

China in Tokugawa Foreign Relations: The Tokugawa Bakufu's Perception of and Attitudes toward Ming-Qing China

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

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

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

¹ I do not mean at all that there were no equal relations among Asian countries prior to the Western impact in the nineteenth century. Within the Chinese world order, China's tributary

setting up hierarchical Sinocentric international relations based upon a tributary system, called the Chinese world order, was related to the legitimacy of their own regimes.² It was not that Japan, as China's neighbor, had had nothing to do with or been indifferent to hierarchical international relations when seeking relationships with China or the constituents of the Chinese world order. It had sporadically paid tribute to Chinese dynasties in ancient and medieval times but had usually not been a regular vassal state of China. It had obviously been one of the countries most reluctant to participate in the Sinocentric world order.³ Japan did not identify itself as a vassal state of China during most of its history, no matter how China saw it. In this traditional setting of international relations in East Asia, it was quite natural that the Tokugawa bakufu also had concerns about Japan's international status when seeking to restore diplomatic and commercial ties with China.

Previous studies have made conflicting arguments over the Tokugawa vision of status relations with China. Their arguments can be separated into three categories. First, it has been argued that Ieyasu and his regime, the Tokugawa bakufu, sought to normalize relations with Ming China by accepting its superior status. Nakamura Hidetaka 中村英孝, for example, argued that the Tokugawa regime sought to be reintegrated into the Sinocentric international order.⁴ Examining a letter which Ieyasu's trusted henchman, Honda Masazumi 本多正純, sent to Ming China in 1611, Fujii Jōji 藤井讓二 states that though it contains no clear appeal for Chinese recognition of the vassalage of Tokugawa Japan, the letter implied the bakufu's recognition of Chinese superiority.⁵

Second, on the contrary, it has been argued that the bakufu had no intention of placing its own country at a lower status vis-à-vis China. Arano Yasunori 荒野泰典 and Nakamura Tadashi 中村質 draw a conclusion opposite to Fujii's from the same source. Arano makes no specific reference to a Tokugawa vision of Japan's status with China.⁶

states were supposed to be engaged in equal relations. A good example is Korea's vision of its relationship with Japan.

² John King Fairbank, "A Primary Framework," in *The Chinese World Order* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 1-19; Nishijima Sadao 西嶋定夫, *Kodai Higashi Ajia sekai to Nihon* 古代の東アジアと日本 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2000), pp. 15-112.

³ Ronald P. Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan: Asia in the Development of the Tokugawa Bakufu* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 139.

⁴ Nakamura Hidetaka 中村英孝, "Taikun gaikō no kokusai ninshiki: kai chitsujo no naka no Nihon" 大君外交の国際認識：華夷秩序のなかの日本, *Kokusai seiji* 国際政治 51 (1974), pp. 10, 14. Nakamura did not, however, suggest any source for his argument in this article.

⁵ Fujii Jōji 藤井讓二, "Junana seiki no Nihon: buke no kokka no keisei" 十七世紀の日本：武家の国家の形成, in *Iwanami kōza Nihon tsūshi* 岩波講座日本通史 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1994), vol. 12, pp. 40-41. Kamiya Nobuyuki 紙屋敦之 also maintains that Ieyasu was seeking equality with China, bearing the title "King of Japan" (*Nihon kokuō*) bestowed by the Ming emperor. However, he does not clearly argue that it meant that Ieyasu wished to become a Chinese vassal, for Kamiya also argues that the Japanese considered the vermilion seal as equivalent to the tally.

⁶ Arano Yasunori 荒野泰典, "Taikun gaikō taisei no kakuritsu" 大君外交体制の確立, in *Kōza Kinsei Nihon shi 2: sakoku* 講座近世日本史, 2: 鎖国 (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1981), p. 142.

Nakamura, on the other hand, states that the bakufu envisaged parity with China.⁷ Kamiya Nobuyuki 紙屋敦之 also maintains that Ieyasu was seeking equality with Ming China, bearing the title, “King of Japan,” bestowed by the Ming emperor.⁸

Third, Ronald P. Toby states: “The Tokugawa bakufu had had ambivalent feelings about participating in the Ming world order from the very beginning of the [seventeenth] century.”⁹ He argues that the bakufu was certainly attracted by the trade benefits and legitimacy which Chinese recognition and bestowal of the title of king would bring and that though it once considered being reintegrated into the tributary system, the bakufu eventually chose not to do so because of its concern that tributary relations with China might mar the legitimacy of its own rule.¹⁰

One purpose of this study is to resolve the question at issue, and I will take the position of disagreeing with the first and third positions. The major problem is that they comprehend the request for resumption of the tally trade (*kangō* 勘合) system unconditionally on the analogy of the precedent of the Ashikaga period and miss the change in Japanese understanding. The tally, *kangō* (C. *kanhe*), was a trading visa issued to tributaries by the Ming court.¹¹ I agree with Toby’s analysis that the 1611 letter, as mentioned below, did not take the form of *biao* (*hyō* 表), which suggests one’s will to be subordinated to China. His interpretation of the Tokugawa request for the tally trade on the analogy of the Ashikaga precedent, however, leads to an argument of ambivalence in the early Tokugawa attitudes toward the Chinese tributary system. Supporting the second position, I will argue that the Tokugawa bakufu consistently intended from its outset not to be an inferior member of the Sinocentric world order.

My position however differs from those previous arguments in two respects. First, I do not find any concrete evidence that the bakufu sought to obtain the specific status of an equal with China. In this respect, the Tokugawa view and attitudes toward China were, I will maintain, ambiguous, though at least premised on the bakufu’s unwillingness to pay tribute to China. Second, apart from the problems mentioned above, Kamiya’s interpretation is speculative, not supported by any evidence that Ieyasu was seeking the title of king along with the restoration of the tally trade. He would also need to prove that

⁷ Nakamura Tadashi 中村質, “Higashi Ajia to sakoku Nihon: Tōsen bōeki o chūshin ni” 東アジアと鎖国日本：唐船貿易を中心に, in *Bakuhansai kokka to iiki ikoku* 幕藩制国家と異域異国 (Tokyo: Azekura shobō, 1989), p. 344.

⁸ Kamiya Nobuyuki, “Taikun gaikō to kinsei no kokusei” 大君外交と近世の国制, *Waseda Daigaku daigakuin bungaku kenkyū kiyō* 早稲田大学大学院文学研究紀要 38 (1993), p. 92.

⁹ Toby, *State and Diplomacy*, p. 87; Toby, “Kinsei ni okeru Nihongata kai chitsujo to Higashi Ajia no kokusai kankei” 近世における日本型華夷秩序と東アジアの国際関係, *Nihon rekishi* 日本歴史 463 (December 1986), pp. 45, 59-60. Marius B. Jansen has also noted, “The bakufu, after considering the possibility of formal relations, concluded that the cost—acceptance of a tributary role in China’s East Asian order—was incompatible with its dignity and with Japanese sovereignty.” See Marius B. Jansen, *China in the Tokugawa World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 1-2.

¹⁰ Toby, *State and Diplomacy*, p. 59.

