JAPAN AND THE WORLD, 1450-1770
Was Japan a “Closed Country?”

By Conrad Totman

Half-truths make the world go round. One conceit American pundits seem most determined to nurture is that in 1853 the US “opened” Japan to “civilization,” ending its days as a backward “closed country” (sakoku). Even though scholars—Ronald Toby most convincingly—established decades ago that Japan was not “closed,” the notion lives on in popular culture and public perceptions.1

The image of Japan as “closed” or “isolated” is reinforced by the companion notion, still found even in some textbooks, that Europeans were the most important part of Japan’s external world, at least during post-Columbus centuries.2 They were not. During the centuries to about 1800, Japan’s “world” consisted primarily of Korea and China, and only marginally included Southeast and South Asia and regions beyond. Contact with Korea and China was never banned, although it was carefully regulated after 1600, as we shall see.

The idea that Japan was “closed” is true, of course, in the sense that it, like all pre-industrial societies, was essentially “closed” to interaction with “foreigners.” The elites of such societies may have had some contacts beyond the areas they controlled, as did “borderland” residents. However, because of limited transportation and communication technology, the vast bulk of the populace knew, interacted with, and was significantly influenced by only its local community and rulers.

The implication that Japan was “closed” in a different and unique sense, however, will not stand scrutiny. That is so even though it was a set of islands separated from adjacent terra firma by shallow straits filled with fast currents and choppy water, which made transit a dangerous and scary business. Even during the years 1600 to 1853, when the Tokugawa-led ruling elite tried—sometimes very firmly—to regulate overseas contacts in a manner advantageous to its own interests, Japan was never a uniquely “closed” country.

So, let us saunter briefly through the history of Japan’s external relations, focusing on the period 1450 to 1770, but casting a cursory look at preceding and more recent times. By doing so we can identify not only how Japan did relate to the world, but also where the curious notion of a “closed country” came from.

Background to 1450
Ever since the archipelago’s origin millions of years ago, Japan has been interacting both geologically and biologically with adjacent continental areas. Human interaction has occurred ever since Homo sapiens first entered the islands tens of thousands of years ago.

Through the millennia, those human contacts grew ever richer, and by 1450 they involved not only extensive cultural interaction (Buddhism, Confucianism, etc.), but also political contacts and an elaborate material trade. That trade was mainly with Korea and China, but via those countries, it involved other regions of Asia and—rarely—Europe. Imports included large quantities of coins as well as “silk and other cloth goods, porcelain, ceramics, lacquerware, scrolls, medicines, and foodstuffs.” In return, Japan exported “copper, sulfur, other minerals, folding fans and screens, lacquerware, ink stones, swords, and other weapons.”3

From 1450 to 1770
Doubtless the period 1450 to 1770 makes analytical sense for studying the history of someplace, but not for examining Japan’s politico-diplomatic history. The break at circa 1600 was too drastic and its effects too far-reaching. So let us approach these centuries in terms of two periods: 1450–1600 and 1600–1770.

1450–1600. During these 150 years, the most noteworthy developments in the Japan-world relationship were these four: 1) the introduction of cotton to Japan; 2) the extension of Japanese commercial activity down the Asian coastline into Southeast Asia; 3) the arrival of Europeans in Japan, and 4) the failed Japanese invasion of Korea from 1592 to 1599.

The first of these four is a thoroughly uncelebrated development. In fact, however, the introduction—from India and Southeast Asia through China to Korea and thence to Japan from the 1420s onward—of cotton clothing and, later, cotton cultivation, may ultimately have been the most consequential of the four for the largest number of islanders. For most of Japan’s people, it eventually led to a great improvement in the comfort and convenience of daily life, replacing stiff, poorly insulating ramie and hemp garments with, in effect, a poor man’s silk.4

The spread of cotton culture into Northeast Asia was but one aspect of the surging trade throughout coastal Asia, and Japanese traders and pirates were active participants in that commerce. The former established trading sites in Southeast Asia, and some of those were partially populated by groups of Japanese refugees fleeing the strife that wrecked their homeland and fostered piracy throughout East Asian coastal regions.5 Then, around 1590, Japan’s newly risen hegemon, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, tried—with considerable success—to stop the brigandage and milk the nonviolent trade. He did so by licensing selected oceangoing traders and ordering local military leaders (daimyō) to prohibit all other sailings.

Meanwhile, a new breed of foreigner, the nanbanjin or “southern barbarians,” had arrived, making their first landfall on the south edge of Japan in 1543. So-called because they were said to have come from “the south,” the nanbanjin are usually identified as Portuguese traders and missionaries. By 1585, they had established a beachhead in the port of Nagasaki, which they fortified and controlled. From there they worked to extend their influence across Japan. They sent missionaries to proselytize among the elite in Kyoto and elsewhere, and labored to win daimyō to their cause, relying on them to pressure their followers to convert.

