. The prime example of this category is the *dasshjinjin* group in the Ryukyu Kingdom, who wanted to restore the kingdom with the support from the Qing. Some members of the *waegwan* who collaborated with the Korean officials also meet the criteria. These are the people who tried to save their communities' status quo in the face of global transformation in the nineteenth century by appealing for external support. Some of them tried to play Japan against another neighbouring polity in order to stay independent, but their effort did not materialise in the end, as discussed in the main chapters.

Overall, the diversity of views presented about the geostrategic position of Japan and the border zones suggests that one should not rely only on the metropole-based narratives for the explanation of the emergence of borders around the Japanese archipelago. Multiple opinions co-existed and collided. Some sought realistic solutions; others believed that they could find a way to stay where they were. Territorial boundaries emerged in the midst of this amalgam of perspectives.

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