¹¹ Jurgis Elisonas, “The Inseparable Trinity: Japan’s Relations with China and Korea,” in *Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 4: *Early Modern Japan*, ed. John Whitney Hall (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 236.

the Japanese understanding of “King of Japan,” which had originally implied a vassal status to the Chinese emperor, had changed.

My position that the Tokugawa bakufu had no intention of surrendering Japan to Chinese suzerainty naturally and logically disagrees with these arguments, coming out of the first and third positions noted above, that attitudes toward the Chinese tributary system had also altered by the 1620s or the 1630s. Nakamura Hidetaka saw “Taikun gaikō taisei” 大君外交体制 (Taikun diplomacy or Great Prince diplomacy), which was formed by the end of the 1630s, as a declaration of independence from the Chinese world order.¹² Fujii and Toby argue that the change occurred earlier. Fujii states that the bakufu raised Japan’s status vis-à-vis China from that of an inferior to that of an equal by the early 1620s, arguing that the term, *tsūshin* (C. *tongxin* 通信), used in the letter of Honda Masazumi to Fujian Province designates the bakufu’s will to obtain parity with China.¹³ Favoring Nakamura’s view of “Taikun diplomacy,” Toby maintains that the bakufu’s rejection of the Chinese envoy in 1621 meant its rejection of subordination to China.¹⁴ On the other hand, my position opposing these historians will draw the conclusion that the cases which they have seen as signs of change manifested the bakufu’s consistency in not participating in the Chinese tributary system.

Few studies have explored Tokugawa attitudes and policies toward China, especially in terms of the status relations between the two countries after the 1630s. In his analysis of the Tokugawa diplomatic protocols especially after the Manchu conquest of China in 1644, Toby, a rare case, argues that the bakufu came to situate China at the lowest level of its hierarchical international order which historians, including Toby, have called “Nihon-gata kai chitsujo” 日本型華夷秩序 (Tokugawa world order, or Japan-centered civilized-barbaric world order).¹⁵ He also regards the trade certificate or *shinpai* 信牌 (*Nagasaki tsūshō shōhyō* 長崎通商照票), which the bakufu introduced to regulate the China trade at Nagasaki in 1715, as a Japanese proclamation of superiority over China.¹⁶

Another purpose of this study is to offer a contrary interpretation. In other words, I disagree that the treatment of Chinese merchants represented China’s status in the hierarchy of Tokugawa international relations. The use of the Japanese era name in the trade certificate and its resemblance to the Chinese-issued tally, for example, announced nothing more than the Japanese rejection of becoming an inferior constituent of the Sinocentric world order or of recognition of China’s superiority. Despite this explicit stance, ambiguity remained in the Japanese views and attitudes over a status relationship with China, even after it came under the control of the “barbaric” northern ethnic group, the Manchu Qing. Tokugawa attitudes toward the Chinese tributary system remained consistent, and the Japanese ideological perception of Qing China even showed some elements of Japanese superiority. Nevertheless, the Tokugawa attitudes remained

¹² Nakamura Hidetaka, “Taikun gaikō no kokusai ninshiki,” pp. 14-15.

¹³ Fujii, “Junana seiki no Nihon,” p. 46. The term did not necessarily bear an exclusive meaning of parity; the relationship with the Ryukyus, which was by no means equal, was also referred to by the same term.

¹⁴ Toby, *State and Diplomacy*, p. 227.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 155-56.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 156-59.

ambiguous and were not necessarily compatible with the intellectual perception which engendered a sense of Japanese superiority because of the Manchu conquest of China. The bakufu did not suggest any concrete vision of a status relationship between Japan and Qing China, other than rejecting integration into the tributary system. Over status relations with Qing China, as its Ryukyu and trade policies indicated, the bakufu chose rather to avoid any antagonism or friction and did not hesitate even to make compromises with the dynasty of conquest on the East Asian mainland.

The Tokugawa Rapprochement Policy Toward China

Ieyasu's China policy began almost in parallel with or shortly after the beginning of the policy to restore peace with Korea. The purposes of Tokugawa China policy were similar to the peacemaking policy toward Korea. Confronted by Chinese and Korean hatred caused by Hideyoshi's war of aggression, Ieyasu wanted to eliminate any potential external threat to the security of Japan. The normalization of relations with China, as well as with Korea, would demonstrate the political capability and qualifications of the Tokugawa to succeed the Toyotomi. With great interest in overseas trade, Ieyasu would not have neglected China, the largest regional producer of silk which enjoyed a significant presence in Japanese markets.¹⁷

In 1598, a group of shipwrecked Chinese was cast ashore on the Gotō Islands of Kyushu. They were rescued by Satsuma, the domain of the house of Shimazu located in southern Kyushu, and in November (?) 1598 (Keichō 慶長 3/10/u) sent to Fushimi where the daimyo of the domain, Shimazu Yoshihiro 島津義弘, was residing. Yoshihiro thereafter sent the shipwrecked Chinese to Jin Xuezheng 金学曾, the military commander of Fuzhou, along with some gifts.¹⁸ Although there is no evidence that Tokugawa Ieyasu instructed Yoshihiro to return the shipwrecked Chinese, he could well have done so, as he was then presiding over foreign affairs, as well as domestic affairs, as the caretaker of the Toyotomi regime under the mandate of the deceased hegemon, Hideyoshi. Upon receiving the repatriated nationals and gifts in April (?) 1599 (Keichō 4/3/u), the Chinese military commander dispatched a ship with 250 crew members in gratitude to Satsuma.¹⁹

An unexpected incident over the Chinese ship brought Ieyasu an opportunity to take substantial action toward normalization of relations with China. On its way to Japan, the ship was assaulted by a pirate crew of 150 Chinese and Japanese. Of the crew, forty were killed, and the rest were cast ashore on the island of Luzon in the Philippines. Shimazu Yoshihiro sent a letter informing his son Tadatsune 忠恒 (later renamed Iehisa 家久) of the incident. This letter, dated October 19, 1599 (Keichō 4/9/1), also noted that two of the survivors of the incident visited Satsuma on a ship from the Philippines. The

¹⁷ Matsuura Masatada 松浦允任, comp., *Chōsen tsūkō taiki* 朝鮮通交大記 (Tokyo: Meicho shuppan, 1978), p. 78; Amenomori Hōshū 雨森芳州, *Manomori Hōshū zensho* 雨森芳州全書 (Osaka-shi: Kansai Daigaku shuppan kōhōbu, 1981), vol. 2, p. 85; Nakamura Hidetaka, *Nis-Sen kankei shi no kenkyū* 日鮮關係史の研究 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1965), vol. 3, p. 260; Tanaka Takeo 田中健夫, "Sakoku seiritsuki Nit-Chō kankei no seiritsu" 鎖国成立期日朝關係の成立, *Chōsen gakuho* 朝鮮学報 34 (January 1965), p. 33.