For Hideyoshi, these nanbanjin, with their foreign political base and growing influence in Japan, constituted rivals for pre-eminence. So in 1587 Hideyoshi seized Nagasaki, and in following years tried to stop missionary proselytizing while retaining the lucrative Portuguese trade—including the muzzle-loading shoulder arms that came with it.6 Soon, however, his attention turned elsewhere, especially from 1592 onward. That year he launched an invasion of Korea that...
supposedly would enable the armies of his dutiful daimyō to overrun China. As is so often the case when politicians launch military invasions, the mix of private and public reasons for Hideyoshi’s venture continues to perplex thoughtful observers. However, he declared that his goal was

to spread the customs of our country to the four hundred and more provinces of that nation, and to establish there the government of our imperial city even unto all the ages.7

Bold intentions notwithstanding, the great enterprise went poorly, and at the time of his death in 1598, Hideyoshi was bogged down in an unwinnable foreign war, the product, it appears, of hubris, ideological self-deception, and strategic miscalculation.

As of 1599, then, Japan’s involvement with the world was greater than ever before. Both Japanese and continental traders were carrying goods and people back and forth between the islands and all of coastal Asia. Some of their cargo went as far as Europe. Japanese-speaking people lived in a few “Japantowns” in Southeast Asia. Japanese armies were bogged down in Korea. New ideas from Europe and Asia, and more knowledge about both, were becoming available in the archipelago.

1600–1770. Japan’s relationship with the world during these 170 years is perhaps best examined in terms of 1) initial Tokugawa efforts to regulate that relationship—the alleged creation of sakoku—and 2) the outcome of those efforts.

Turning to the first of these topics, Hideyoshi’s death in 1598 led, unsurprisingly, to a struggle for supremacy among the score or so major daimyō. One of them, Tokugawa Ieyasu, won the military showdown at Sekigahara in 1600 and then faced the task of persuading his surviving rivals to accept subordinate roles in a Tokugawa-led polity. He did so by recognizing their local authority as quid pro quo for nominal subservience.

Ieyasu’s accommodationist strategy worked, but it compelled him and his successors to be ever-vigilant lest any daimyō use that local base of power as foundation for a new challenge. Tokugawa political policy, both domestic and foreign, was built around that fundamental task.

In foreign relations, the task dictated that trade and political contacts be handled only by the Tokugawa and their authorized representatives. Such a strategy would assure that profits from foreign trade, as well as whatever useful technology, political intelligence, or alliances there might be, would serve their regime.8

For centuries, Japan’s most substantial trading partner had been Korea, but Hideyoshi’s invasion had wrecked that connection. Therefore, Ieyasu tried to revive the trade by recalling the troops and re-establishing diplomatic relations. The daimyō of Tsushima Island played a key role in that effort, which did restore the diplomatic ties in 1607. As a reward, he was given exclusive control of the Korea-Japan trade, which he handled through a Japanese trading station in the Korean port town of Pusan. Because Tsushima was a poorly endowed domain, the daimyō had compelling reason to promote the trade, and he, in fact, developed a substantial “private” commerce that supplemented his Tokugawa-sanctioned legal trade. He also had a compelling reason to retain Tokugawa goodwill, however, and so made great effort to keep that unauthorized trade, i.e., smuggling, hidden.

Tokugawa strategy also stabilized the modest but longstanding continental trade via the largely unexplored and ill-defined northern region known as “Ezo.” Roughly speaking, it encompassed today’s Hokkaido, Sakhalin, and the adjacent Kurile Islands and Siberian coastal zone. The small-scale daimyō of Matsumae on southern Hokkaido was placed in charge of all trade and movement to the north. Like Tsushima, he came to depend on the benefits of his sanctioned role in that trade.

Those arrangements stabilized two avenues of contact with the world. But elsewhere a couple of issues—one involving Europeans, the other, China—complicated other aspects of the overall Tokugawa strategy.

First, Iberian (Portuguese, later supplemented by Spanish) missionaries did not cooperate, preferring to go wherever followers could be recruited. Ieyasu, like other Japanese leaders of the day, had ample experience with the challenge posed by politicized religious movements, having struggled for years to suppress domestic Buddhist...
versions. To control this new version of the problem, he and his two successors pursued an erratically enforced strategy of suppression that ended the missionary presence by 1640. That process, however, eventually excluded all Iberian traders.

Fortunately for the Tokugawa, who saw advantage in controllable foreign trade unencumbered with theological baggage, in about 1600 two other groups of Europeans—the Dutch and English—had come in search of commercial opportunity. They viewed themselves and their religion as rivals, even enemies, of the Iberians and their creed. Unlike the Iberians, they were willing to trade without promoting their religion. Even as Tokugawa leaders were ending the Iberian presence, they took steps to nurture the Anglo-Dutch trade while prohibiting daimyō participation in it.

As things turned out, in 1623 the English gave up, finding the trade insufficiently profitable. Nevertheless, the Dutch persevered, and during the 1630s their activities were consolidated on the man-made, Tokugawa-controlled islet of Dejima (or Deshima) in Nagasaki harbor. When the English tried to return a few decades later, the Dutch objected, and the English were refused entry. Therefore, of the Europeans, the Dutch alone remained, and—except for an interregnum during the Napoleonic Wars—they enjoyed their monopoly of the direct Europe-Japan trade until 1858.