¹⁸ *Kyūki zatsuroku kōhen* 旧記雜録後編 (Kagoshima-shi: Kagoshima-ken, 1983), vol. 3, no. 867.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

survivors requested the return of their ship, which had been found in Amakusa, Kyushu, and the surrender of the ringleader of the pirates. The survivors continued that if their demands were fulfilled, they would report to the Chinese authorities regarding the severity of the Japanese regulations against piracy, and that trade with China would be resumed.²⁰

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

Along with the repatriation of war captives, Ieyasu decided to send a letter to China. This letter, drafted by Saishō Jōtai 西笑承兌, was the first of three letters addressed directly from the Tokugawa to Ming China.²⁴ This one, dated March 12, 1600 (Keichō 5/1/27; hereafter the 1600 letter), showed the consistency of Tokugawa China policy with its Korea policy and the linkage between the two. It did not take the form of an official state letter (*kokusho* 国書), nor was it addressed from Ieyasu. This was perhaps intentional; the letter, in a euphemistic way, indicated that it was issued at Ieyasu's request, mentioning that he was presiding over state affairs on behalf of his child lord, Toyotomi Hideyori 豊臣秀頼, after the death of the latter's father, Hideyoshi. There were neither words of apology for the invasion of Korea nor a direct reference to peace with China. Ieyasu seemed to consider a "victor's peace" with Korea, based on the truce arranged between Chinese and Japanese generals in November 1598, to be a stepping stone to the recovery of relationships with Ming China, as the letter referred to the expected visit of a Korean peace mission to Japan before restoring relationships with China.²⁵

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., no. 795. Before and after Tadatsune received the letter from Terasawa in the seventh month, anti-piracy regulations were issued with the names of the Five Seniors of the Toyotomi regime to the daimyo of Kyushu including Shimazu, in the fourth and eighth months of 1599. Fujiki Hisashi 藤木久志, *Toyotomi heiwarei to Sengoku shakai* 豊臣平和令と戦国社会 (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku shuppankai, 1985), pp. 237-38.

²³ *Kyūki zatsuroku kōhen*, vol. 3, no. 807.

²⁴ Ibid., no. 1017, 1025.

²⁵ Ibid., no. 1025.

The letter also did not hide the growing Japanese irritation with the delay of the Korean peace mission. Reminding China of its indebtedness to Japan, it noted reproachfully: “Regarding the peace between our country and Korea, it is righteous that a breach of promise and agreement would necessarily result in the execution of the hostages. However, the Privy Minister [*Naidaijin* 内大臣, namely Ieyasu] is reluctant to execute [the four Chinese hostages, including Mao Guoke] without strong evidence of their guilt. If there is no realization of peace because no Korean minister visits Japan, this will be wholly due to Korea.”²⁶ It further stated that if the arrival of a Korean mission and the restoration of the tally trade were not accomplished by 1602, Japanese generals would again send troops to Korea as well as Fujian and Zhejiang Provinces.²⁷

The greater importance of this letter is that it gives a picture of Ieyasu’s vision of peace and a restored relationship with China. He hoped to restore Japan’s relationship with China by reinstating the tally trade which had existed between the two countries from the early fifteenth century until the mid-sixteenth century. The letter states that after making peace with Korea, Japan was to associate with China, bearing a golden seal and a tally in accordance with precedent.²⁸ The 1600 letter is the very first time the Japanese expressed their wish for the restoration of the tally trade, and the same request was repeated in the two subsequent letters which the Tokugawa bakufu sent to Ming China in 1611.

Some historians have seen the request as evidence that Ieyasu intended for Japan to be subjected to Ming China as had the Ashikaga.²⁹ This interpretation would be valid if the tally trade was understood as it had been in the Muromachi period. In that period, the tally system fixed a grantor and grantees: the grantor was Ming China, and the grantees were its vassal states such as Thailand and Japan. The purpose was to put overseas trade under Chinese control within the framework of the tributary system and was intended to distinguish traders from pirates, particularly the “Japanese” pirates known as *Wakō* 倭寇³⁰. To be granted the tally meant to be recognized as a Chinese vassal; the Ashikaga bakufu first received a tally from the third emperor of the Ming, Yongle 永樂 (r. 1403-24), in 1404, two years after the Ming dynasty had bestowed upon the abdicated third shogun of the bakufu, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu 足利義満 (r. 1368-94), the title of king and the golden seal. Since then, Japan had been a participant in the Chinese tributary system and received one hundred sets of tallies upon the accession of each new Ming emperor, until the last piece of tally was reduced to ashes, when the house of Ōuchi 大内, a powerful warrior house in western Japan, fell in 1551.

The assumption that Ieyasu understood the tally system in this historical context, nevertheless, not only lacks proof but also overlooks the fact that the Japanese understanding of the tally trade was not necessarily the same as it had been. Two

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ For example, see Nakamura Hidetaka, “Taikun gaikō no kokusai ninshiki”; Fujii, “Junana seiki no Nihon”; and Toby, *State and Diplomacy*.

³⁰ Sakuma Shigeo 佐久間重男, *Nichi-Min kankei shi no kenkyū* 日明関係史の研究 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1992), pp. 352-54. Before Japan, Siam, Champa, and Cambodia had also been granted the tally by Ming China.

Japanese historians, Tanaka Takeo 田中健夫 and Kamiya Nobuyuki, have demonstrated that the Japanese understanding of tallies had changed from the mid-sixteenth century, and that *kangō* had become a type of official trade that was no longer inseparable from tributary relations with China.³¹

Desiring to establish the tally trade with Ming China, Toyotomi Hideyoshi also refused to recognize China's superior status which the tally originally implied. Before Hideyoshi dispatched a large army to the Korean peninsula for the purpose of conquering the East Asian mainland, a letter which two of his vassals, Hosokawa Fujitaka 細川藤高 and Ishida Mitsunari 石田三成, addressed to Shimazu Yoshihisa 島津義久, on March 7, 1589 (Tenshō 天正 17/1/21), indicated that their lord desired to restore the tally trade with Ming China.³² The unifier of warring Japan never expected that his country would be reintegrated into the tributary system, however. He believed rather that the tally trade would be reinstated if China first submitted it and that he then accepted it.³³ His wishful anticipation that the tally trade would be restored in the way he desired seemed to have continued for a few more years, and the crossing of Japanese troops to the continent meant the renunciation of his earlier optimism. Realizing that his grand design of constructing a large empire of conquest in East Asia had been frustrated, he again desired the restoration of the tally trade. This was not, however, because he intended to surrender and be subject to Ming China again. In 1593, during the stalemate in the war in Korea, he suggested to his enemies seven conditions for peace, one of which was the recovery of the tally trade.³⁴ The day after the peace conditions were suggested to the Ming representatives on July 25, 1593 (Bunroku 文禄 2/6/27), the Japanese negotiators stated that the bestowal of vassalage by the Ming emperor was undesirable.³⁵ For the Japanese unifier, the tally was one of those conditions necessary to proclaim that the war concluded with a Japanese victory as he simultaneously demanded China's surrender of an imperial princess to the Japanese emperor and Korea's concession of its four southern provinces.³⁶

One might argue that it would be premature to draw from those two scholars' studies and Hideyoshi's example the conclusion that the Japanese understanding of the tally trade had changed. Kobata Atsushi 小葉田淳, for example, has demonstrated that

³¹ Tanaka Takeo, "Kangōfu, kangōin, kangō bōeki" 勘合符、勘合印、勘合貿易, *Nihon rekishi* 日本歴史 392 (1981), p. 11; Kamiya, "Taikun gaikō to kinsei no kokusei," pp. 87-88.

³² *Kyūki zatsuroku kōhen*, vol. 2, no. 571.

³³ *Ibid.* In the earlier part of this letter, Hosokawa and Ishida stated: "Since not only Japan but also the ocean recovered its calm [as a result of issuing the decree prohibiting piracy in 1588], China desirably dispatched a ship with a gift." According to Fujiki Hisashi, the Chinese ship was by no means officially dispatched by the Ming court but was probably a pirate vessel. See Fujiki, pp. 232-33.

³⁴ Tanaka Takeo, ed., *Zenrin kokuhō ki, Shintei zoku zenrin kokuhō ki* 善隣国宝記 新訂続善隣国宝記 (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1995), pp. 376-79 (hereafter, *Zenrin kokuhō ki* or *Zoku zenrin kokuhō ki*).

³⁵ Sanyō shinbunsha 山陽新聞社, ed., *Nene to Kinoshita-ke monjo* ねねと木下家文書 (Okayama: Sanyō shinbunsha, 1982), p. 43.

³⁶ *Zenrin kokuhō ki*, pp. 376-79. One document attached the seven conditions. One of the three articles in the document shows that Hideyoshi reasoned that China's failure to express gratitude for his achievement in the ocean brought about his punitive expedition.

in the late sixteenth century, some daimyo still perceived trade with China as within the context of tributary relations.³⁷ The 1600 letter indicated, however, that Ieyasu was not the inheritor of the traditional understanding of the tally. In the letter, the conventional order of the tally and the initiation of official relations was reversed. According to the Ashikaga precedent, tally trade was supposed to be granted by the Ming emperor after diplomatic relations, namely tributary relations, were established. In the letter, government-to-government relations were considered to follow the restoration of the tally. This reversed order furthermore indicated that Ieyasu possibly considered restoring the tally trade in the same (or a similar) way as Hideyoshi had.

The style of the letter also indicated that Ieyasu had no intention of reintegrating his country into the Chinese tributary system. If he had desired to be recognized as a vassal by the Chinese emperor, Ieyasu would simply have followed the precedent of the Ashikaga bakufu. He would simply have submitted a letter fulfilling the conditions as *biao* (J. *hyō*) to the Ming emperor as his subject, *chen* (J. *shin* 臣). From the viewpoint of the Middle Kingdom, a foreign state letter should have proclaimed its monarch's homage to the Chinese emperor, in compliance with fixed diplomatic etiquette. For Chinese dynasties, to substantiate successfully the Middle Kingdom ideology through diplomacy was a matter of the legitimacy of their power and rule.³⁸ Two letters from Ashikaga Yoshimitsu to the Ming emperor had been declined before 1401 because their styles failed to satisfy the Chinese, and the 1600 letter failed in this respect as well.³⁹

The letter was not written as an official state letter (*kokusho*) either, as mentioned above. If it had been drafted as a state letter, it would have been addressed from a ruler of Japan to the Ming emperor. Since the time that diplomatic prerogatives were taken over from the imperial court by warriors in the early fifteenth century, state letters had been written and sent to foreign countries in the name not of the emperor but of such successive warrior rulers as the Ashikaga shoguns and Hideyoshi. On the other hand, while not necessarily concealing that the initiative came from Ieyasu, the letter took the form of being addressed from the three daimyo—Terasawa Masanari, Shimazu Yoshihiro, and Shimazu Tadatsune—to the military commander of Fujian Province, Mao Guoqi 毛国器, instead.⁴⁰ According to diplomatic customs practiced since antiquity in the East Asian world, this letter could have elicited rejection by China. A diplomatic letter from one country to another was in principle to be addressed from a monarch or a ruler to his

³⁷ Kobata Atsushi 小葉田淳, *Chūsei Nis-Shi tsūkō bōeki shi no kenkyū* 中世日支通交貿易史の研究 (Tokyo: Tōhō shoin, 1941), p. 23. Kobata demonstrated that some warring daimyo had sent trade ships to Ming China in the name of a tributary mission. This indicates that while some were changing their understanding of the tally, others still saw trade with China in the context of tributary relations.

³⁸ Fairbank, "A Primary Framework," p. 3; Nishijima Sadao, *Kodai Higashi Ajia sekai to Nihon*, p. 209.

³⁹ Tsuji Zennosuke 辻善之助, *Zōtei kaigai tsūkō shiwa* 増訂海外通交史話 (Tokyo: Naigai shoseki kabushiki kaisha, 1930), p. 301; Tanaka Takeo, *Chūsei taigai kankei shi* 中世対外関係史 (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku shuppankai, 1975), p. 59.

⁴⁰ Regarding Mao's surname, Kamiya notes "Mao 毛 Guoqi" instead, and mentions that he was Mao Guoke's elder brother. On the other hand, *Ming shilu Shengzong shilu* 明實錄神宗實錄 records "Mao" 茅. I have not yet discovered which is correct.

counterpart, as the phrase, “none other than monarchs take charge of diplomacy” (*jinshin ni gaikō nashi* 人臣に外交なし), indicates. Although warrior diplomacy contained an essential contradiction with this East Asian diplomatic principle because of the warrior rulers’ domestic status relations with the Japanese emperor, neither China nor Korea saw this as disturbing their diplomatic relations with Japan, so long as the emperor was kept invisible in the diplomatic arena. In this situation, a state letter requesting normalization should have been submitted to the Chinese emperor by Hideyoshi’s heir, Hideyori, during the time before Ieyasu established his own regime in 1603. He should have submitted a state letter under his own name; otherwise, his caretaker status—in other words, his vassal status to the child master—would have inevitably questioned his right to take such action. According to the diplomatic tradition of the East Asian world, dispatching a diplomatic note or a mission to another country first meant surrender or subordination.⁴¹ And, Ieyasu knew what submitting an official letter first, with his name, could mean.⁴²

It is unlikely that the Japanese were ignorant of China’s favored diplomatic protocols. They would not have failed to fulfill the necessary conditions of the Chinese requirements if they had intended to pay tribute. As mentioned above, the 1600 letter was drafted by Saishō Jōtai, who also wrote other diplomatic notes, such as the letter to Korea in 1607. Since the early Muromachi period, monks of the Five Mountains, the five major Zen Buddhist monasteries in Kyoto, had been in charge of the administration of diplomacy for the warrior regimes, and their knowledge and experience had accumulated and been transmitted over several centuries. They were steeped in traditional Japanese diplomatic notions and practices. Jōtai was a Zen monk of one of the Five Mountains, Shōkokuji 相国寺 Temple, who had been in charge of diplomatic administration since the time of Hideyoshi. He had inherited the ancient diplomatic notion of Sino-Japanese equality based on parity between the Chinese and Japanese emperors.⁴³ Thus, even though the warrior rulers themselves may have been ignorant of diplomacy, their regimes, depending on the wisdom of Zen monks, could have handled foreign affairs properly in light of Japanese foreign perceptions and the Japanese vision of status relations in diplomacy.