More importantly, even as the Tokugawa were regularizing their European connection, epic changes were convulsing China, produced by 1650 a new, powerful, Manchu-dominated dynasty. Fully aware of Manchu power and mindful of the two Mongol invasions of Japan some 350 years earlier, Tokugawa leaders tried to avoid any repeat of those episodes by distancing Japan from China. To that end, they declined any sort of political relationship and tried to channel all adjacent to Dejima in direct Chinese trade through a regulated “Chinatown” adjacent to in Nagasaki. That policy also limited Chinese trade via the Ryūkyū Islands—trade that was controlled by and mainly benefited the powerful Satsuma daimyō in southern Kyushu.

Meanwhile, Tokugawa leaders also dealt with the question of Japanese traveling or living abroad. They were aware of the disorderly history of pirates and unregulated Japanese traders, and were particularly concerned lest travelers provoke Manchu displeasure or other complications. So in 1633 the Tokugawa shogunate decreed that no Japanese were to go abroad without government authorization. In fact, once domestic peace was restored and a set of stabilized trading relationships was established, Japan’s economy experienced rapid growth and the incentive to go abroad largely evaporated. In consequence, such travel nearly ceased.

By 1650, then, stabilized trading relationships with Korea, Ezo, “the south” (including Europe), and China had been established. The new rulers had regularized their foreign relations in a manner that perpetuated foreign trade and contact while minimizing their impact on the domestic political order—despite some persistent smuggling, mainly via Tsushima. Within that stabilized framework, foreign goods and intellectual influences continued to enter Japan, even as Japanese goods—notably gold and silver, and later copper, ceramics, and marine products—flowed outward.

Turning to the second topic, one wonders how this Tokugawa policy of managed foreign relations worked out during the decades circa 1650 to 1770. The short answer is “reasonably well”—as long as one isn’t looking for a “closed country.”

Foreign trade survived, but did not really prosper. The supplies of Japan’s chief exports—gold, silver, and copper—failed to grow. Indeed, as the economy expanded and domestic use of the metals mushroomed, mines were petering out and exportable quantities shrank. Having failed to develop sufficient alternative exports, Japan’s trade with Korea via Tsushima nearly ceased by 1770. Trade with China and the Dutch became more irregular. Instead, a number of goods that hitherto had been extensively imported—notably cane sugar, cotton cloth, ginseng, and silk—came to be supplied from domestic cultivation.

That last development—the adoption of new horticultural enterprises—exemplifies the other major aspect of this story: the long-term accumulation and use of more and more knowledge about the world.

Most noteworthy, perhaps, was the elaborate ideology employed during the seventeenth century to legitimize Tokugawa rule. It was taken mainly from the Confucian tradition associated with the Chinese philosopher Chu Hsi, as that tradition was understood by Chinese and Korean scholars. Japanese scholars, however, manipulated it to meet Tokugawa needs. In addition, new strands of mainland art and religion also reached Japan.

Less important at the time were aspects of European culture introduced to Japan’s intelligentsia via Dejima. Especially during the eighteenth century, Tokugawa leaders began encouraging their scholars to obtain “useful” or “practical” (jitsugaku) information, including whatever might be found in the so-called “Dutch Learning” (rangaku), from the Dutch.

As the century advanced, scholars and physicians acquired and began translating texts relating to European art, astronomy, geography, medicine, and other technologies. They then employed facets of that learning—such as the use of perspective in painting, new approaches to map-making, a new understanding of human anatomy, clocks based on the European twenty-four-hour cycle, and telescopes to observe a heliocentric heavenly order (or a heavenly body in the neighbor’s bedroom).

Meanwhile, foreign residents of Dejima, most famously the German doctor Engelbert Kaempfer (whose nationality was kept secret while he was there), were sending reports back to the Netherlands on their trade in particular, and on matters Japanese more generally. Their reports were stored for future reference and contributed to the growing body of European knowledge about East Asia.

As of 1770, then, when our story ends, the Tokugawa policy of managed foreign relations was still serving its basic political purpose:
daimyō continued to mind their manners. Trade continued, as did cultural exchange, both reduced somewhat from the level of earlier centuries. Perhaps the most noteworthy trend was the slowly growing attention given to Dutch Learning.

Globally, however, the times were poised for more radical change, and the Tokugawa arrangements that had sufficed before 1770 gradually lost their effectiveness thereafter. As that occurred, intriguing disjunctions appeared between the rhetoric and reality of Japan’s relationship to the world. Those disjunctions helped give rise to the notion of Tokugawa Japan as a “closed country” and so require brief notice.

After 1770: The “Closed Country”

From about the 1770s onward, things began to fall apart. The nambanjin—who might more appropriately be labeled nanbokuosei banjin, or “barbarians from all directions”—were the main external force for disruption.

To state the matter directly, the relentless spread of Europeans around the world—Iberians, Russians, the Dutch, French, Belgians etc., but most especially Anglophones—affected Japan in several ways. In the years around 1800, the Napoleonic Wars disrupted Dutch operations at Nagasaki, enabling a few opportunistic English and American vessels to sneak into the port or otherwise create trouble there. Meanwhile, Russian merchantmen approached Japan in search of trading privileges and, when turned away in 1806, engaged in violent marauding in the region. Anglophone whalers sought landing privileges during the 1820s, and when they were refused, some engaged in plunder. The Opium War of 1839–42 set off warnings of attacks on Japan that provoked consternation among the rulers. Finally, in 1853, the American Commodore Matthew Perry arrived with a war fleet and an ultimatum: a treaty of “peace and amity”—or naval bombardment of the Tokugawa capital city of Edo.

This series of aggravations produced sharp policy debates at the highest Tokugawa levels, as well as a scramble for increased knowledge of the encroaching menace and preparations to confront it. The scramble led to intensified study of Dutch Learning, with particular attention given to military technology and techniques, and eventual attempts to produce and use new-style weapons.11

In the policy debates, some officials argued that the foreigners’ demands should be accommodated until military strengthening assured that resistance would not lead to defeat. Others argued that such accommodation would only reveal Tokugawa weakness, encouraging respite daimyō finally to rebel. Advocates of both positions realized that whatever policy was pursued, the Tokugawa must retain their control of foreign connections. If they failed to do so, daimyō would gain access to new weapons, profitable trade, and foreign allies. So from about 1801 onward, these advocates began to assert that the established policy of Tokugawa-controlled foreign relations was immutable, the sacred legacy of the godly founders of the Tokugawa order. Only Tokugawa authorities could modify its particulars, and any change must leave control in Tokugawa hands. They dubbed the sacred ancestral policy sakoku.12

So, the notion of a “closed country” came into being even as the Tokugawa system of regulated relations was in fact starting to fall apart under the hammer blows of aggressive “barbarians.” Intended to preserve what was being lost, the notion utterly failed at its task.

Yet it survives today in popular foreign images of Japan, being regarded as one of that society’s most distinctive historical characteristics. The survival of this notion constitutes a particular instance of a common phenomenon—the durability of misperceptions, even when their falsity has long been exposed. So one wonders: Why does the notion of Japan’s “isolation” endure? What purpose does it serve? What interests or convictions does it help perpetuate?

NOTES


5. Archaeological evidence indicates that one “Japantown” was located in Manila and two each in the vicinity of Hue and Pnomh Pehn.

6. A recent study of this topic and guide to earlier works is Olof G. Lidin. Tane-gashima—The Arrival of Europe in Japan, (Copenhagen: NAIS Press, 2002).


8. This topic has been thoroughly studied by Toby in State and Diplomacy. Toby presents Tokugawa foreign policy as part of an overall strategy for legitimizing Tokugawa rule.

9. For more detail on this process, and for further reading, see Totman, Early Modern Japan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), especially 141–148. The finest treatment of this early Tokugawa foreign trade is the PhD dissertation (available in microfilm) by Robert LeRoy Innes, The Door Ajar: Japan’s Foreign Trade in the Seventeenth Century (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1980).


11. Dutch Learning has received much attention. A recent work is W. F. Van de Walle, Modern World History: Patterns of Interaction, (Evanson, IL: McDougall Littell Inc., 2003). These authors in fact give reasonable descriptions of Tokugawa foreign policy despite their Eurocentrism, but they still label it “isolation” or “closed country.”

12. On the origin, etymology, and use of the term sakoku, see Toby, State and Diplomacy, 12–22.

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Errata
Spring 2007 Issue

On page 38, in the third complete paragraph of the first column of Conrad Totman’s article, “Japan and the World, 1450–1770, Was Japan a Closed Country?” two lines of text were inadvertently dropped. Below is the correct paragraph:

More importantly, even as the Tokugawa were regularizing their European connection, epic changes were convulsing China. These produced by 1650 a new, powerful, Manchu-dominated dynasty. Fully aware of Manchu power and mindful of the two Mongol invasions of Japan some 350 years earlier, Tokugawa leaders tried to avoid any repeat of those episodes by distancing Japan from China. To that end, they declined any sort of political relationship and tried to channel all direct Chinese trade through a regulated “Chinatown” adjacent to Dejima in Nagasaki. That policy also limited Chinese trade via the Ryūkyū Islands—trade that was controlled by and mainly benefited the powerful Satsuma daimyō in southern Kyūshū.

On page 47, the Lesson Plan Handouts URL should have read www.asianstnst.org/EAA/mcdvtt.htm.

The editors sincerely apologize for these mistakes.

Encounters with Dutch

**Part 1: Read, Annotate, and Analyze**

“Dialog” with your assigned visual and reading. Highlight key ideas. Write questions or insights you have in the margins.

http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E6%97%A5%E8%98%AD%E9%96%A2%E4%BF%82#mediaviewer/File:Curious_Japanese_watching_Dutchmen_on_Dejima.jpg


Kaempfer was a German scholar who served as a physician for the Dutch East India Company and resided at Dejima in Nagasaki from September 1690 to October 1692. While there, he made detailed observations and sketches, which eventually were published in English in 1727 as a two-volume best-selling work.