The arrogant and threatening phrases in the letter may also be an eloquent sign of the Japanese stance against the tributary system, despite their great interest in recovering lost ties with China. The letter showed that the Japanese unilaterally imposed a two-year deadline for achieving peace with China and Korea and the restoration of the tally system. As they had done to Korea, they then threatened China, stating: “When the year 1602 comes, [Japanese] generals will cross the sea [to Korea] again, and in addition will sail

⁴¹ Kitajima Manji 北島万次, *Toyotomi seiken no taigai ninshiki to Chōsen shinryaku* 豊臣政権の対外認識と朝鮮侵略 (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku shuppankai, 1986), pp. 239-40.

⁴² In the peacemaking with Korea, neither proposing peace nor submitting a letter first was Ieyasu’s consistent stance. See, for example, Kihaku Genpō 規伯玄方, *Hō Chō rō Chōsen monogatari: tsuketari Yanagawa shimatsu* 方長老朝鮮物語: 付柳川始末 (Tokyo: Kondō kappansha, 1902), p. 21; *Chōsen tsūkō taiki*, p. 65.

⁴³ Kyōng Sōn 慶暹, *Haesarok* 海槎録, *Kaikō sōsa* 海行惣載 (Keijō: Chōsen kosho kankōkai, 1914), vol. 2, p. 55.

battleships on the shore of Zhejiang and Fujian Provinces and destroy the towns and villages of those areas.”⁴⁴

It would not be surprising that the 1600 letter broke little ground toward realizing the restoration of relationships with China. The letter left Bōnotsu, Satsuma for Fuzhou aboard the ship of a Satsuma merchant, Torihara Sōan 鳥原宗安, in September (?) 1600 (Keichō 5/8/u). Torihara, along with some Chinese hostages, including Mao Guoqi, was taken to Beijing, the capital of Ming China.⁴⁵ The response of the Chinese emperor Wanli 萬曆 (r. 1573-1619) to the Japanese mission was surprising. While making no response to the letter, he promised to dispatch two commercial vessels annually to Satsuma, though the Chinese authorities never relaxed their cautious attitude toward Japan.⁴⁶ Since it is unlikely that he was pleased by the insolent Japanese letter, he might have been happy about the return of his subjects, or he might also have found a chance to reduce tensions with Japan without disgracing his country.

The Chinese vessels, dispatched to Japan in accordance with the decision of the emperor did not, however, reach Japan. They were attacked in 1601 by the pirates of Itamiya Sukeshirō 伊丹屋助四郎, a merchant of Sakai, on the shores of Iōjima 硫黄島, located to the north of Yakushima.⁴⁷ Informed of the incident, Ieyasu seemed determined not to lose the thread of contact with China. He arrested and executed the perpetrator.⁴⁸ The Chinese record notes that the Japanese thereafter repatriated Chinese war captives at least twice after the incident. In June or July 1602, (Keichō 7/5/u), Katō Kiyomasa 加藤清正, one of the Japanese generals most notorious among Chinese and Koreans during the war, returned eighty-seven prisoners of war. Two months later, another unidentified Japanese returned fifty-three prisoners of war. Officially-sanctioned Chinese vessels, nevertheless, never appeared in Japan again.⁴⁹

Undertaking no further direct approach until 1611, Ieyasu attempted to pursue a policy of rapprochement toward Ming China via its tributary states—Korea and the Ryukyus. This temporary suspension of the direct approach might have been because there were issues of greater magnitude for his newborn regime, such as the consolidation of domestic rule and peacemaking with Korea as a stepping stone of the China policy. When the first Korean embassy visited Japan in the early summer of 1607, Ieyasu might have optimistically seen the realization of peace with Korea as a good chance to break through the stagnant China policy. He thought of asking the Korean king to mediate with China by sending him a letter. He did not seem to notice that the indirect approach would still have a possibility to cause what he wanted to avoid. Saishō Jōtai, however, warned against that idea and remonstrated with him, saying that such action would imply that

⁴⁴ *Kyūki zatsuroku kōhen*, vol. 3, no. 1025.

⁴⁵ Kamiya Nobuyuki, “Ryūkyū AINU to kinsei kokka” 琉球アイヌと近世国家, in *Iwanami kōza Nihon tsūshi* 岩波講座日本通史 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1993), vol. 11, p. 192. There is no evidence to prove, but it can be conjectured, that it was decided to charge a merchant with this duty in order to reduce the formality of the Japanese action. Torihara’s arrival in China can also be found in *Ming shilu Shengzong shilu*, the entry for the first day of the seventh month of 1600.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁴⁹ *Ming shilu*, entry of the twenty-second day of the fifth month of 1602.

Japan had become subordinated to China as its strength declined after Hideyoshi's death.⁵⁰ His remonstrance also came probably out of Jōtai's belief in Sino-Japanese parity.⁵¹ Ieyasu perhaps understood soon that the idea would contradict the stance which he had been taking in his China policy. He deferred to him with no fuss and never wrote to the Korean king.⁵² In the same year, his son, Tokugawa Hidetada 徳川秀忠, also remarked that Japan was not a Chinese tributary state, and this was a reason to support Jōtai's refusal to use a Chinese era name in his state letter to the Korean king. This remark should be understood to mean that the second shogun followed or shared the line as his father who still held the reins of foreign policy as *ōgoshō* 大御所 and was the head of the Minamoto 源 Clan.⁵³

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

The Letters of 1611

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

⁵⁰ *Tsūkō ichiran* 通航一覽 (Osaka: Seibundō shuppan, 1967), vol. 3, p. 2.

⁵¹ Kyōng Sōn, *Haesarok*, p. 55.

⁵² *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 3, p. 2.

⁵³ Kyōng Sōn, *Haesarok*, p. 55.

⁵⁴ Umeki Tetsuto 梅木哲人, "Kinsei ni okeru Sappan Ryūkyū shihai no keisei" 近世における薩藩琉球支配の形成, in Fujino Tamotsu 藤野保, ed., *Kyūshū to hansei* 九州と藩政 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1984), vol. 2, p. 367.

⁵⁵ *Kyūki zatsuroku kōhen*, vol. 2, no. 810, 815. For Satsuma's conquest and rule of the Ryukyus, see Kamiya, *Bakuhānsei kokka no Ryūkyū shihai* 幕藩制国家の琉球支配 (Tokyo: Azekura shobō, 1990).

⁵⁶ Li Xianzhang 李獻璋, *Nagasaki Tōjin no kenkyū* 長崎唐人の研究 (Sasebo: Shinwa ginkō, 1991), p. 131.

On January 29 (Keichō 15/12/16), the bakufu prepared two letters (hereafter, the 1611 letters) to Ming China and entrusted Zhou Xingru to deliver them to the military governor of Fujian Province, Chen Zizhen 陳子貞.⁵⁷ The 1600 letter had been drafted by the Zen monk, Saishō Jōtai, while these two letters were drafted by Ieyasu's Neo-Confucian advisor, Hayashi Razan 林羅山. Jōtai died in 1607, and Konchiin Sūden 金地院崇伝, also a Zen monk of the Nanzenji 南禅寺 Temple in Kyoto, had taken over his position in 1609 but merely modified and wrote out a fair copy of Razan's draft because of the Neo-Confucianist's poor handwriting.⁵⁸ Razan's drafting of the diplomatic letters was indeed the only exception until the house of Hayashi came to dominate diplomatic administration after Sūden's death in 1633.⁵⁹ Hori Isao 堀勇雄 has conjectured that Razan had ingratiated himself with the bakufu and thus was given the chance to draft these letters.⁶⁰

The 1611 letters had some characteristics in common with the 1600 letter. First, these two letters were neither state letters nor *biao*. The vermilion seals (*shuin* 朱印) found on the tails of the letters connoted that they were written based on the will of Ieyasu. One of them, hereafter called the 1611 Hasegawa letter, stated this even more explicitly.⁶¹ However, in common with the 1600 letter, neither of them was addressed from Ieyasu. They were addressed by Honda Masazumi and by Hasegawa Fujihito 長谷川藤広, the Nagasaki Magistrate (*Nagasaki bugyō* 長崎奉行).⁶² The expected recipient was not the Wanli Emperor but again the military governor of Fujian Province.⁶³ They also showed no indication that Ieyasu intended to pay homage to the Chinese emperor as his vassal. Second, the letters made no reference to an apology for the Japanese invasion of Korea. In the Honda letter, there was a term, *ikan* 遺憾 (regret), which referred not to the war *per se* but to the frustrated peace settlement between Japan and Ming China in 1596 during the war in Korea.⁶⁴

Third, both letters repeated the request for the restoration of the tally trade system but indicated that the Japanese had no intention of conducting a restored tally trade in the traditional way. It should be remembered here that some historians have seen this as evidence of Ieyasu's desire to be reintegrated into the Chinese tributary system. The Honda letter did not, however, show that Ieyasu hoped for the revival of tally trade in the

⁵⁷ *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 5, pp. 340-41.

⁵⁸ Hori Isao 堀勇雄, "Kaisetsu" 解説, in *Hayashi Razan bunshū* 林羅山文集 (Tokyo: Perikansha, 1979), supplementary volume, p. 14.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* Sūden mentioned Enkōji Genkitsu 円光寺元倍 and he did not know that Razan was appointed to be the drafter of the letters. *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 5, p. 308.

⁶⁰ Hori, *Hayashi Razan* 林羅山 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1964), pp. 140-41.

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

⁶² *Ibid.*, 130-32. These letters are also compiled in *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 5, pp. 342-43. Toby argues that this was the first time Tokugawa Japan had announced its independence from the Chinese world order; as we saw in the 1600 letter, 1611 was not the first time.

⁶³ Diplomatic letters were supposed to be exchanged between equals according to the East Asian diplomatic custom. It might be possible to say that the bakufu at least observed the custom at this point if they had regarded Mao Guoqi and Chen as equals to the three daimyo, and to Honda and Hasegawa.

⁶⁴ *Hayashi Razan bunshū*, vol. 1, p. 130.

conventional way. According to Ashikaga precedent, the tally came after Ashikaga Yoshimitsu paid homage to the Ming emperor. That is, the tally followed the establishment of tributary relations. On the other hand, as with the 1600 letter, the Honda letter showed that the Tokugawa bakufu reversed the conventional order of the tally and the initiation of official relations, as it stated that after receiving the tally, the bakufu would dispatch an official ship (*taishisen* 大使船).⁶⁵ It further continued: “If other ships arrived without our *insho* 印書 they will not be the ships which we dispatched.”⁶⁶ The term *insho* suggested a trade credential with the vermilion seal, *shuinjō* 朱印状, which Ieyasu and his successors issued to both Japanese and foreign traders for their voyages abroad and for their visits to Japan.⁶⁷ During the Muromachi period, Japanese ships setting out for Ming China were required to bear the tally. The Chinese-issued tally was, at the time, the sole authority enabling the Japanese to trade with China. As Ming China issued and granted the tally to its tributary states every time a new emperor ascended to the imperial throne, it embodied the authority of the Chinese emperor as the Son of Heaven (*Tianzi* 天子). For the Tokugawa bakufu, the tally was no longer the only source of authority for regulation of the China trade. The Tokugawa rulers intended to deny the traditional authority of the tally and instead initiated a vermilion seal, along with the tally, as another authority for regulation of the trade. Furthermore, in the Sino-Japanese trade, while the tally was considered to be issued to the Japanese unilaterally as it had been previously, a vermilion seal was intended for Chinese traders who wanted to come to Japan, as well as for the Japanese going to China. Ieyasu had actually granted vermilion seals to several Chinese visiting Japan, including Zhou Xingru.⁶⁸ In the Tokugawa vision of trade relations with Ming China, the vermilion seal might have had a wider range of application than the Chinese-issued tally and may have even given the impression that the bakufu intended to treat the tally as functioning supplementally in the institution of Tokugawa foreign trade.

The letters furthermore showed the Tokugawa vision of international relations, which also appeared to challenge and deny Chinese superiority and supremacy. After referring to Ieyasu’s wish to reinstitute the tally trade, the Hasegawa letter continued that the rehabilitation of the relationship between the two countries would “unite the delighted hearts of two universes” (*niten* 二天).⁶⁹ The context of the letter indicates that the term “two universes” suggests two universes which centered on China and Japan. The Honda letter showed what the Tokugawa Japan-centered universe was like. Referring to Ieyasu’s unification and pacification of Japan, it stated that the reign of the Tokugawa had extended over three generations, which probably included Ieyasu’s grandson, Iemitsu 家光, who became the third shogun in 1623.⁷⁰ As Ronald Toby notes, Hayashi Razan, the drafter of the letter, perhaps inserted this passage in order to assert the legitimacy of Tokugawa rule in Chinese rhetorical terms.⁷¹ It then continued that Korea paid tribute,

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ As for Ieyasu and his successors’ issuing of vermilion seals, see *Tsūkō ichiran*.

⁶⁸ Li Xianzhang, *Nagasaki Tōjin no kenkyū*, pp. 123-30.

⁶⁹ *Hayashi Razan bunshū*, vol. 1, p. 132.

⁷⁰ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 130.

⁷¹ Toby, *State and Diplomacy*, p. 60.

Ryukyu paid homage, and others such as Vietnam and Siam extended letters and tributes as the virtuous sway of the Tokugawa had reached over them.⁷² The Tokugawa bakufu seemed to dream of forming hierarchical international relations based on Japanese superiority and centrality, as it called the visits of foreign envoys *onrei* 御礼 (gratitude and obedience) to a Japan ruled by the Tokugawa shogun, and as it envisaged that peace with Korea was achieved in the form of Korean subordination to Tokugawa Japan.⁷³ The Tokugawa worldview corresponded little to reality, however. Except for the Ryukyus, the countries and regions to which the Honda letter referred were by no means either Japanese subordinates or tributaries in actual diplomatic and commercial relations. Regardless of the truth of these claims, it is easy to imagine that the Japanese proclamation of another universe was intolerable to China which was, it believed, supposed to be the only center of the only heaven under the rule of the Son of Heaven, the bearer of the mandate of heaven (*tianming* 天命), namely the Chinese emperor.