* * * *

At the beginning of the present seventeenth century, very soon after their ships began to travel to Asia and the establishment of their East India Company, the Dutch, enticed by the fertile trade of the Portuguese, began making annual visits to this, the furthest empire of the world. They arrived at the city and island of Hirado and set up their warehouse and living quarters on a spit of land linked to the city by a bridge. . . . Even though the Portuguese still had a lot of influence with the greatest lords of the country, and did much to prevent the entry of the Dutch, they were finally unable to stop the shogun, Ieyasu . . . from giving the Dutch access to the country in the year of Christ 1611 with a special . . . shogunal permit or pass. . . . Meanwhile, from the time they settled in Hirado, the Dutch did what they could to profit from the progressive decline of the Portuguese. . . . The Dutch showed the utmost subservience in everything, even wrongful impositions, to stay in the good books of this nation and conduct profitable trade. Since they valued their lives, they could show no objection when in 1638 the shogun ordered them to tear down . . . their own newly built residence and warehouse on the island of Hirado . . . The reason was that the [stone] buildings were splendid beyond the custom of the country and had the year of the Christian era on the gable. Soon afterward, in the same year of 1638, this heathen court had no qualms in
inflicting upon them a cursed test to find out whether the orders of the shogun or the love for their fellow Christians had greater power over them. It was a matter of us serving the empire by helping to destroy the native Christians, of whom those remaining, some forty thousand people, in desperation over their martyrdom had moved into an old fortress in the province of Shimabara and made preparations to defend themselves. The head of the Dutch, Koekebecker, himself went to the location with the one remaining vessel . . . and in fourteen days treated the beleaguered Christians to 426 rough cannon salvos, both from land and sea . . .

It is true that this show of total obedience was instrumental in keeping a foothold in the country when the court was considering completely closing it to all Christians. At the same time, however, they gained a bad reputation among the more high-minded at court and throughout the country, for they judged that people who so easily permitted themselves to be used in the destruction of those with whom they basically shared the same belief and the path of Christ—as they had been amply told by the padres from Portugal and Manila—could not be true of heart, honest, and loyal towards a foreign ruler. I was told this by the locals in these very same words. Thus far from earning the trust and deep friendship of this exceedingly suspicious nation by their compliance, the reputation of the Dutch was ruined unjustly, regardless of their merits. Shortly afterward, in 1641, the Dutch, having assisted in the confinement of the Portuguese by word and deed, were to undergo the same experience . . .

This jail goes by the name of Deshima, that is, the island which lies in front of the city . . . It has the shape of a fan without a handle, or a rounded square, following the curve of the city, to which it is linked by a bridge of hewn stones of a few steps long, and from which it is separated by a strong gate and sentry . . .

. . . According to my measurements it is 82 ordinary steps in width and 236 in length through the middle . . . Only the street running the length of the island has houses on both sides . . . They are miserable buildings and look like goat-pens: made of clay and pine boards roughly stuck together, two stories high, with the lower having to serve as store and the upper as living quarters. The occupant covers the latter at his own expense with colored wallpaper and padded floor mats in Japanese fashion and installs doors and windows . . .

. . . During the two to three months of their stay, the annually arriving vessels are permitted to let their men visit the island to refresh themselves in turn after each has been searched and registered. When they have left, the chief must remain here, together with various other persons, about seven, more if desired . . . The Japanese could hardly imagine that the nation could come to grief over the presence of the few remaining Dutch. Their small number and the fact that they are unarmed precludes an enemy attack. Neither is it possible for the Dutch to engage in smuggling since all goods and anything else that could be sold is registered and kept under lock and seal by the Japanese . . . But in spite of all this, they are strictly and strongly guarded in this prison
from the inside and outside of the secluded island by various guards, companies, and guilds and their sworn members, who in turn contain vigilant outsiders among them, treating us not like honest men but like criminals, traitors, spies, prisoners, or to say the least, as hito jichi, hostages of the shogun, as the local always (thoughtfully) call us. . . .

Japanese orders addressed to our nation are transmitted to our directors partly by being read to us at the shogunal court [in Edo] by the councilors and partly by the governors of Nagasaki conveying them orally to us through their bugyō and our interpreters. . . .

Such are the conditions under which we live all year round, surrounded by sworn officers, confined and imprisoned. We are, however, permitted a few escapes from our prison quarters annually. . . .

The first takes place after the departure of the vessels when the captain with a few of his colleagues, makes the annual journey to court [in Edo] and delivers the official presents. This is the same demonstration of commitment all vassals of the empire have to pay annually, and the court considers it nothing less than homage from the Dutch nation. Therefore, on their dismissal, the laws governing their behavior in this country are read to them as they are to other vassals, and in general parlance we are referred to as hito jichi, that is, human pawn, in other words hostages furnished by the Dutch nation. Accordingly, we are granted no more liberties on our journey than those accorded to prisoners: we are not permitted to converse with other people, not even with the servants of our inn, unless special permission is granted. . . .

Once or twice annually the resident Dutch are given leave to stretch their legs outside the compound and to look at the temples. This liberty is granted to use under the name of gathering medicinal herbs. . . .

**Part 2: Discuss, Summarize, and Share**

- Discuss with your group your conclusions about these sources. What is the story being told? What are key ideas within this encounter? What is unclear? What additional information would help you better understand the story/perspective? What questions do you have? Work together to deduce answers.
- Based upon your discussion, create a group summary of what you have learned. This summary should be no longer than four sentences. Record it on your Tokugawa Encounters handout.
- Decide together to what degree this particular group complicates the idea of Tokugawa isolation. In other words, does the interaction between this group and Tokugawa Japanese support or contradict the idea of Tokugawa Japan as a “closed door” society?
- Be prepared to share out. If instructed by the teacher, create a short digital presentation of the summary and the name of your assigned group.
Part 1: Read, Annotate, and Analyze
“Dialog” with your assigned visual and reading. Highlight key ideas. Write questions or insights you have in the margins.

http://www.nmhc.jp/keiga01/kawaharasite/target/kgdetail.php?id=3701&cfcid=166&search_div=kglist  
Click on “Next>>” to advance scroll through 11 images.