The Japanese seemed to be aware that such remarks would make rapprochement difficult to achieve but continued to be outspoken about their ideal of international order. There are actually two versions of the Honda letter, one in *Hayashi Razan bunshū* 林羅山文集 and the other in Konchiin Sūden's *Ikoku nikki* 異国日記, between which there are differences. The passage referring to Korea's tribute, the Ryukyus' subordination, and so on in the Honda letter is not found in the version compiled in *Ikoku nikki*.⁷⁴ From the fact that fair copies of the letters were made by Konchiin Sūden, Fujii Jōji conjectures that Sūden modified Razan's draft and that the draft found in *Ikoku nikki* was the one sent to Ming China.⁷⁵ Supposing this conjecture is correct, it was probably because the Zen monk knew the diplomatic protocols acceptable to China. He, in fact, had consulted *Zenrin kokuhō ki* 善隣国宝記, a collection of ancient and medieval diplomatic documents edited and annotated by the Zen monk Zuikai Shūhō 瑞溪周鳳 in the late fifteenth century.⁷⁶ The manuscript in *Ikoku nikki*, however, still sounded sufficiently insolent to upset China. This manuscript still maintained the idea of another Japan-centered universe as it stated that the moral sway of Tokugawa Japan had reached Korea and other countries.⁷⁷

Political and Ideological Sources of the Tokugawa Perception of China and Attitudes Toward Its Tributary System

Why was the reintegration of Japan into the Chinese tributary system not an option to the Tokugawa regime from its inception? As with the Korea policy,

⁷² *Hayashi Razan bunshū*, vol. 1, p. 132.

⁷³ See Tōkyō Teikoku Daigaku shiryō hensangakari 東京帝國大學史料編纂係, ed., *Dai Nihon shiryō* 大日本史料 (Tokyo: Tōkyō Teikoku Daigaku, 1903), vol. 12, part. 4, p. 785. See also *Dai Nihon shiryō* (1904), vol. 12, part. 6, pp. 132-34.

⁷⁴ *Hayashi Razan bunshū*, vol. 1, pp. 130-31. Konchiin Sūden 金地院崇伝, *Eiinbon ikoku nikki: Konchiin Sūden gaikō monjoshū* 影印本異国日記：金地院崇伝外交文書集 (hereafter as *Ikoku nikki*) (Tokyo: Tōkyō bijutsu, 1989), pp. 4-16.

⁷⁵ Fujii, "Junana seiki no Nihon," pp. 38-40.

⁷⁶ Konchiin Sūden, *Shintei honkō kokushi nikki* 新訂本光国師日記 (Tokyo: Zoku gunsho ruijū kanseikai, 1970), vol. 5, p. 163.

⁷⁷ Konchiin Sūden, *Ikoku nikki*, p. 15.

rehabilitating the relationship with China was an occasion for the Tokugawa to demonstrate its ability to handle foreign affairs as a new unification regime replacing the Toyotomi. That it defined peace with China as inseparable from peace with Korea is shown in the 1600 letter; the Tokugawa needed to normalize relations with Ming China without surrendering to China's claim of suzerainty. In fact, as one of the executive members of the Toyotomi regime, Ieyasu seemed to know the late hegemon's stance toward China and even to share a similar vision of peace with China. The seven peace conditions of 1593 revealed that Hideyoshi was to behave as victor.⁷⁸ The state letter of 1596 from the Wanli Emperor, treating him as his vassal, hence enraged him and drove him into continuing the fighting in Korea. Ieyasu expected the same conclusion to the war as Hideyoshi. He perceived the previous Chinese envoy, visiting the wartime headquarters in Nagoya, Kyushu, in 1594, as a sign of China's begging for Japanese forgiveness (*wabi* 侘び).⁷⁹ For him, subordination to China, which Hideyoshi had rejected, would not have been a proper choice, given his desire to establish his legitimacy in taking over from the Toyotomi regime. Demonstrating legitimacy by refusing to become a Chinese tribute was also necessary for the Tokugawa as a warrior regime. When Japanese military superiority was a shared perception among the warriors of the time, and while the failure of the war of conquest in Korea did not lead to the complete discouragement of this unsubstantiated conceit, to behave as a Chinese tributary might have been harmful or even destructive for a military regime which was supposed to represent Japanese military might externally and whose legitimacy of domestic rule depended on demonstrating and maintaining the military prowess of the Tokugawa as a new hegemon.⁸⁰

The Tokugawa regime might also have learned how to deal with the Chinese tributary system from the experience of the Ashikaga bakufu. In the civil war of the fourteenth century known as the Northern and Southern Courts period, Chinese suzerainty seemed to become an alternative source of authority when imperial authority had been diminished by the split of the imperial court, which lasted from the fall of the Kenmu 建武 regime of the Emperor Godaigo 後醍醐 in the 1330s until the reunion of the two imperial courts in 1392. The decision of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu to become a Chinese vassal was probably intended to reinforce his own regime by relying on the authority of a foreign throne, in addition to any commercial interest.⁸¹ However, he

⁷⁸ *Zenrin kokuhō ki*, p. 376.

⁷⁹ Kitajima Manji, *Toyotomi Hideyoshi*, pp. 62-65. The distorted information of the peace negotiations reported by such Japanese negotiators as Konishi Yukinaga 小西行長 seemed to give Hideyoshi and others an understanding that the envoy was Ming China's expression of apology, although Hideyoshi did not seem to believe China's sincerity fully.

⁸⁰ As for the Japanese perception of martial superiority, see Yoshino Jingoemon 吉野甚五右衛門, *Yoshino nikki* 吉野日記, in *Chūgai keiden* 中外経緯伝 (Tokyo: Kondō kappansha, 1901), pp. 201-02; Asao Naohiro 朝尾直弘, "Sakokusei no seiritsu" 鎖国制の成立, in *Kōza Nihon shi*, 4: *Bakuhansai shakai* 講座日本史, 4: 幕藩制社会 (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku shuppankai, 1973), p. 60.