**Number of Chinese and Southeast Asian Ships Entering Nagasaki, 1647-1692**

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<th>Fujian</th>
<th>Guangdong</th>
<th>Chinese Ships from Unknown Ports</th>
<th>Total Chinese</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>Vietnam</th>
<th>Siam</th>
<th>Cambodia</th>
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Encounters with Koreans

Part 1: Read, Annotate, and Analyze
“Dialog” with your assigned visual and reading. Highlight key ideas. Write questions or insights you have in the margins.


See entourage entering castle in middle left pane. Use up, down, left, right arrow keys (bottom right of screen’s nine blocks) to peruse more blocks of the screen painting.


Shin Yu-han was secretary and diarist for the 1719 Korean embassy to Edo and audience with the kampaku (Tokugawa leader or shogun).

* * * * *

27th . . . After a little over ten ri, I was informed by the Japanese palanquin bearers that we had already arrived in Edo. . . .

The Japanese men and women were clogged to overflowing. Looking up at the decorated houses, I could see eyes had gathered in the spaces between the lentils and the slats and there was not an inch of open space to be seen. . . . We continued another hundred paces and reached the [Korean] envoy’s guest hall. . . . Since olden times, our nation’s envoys have always lodged here. . . .

28th . . . It was late evening when the kampaku sent two senior councilors for an audience with the envoys. The Lord of Tsushima bent his knees in respect and led the councilors to the envoys. The envoys exited the building to stand outside and greet the councilors. . . . After taking their seats, the senior councilor summoned the Tsushima lord, and he prostrated himself before them. The Lord of Tsushima, lying flat, listened to the kampaku’s message which was appreciative of the efforts of the envoys. Then he left his place and reported this to the envoys who stood up from their seats to listen. . . .
After tea was served, just as the ministers were about to leave, the envoys arose, stepped down from their seats and put forward an address of thanks with the words, “We congratulate the heavenly health and happiness of the king. The solicitude of the ruling house has been turned toward us and the senior councilors have been sent to enquire after our troubles. Thank you.” Conducting them out of the building, the envoys bowed and sent the senior councilors off. When we were in Okazaki before, the envoys did not reply directly to the message of the kampaku, but only stated their feelings of appreciation to a representative. At that time, the Lord of Tsushima and the Japanese escorts all said, “When the kampaku asks after you, the envoy must reply; this is to show sincere respect.” Therefore, this time, they dispatched a statement that was reported to the ruler via his senior councilors. Japanese protocol generally was conducted in this fashion.

Moreover, superintendent Taira no Masaka also had an audience and related the following information. “On the first day of the coming month, you will present your communication; on the fifth, your equestrian skills. On the ninth, there will be a banquet at the mansion of the Lord of Tsushima and on the eleventh, you will receive a reply to your communication. On the thirteenth, you will be banqueted and on the fifteenth, you will begin your homeward journey. The kampaku has already issued the directives for your schedule, so you need not worry about any delay of arrangement.”

The Rector of the University, Hayashi Nobuatsu brought his two sons . . . I and the three scribes donned our Confucian robes and appeared in the main hall. . . . We faced each other, exchanged bows and sat down . . .

Nobuatsu, opened by writing the following on a piece of paper. “I have served four rulers and have met four Korean embassies. I am presently 76 years old.” . . .

Generation after generation, the Hayashi house has presided over letters in Japan. Generally speaking, all those who practice literature with the state as their patron, come from this house. . . . However, when viewed, the (product) is clumsy and simple and does not succeed (in having) a style. Since all Japanese offices are hereditary, even if there is a scholar of high caliber and profound learning, without studying under Nobuatsu, he will not find a position. The situation is laughable . . .

The following morning, the three came again and presented myself and the scribes with poems they had composed. . . . The father and sons each produced his own collection of poetry, offered them to the three envoys and requested an exchange of poems. The ambassadors received the requests and said, “We have not yet presented our official message. To engage in leisurely, uninhibited (poetry) recitation before having finished our official business would not be proper. When we have finished and are on the way home, we will then be ready to offer our poetry.” The Japanese meekly withdrew.
First day of the 10th month. . . . Last night, the Tsushima lord and the two elders visited the envoys and said, “The rules of protocol for the presentation of the documents have been copied over.” . . . Unavoidably, myself and an interpreter presented ourselves in the outer hall, summoned the magistrate, and after minutely verifying the situation, translated the document. We then sent it to the assistant envoy who circulated it. According to the points recorded there, the etiquette of entering the palace of the kampaku and presenting the communication were precisely in accordance with the case of 1682.

After eating, we took up the Dragon Pavilion (which housed the communication), and the three envoys put on gold caps, court robes, and jade pendants for their girdles. In their hands, they grasped batons of state as they boarded Korean palanquins. Myself, the three senior interpreters, and the senior translator wore black official robes and boarded suspended palanquins. Both the scribes and the physician wore caps and girdles with black official robes. The military attachés wore plumed, bamboo rain hats, thin, brocade robes, waist swords, bow with quirers, a whip and cross-bow and rode atop noble horses on gold saddles. Two corps of drum, horn, flute, and string with bannermen and halberd carriers proceeded unit by unit while playing slow music.

Inside the first gate were [Japanese] men and women sightseers crowded together like silkworms, all dressed in brocades. . . .

Presently, the Inspector General of the Wakan appeared and stated to the lord of Tsushima that we had been given permission to enter the palace. When the Tsushima lord relayed this to the senior interpreter, he took the communication in both hands and went forward, followed by the three envoys. They entered the main hall and installed the communication on a table. This was the audience hall of the kampaku. In an area partitioned off by a wall, the various lords and high salaried officials were visible. Barefoot in official robes, they were crowded together like a forest. Hayashi, the Great Scholar, was also seated there.

The envoys sat to the east, facing the west, and the lord of Tsushima faced the south, all cross-legged. After a moment, when Minamoto no Masamine (Inoue Masamine) minister in the head seat, summoned the Tsushima lord and began speaking to him, the senior interpreter immediately took the communication in both hands, proceeded to the hall entrance, knelt and passed it to the lord of Tsushima. He knelt as well and accepted it, went into the hall and handed it to the minister. The minister then offered it up to the kampaku. Ceremonial presents were exhibited to the public outside the hall. Horses with saddles were among the presents and they stood just outside the audience chamber. . . .

The envoys entered, made obeisance to the kampaku and went out. They entered a second time, made a toast and went out. . . . The middle and lower officials made obeisance outside the audience hall. All made obeisance four times and withdrew.
When I paid my respects, I gazed at the *kampaku* from afar. He was wearing a pointed, black coronet on his head, a pale blue robe on his body, and sat atop a pile of cushions. There was no dias or chair. I and he were about three or four *ken* apart, but since his seat was far in the back and to his left and right were provided colorful screens with pearl embroidery, an unobstructed view of the interior of the hall was difficult to obtain. I was unable to examine his face very closely. Roughly speaking, he appeared very fierce, lean and muscular, and his seated appearance was towering. . . .

The [Japanese] officials, high and low, apparently carry ineffectual swords. No one boldly carries a sword. They carry wooden swords in [their] scabbards. The trousers of all those who were official clothes just reach the ankle, but even in wintertime, they do not wear socks and go about with exposed feet. Between the legs a strip of white calico, several feet in length hangs down from the back and drags across the ground. Those who wear those long trousers also have them extend past their legs for several feet, indistinguishable from the strip of cloth when they move and drag the ground. Such a style is said to be honorable, but all the clothing is weird.

**Part 2: Discuss, Summarize, and Share**

- Discuss with your group your conclusions about these sources. What is the story being told? What are key ideas within this encounter? What is unclear? What additional information would help you better understand the story/perspective? What questions do you have? Work together to deduce answers.
- Based upon your discussion, create a group summary of what you have learned. This summary should be no longer than four sentences. Record it on your *Tokugawa Encounters* handout.
- Decide together to what degree this particular group complicates the idea of Tokugawa isolation. In other words, does the interaction between this group and Tokugawa Japanese support or contradict the idea of Tokugawa Japan as a “closed door” society?
- Be prepared to share out. If instructed by the teacher, create a short digital presentation of the summary and the name of your assigned group.
Encounters with Ryūkyūans (Okinawans)

Part 1: Read, Annotate, and Analyze

“Dialog” with your assigned visual and reading. Highlight key ideas. Write questions or insights you have in the margins.


Click on the scroll image and then click the right-side of the pop-up image to scroll through the scroll.


Ryūkyūan Embassies to the Tokugawa Bakufu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Shogun</th>
<th>Ryūkyūan King</th>
<th>Ambassador</th>
<th>Purpose of Embassy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1610</td>
<td>Hidetada</td>
<td>Shō Nei</td>
<td>Shō Nei</td>
<td>Submission to Japan (Shō Nei brought as captive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1634</td>
<td>Iemitsu</td>
<td>Shō Hō</td>
<td>Princes Sashiki, Tamagusuku, Kin</td>
<td>Congratulations on Iemitsu’s succession, Gratitude for investiture of Shō Hō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1644</td>
<td>Iemitsu</td>
<td>Shō Ken</td>
<td>Prince Kin</td>
<td>Congratulations on birth of shogunal heir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1644</td>
<td>Iemitsu</td>
<td>Shō Ken</td>
<td>Prince Kunigami</td>
<td>Gratitude for investiture of Shō Ken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1649</td>
<td>Iemitsu</td>
<td>Shō Shitsu</td>
<td>Prince Gushikawa</td>
<td>Gratitude for investiture of Shō Shitsu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1653</td>
<td>Ietsuna</td>
<td>Shō Shitsu</td>
<td>Prince Kunigami</td>
<td>Congratulations on Ietsuna’s succession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1671</td>
<td>Ietsuna</td>
<td>Shō Tei</td>
<td>Prince Kin</td>
<td>Gratitude for investiture of Shō Tei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1682</td>
<td>Tsunayoshi</td>
<td>Shō Tei</td>
<td>Prince Nago</td>
<td>Congratulations on Tsunayoshi’s succession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Shō</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1711</td>
<td>Ienobu</td>
<td>Shō Eki</td>
<td>Princes Miri, Tonigusuku</td>
<td>Congratulations on Ienobu’s succession, Gratitude for investiture of Shō Eki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1714</td>
<td>Ietsugu</td>
<td>Shō Kei</td>
<td>Prince Kin</td>
<td>Gratitude for investiture of Shō Kei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1714</td>
<td>Ietsugu</td>
<td>Shō Kei</td>
<td>Prince Yonagusuku</td>
<td>Congratulations on Ietsugu’s succession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1718</td>
<td>Yoshimune</td>
<td>Shō Kei</td>
<td>Prince Goeku</td>
<td>Congratulations on Yoshimune’s succession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1748</td>
<td>Ieshige</td>
<td>Shō Kei</td>
<td>Prince Gushikawa</td>
<td>Congratulations on Ieshige’s succession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1753</td>
<td>Ieshige</td>
<td>Shō Boku</td>
<td>Prince Nakijin</td>
<td>Gratitude for investiture of Shō Boku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1764</td>
<td>Ieharu</td>
<td>Shō Boku</td>
<td>Prince Yomitanza</td>
<td>Congratulations on Ieharu’s succession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1791</td>
<td>Ienari</td>
<td>Shō Boku</td>
<td>Prince Ginowan</td>
<td>Congratulations on Ienari’s succession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1797</td>
<td>Ienari</td>
<td>Shō On</td>
<td>Prince Ōgimi</td>
<td>Gratitude for investiture of Shō On</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1806</td>
<td>Ienari</td>
<td>Shō Kō</td>
<td>Prince Yomitanza</td>
<td>Gratitude for investiture of Shō Kō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832</td>
<td>Ienari</td>
<td>Shō Iku</td>
<td>Prince Tomigusuku</td>
<td>Gratitude for investiture of Shō Iku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>Ieyoshi</td>
<td>Shō Iku</td>
<td>Prince Urasue</td>
<td>Congratulations on Ieyoshi’s succession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>Ieyoshi</td>
<td>Shō Tai</td>
<td>Prince Tamakawa</td>
<td>Gratitude for investiture of Shō Tai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Encounters with *Ezojin* (Ainu)

**Part 1: Read, Annotate, and Analyze**

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**Written Source:** “Table 1: List of Trade Goods in the Ezo Region as Seen from Old Documents.” From Kaoru Tezuka, “Long Distance Trade Networks and Shipping in the Ezo Region,” *Artic Anthropology*, vol. 35, no. 11, 1998, 356. ©1998 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. Reproduced courtesy of the University of Washington Press.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>From Ainu to Japanese</th>
<th>From Japanese to Ainu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1611</td>
<td>Fish, animal skin, etc.</td>
<td>cotton, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1613</td>
<td>(silver), (gold dust), salmon, dried fish</td>
<td>rice, cotton cloths, iron, lead, tableware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1618</td>
<td>dried salmon, herring, sea otter skin, <em>donki</em></td>
<td>rice, sake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1620</td>
<td>high quality silk cloth, sea otter skin</td>
<td>rice, <em>koji</em>-ferment, sake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1621</td>
<td>dried salmon, herring, swan, living crane, dried crane, hawk, whale, sea lion skin, sea otter skin</td>
<td>rice, <em>kosode</em>-garment, cotton cloths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1717</td>
<td>dried salmon, dried herring, dried cod, dried abalone, dried sea cucumber, kelp, fur seal, fish oil, dried shark, salted salmon</td>
<td>rice, <em>koji</em>-ferment, used cloths, thread, <em>sake</em>, cotton, iron pot, cutlery, iron, cotton, ceramic bowl, lacquered cup, thread, pipe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1739</td>
<td>hawk, eagle, eagle tail feather, crane, <em>eburiko</em>-mushroom, bear skin, bear gall bladder, herring, kelp, salmon, deer skin, seal skin, sea lion skin, dried shellfish, dried sea cucumber, dried cod, whale, shark oil, <em>shiitake</em>-mushroom, dried abalone, sea otter skin, fur seal, <em>Ezo-nishiki</em>, glass ball</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1786</td>
<td>sea otter skin, eagle or hawk tail feather,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1792</td>
<td>seal skin, bear gall bladder, bear skin, <em>soykarshi</em>, dried sea cucumber, fish oil, dried salmon, deer skins, <em>atsushi</em>-garment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>rice, <em>koji</em>-ferment, <em>sake</em>, millet powder, cotton, silk, used clothes, paper lantern, scissors, wooden bowl, tobacco case, needle, lacquerware, comb, tub, saw, cloth, iron pot, sickle, tobacco, <em>tabi</em>-socks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>eagle tail feather, otter, fox, bear gall bladder, bear skin, seal skin, sturgeon, herring &amp; trout fish manure, salmon, trout, trout oil, seal oil, whale oil, shark, shell, <em>shiitake</em>-mushroom, firewood, willow &amp; birch fiber</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tokugawa Encounters Summary

The Dutch in Nagasaki:

The Chinese in Nagasaki:

Korean (Joseon) diplomatic missions to Japan:

The Ryūkyū Kingdom:

Ezochi and the Ezo peoples (Ainu):