⁸¹ Satō Shin'ichi 佐藤慎一, "Ashikaga seikenron" 足利政權論, in *Iwanami kōza Nihon rekishi* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1962-64), vol. 7, p. 48. Before Yoshimitsu, Prince Kaneyoshi, who had stood against the Ashikaga in northern Kyushu, sent a *biao* to the first Ming emperor and became his vassal as King of Japan in 1371, according to *Ming shilu*. Although Kameyoshi seemed to

encountered the criticism of his contemporaries, even those who were close to him. When Yoshimitsu received a Chinese envoy in 1402 as a reply to his letter of the previous year, Nijō Mitsumoto 二条満基, a court noble, noted in his diary regarding the Chinese letter in which China's superiority was clearly spelt out: "The style of the letter was unthinkable. This is a grave matter for the country [i.e., Japan]."⁸² Sanpōin Mansai 三宝院満濟, Yoshimitsu's adopted son (*yūshi* 猶子), also noted in his diary that among some, such as Shiba Yoshimasa 斯波義将, a prominent *shugo* 守護 daimyo of the time, there was a critical view of Yoshimitsu's reception of the Chinese embassy as "excessive."⁸³ Yoshimitsu continued to be criticized by later generations. In *Zenrin kokuhō ki*, which Konchiin Sūden consulted, Zuikei Shūhō, a late-fifteenth century diplomat and Zen monk of Shōkokuji Temple, criticized Yoshimitsu for his use of the title of king and a Chinese era name and for styling himself a "subject" of the Chinese emperor as a national humiliation and as infidelity to Japan's own emperor.⁸⁴ Arai Hakuseki 新井白石, a Confucian advisor of the sixth Tokugawa shogun, Ienobu 家宣, in the early eighteenth century, commented that such criticisms were "sensible."⁸⁵

The criticism which the Ashikaga attitudes toward the tributary system evoked actually came from the traditional notion of Sino-Japanese equality. We can find in Chinese documents the Japanese paying tribute to Chinese dynasties in antiquity; the tribute of Himiko 卑弥呼, Queen of Yamatai, to the Wei dynasty (220-65) in the early third century is well known. Some imperial rulers such as "Five Kings of Japan" (*Wa no go ō* 倭の五王) had also paid tribute to Chinese dynasties in antiquity. However, by the beginning of the seventh century, the Japanese were no longer trying to earn a relationship with China by becoming its tributary.⁸⁶ Prince Shōtoku 聖徳太子, the regent of the Empress Suiko 推古 (r. 593-628), sent an envoy, led by Ono no Imoko 小野妹子,

send a letter to the Ming court, the fact that he became a Chinese vassal cannot be found in Japanese records. See Tsuji Zennosuke, *Zōtei kaigai*, pp. 302-03; Mori Katsumi 森克己 and Numada Jirō 沼田次郎, eds., *Taigai kankei shi* 対外関係史 (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 1978), pp. 75-76.

⁸² Tanaka Takeo, *Chūsei kaigai kōshō shi no kenkyū* 中世海外交渉史の研究 (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku shuppankai, 1981), p. 165.

⁸³ Mansai Jugō 満濟准后, *Mansai Jugō nikki* 満濟准后日記 (Tokyo: Zoku gunsho ruijū kanseikai, 1958), vol. 2, p. 55.

⁸⁴ *Zenrin kokuhō ki*, pp. 77-9. Itō Tasaburō 伊東多三郎 and Tanaka Takeo argue that Zuikei Shūhō criticized Yoshimitsu in terms of diplomatic justice rather than his presumptuousness to the emperor. As Min Tu-ki 閔德基 has noted, in *Zenrin kokuhō ki* Zuikei explicitly indicated that he saw Yoshimitsu's vassalage bestowed from Ming China as a matter of loyalty to the Japanese emperor. See Itō Tasaburō, "Shōgun, Nihon kokuō to shōsu: sono rekishiteki igi" 將軍、日本国王と称す：その歴史的意義, *Nihon rekishi* 60 (January 1956), p. 56. Tanaka Takeo, *Chūsei kaigai*, p. 168; idem., "Kaisetsu" 解説, in *Zenrin kokuhō ki*, *Shintei zoku zenrin kokuhō ki*, p. 629; Min Tu-ki, *Zenkindai Higashi Ajia no naka no Kan-Nichi kankei* 前近代東アジアのなかの韓日関係 (Tokyo: Waseda Daigaku shuppanbu, 1994), pp. 235-36.

⁸⁵ Arai Hakuseki 新井白石, *Arai Hakuseki zenshū* 新井白石全集 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1977), vol. 3, pp. 634-35.

⁸⁶ *Taigai kankei shi*, pp. 1-21. See also *Zenrin kokuhō ki*, pp. 18-27.

to the Sui dynasty (589-618) in 607. The Japanese state letter addressed to the second emperor of the dynasty, Yangdi 煬帝 (r. 604-18), stated: “The Son of Heaven of the country of the sunrise (*hiizuru tokoro no tenshi* 日出処天子) addresses the Son of Heaven of the country of the sunset (*hibossuru tokoro no tenshi* 日没処天子).”⁸⁷ This reveals that Shōtoku ventured to claim equality in the relationship of the two countries by making the Japanese emperor a peer of his Chinese counterpart. The notion of Sino-Japanese equality was specified in the eighth century political codes, *ryō* 令, as they fixed Tang China (618-907) as an equal neighboring country (*ringoku* 隣国), contrasted with Korea as a barbarian tributary (*bankoku* 蕃国).⁸⁸ Government-to-government relations with China had been absent after the embassies to Tang China (*ken-Tōshi* 遣唐使) were cancelled in 894. Although Ashikaga Yoshimitsu restored official relations by paying tribute to Ming China in the early fifteenth century, Japan’s participation in the tributary system did not alter the traditional notion that Japan would not be subject to China. Yoshimitsu’s attitude toward Ming China was therefore considered unprecedented and continued to be criticized for centuries. Jōtai’s view of the status relations between the two countries and the remarks of Tokugawa Hidetada in 1607 that Japan was not a subordinate of Ming China indicated that the Tokugawa policymakers had inherited the traditional notion.

Japanese attitudes toward the Chinese tributary system reflected their traditional ideology and beliefs. This can be found first in the fact that their religious and ideological self-perception of a divine land (*shinkoku* 神国) made the Japanese refuse to recognize Chinese superiority. In 1411, Yoshimitsu’s son, Yoshimochi 義持, the fourth shogun of the Ashikaga bakufu (r. 1394-1423), repealed his father’s China policy and refused to behave as a Chinese vassal.⁸⁹ He reasoned that Yoshimitsu’s behavior violated the covenant bequeathed by the Japanese deities and that his death in 1408 had been caused by their curse.⁹⁰ Resuming tributary relations with Ming China in 1432, Yoshimochi’s younger brother Yoshinori 義教, the sixth shogun (r. 1429-41), did not believe that emulating the style of his father’s state letter to the Ming emperor would be proper. Summoned for advice on the proper style of a state letter to China by the shogun, Mansai responded: “Since [Japan is] a divine land, to comply with the protocol of China is impossible.”⁹¹ Zuikei Shūhō, criticizing Yoshimitsu, also seemed an inheritor of the divine land ideology. He began *Zenrin kokuhō ki* by quoting a famous passage, “Great Japan is a divine land” (*ō Yamato wa kami no kuni nari* 大日本ハ神国也), from

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 33; Nishijima Sadao, *Nihon rekishi no kokusai kankyō* 日本歴史の国際環境 (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku shuppankai, 1985), p. 89. The letter is compiled in *Zenrin kokuhō ki*; see p. 34.

⁸⁸ Nishijima, *Nihon rekishi*, pp. 104-06; Saijō Tsutomu 西条勉, “Nihon shoki no shisō: ‘Nihon’ to iu gensō” 日本書紀の思想: 「日本」という幻想, in *Kojiki, Nihon shoki, Fudoki: Kodai bungaku kōza* 古事記・日本書紀・風土記: 古代文学講座 (Tokyo: Benseisha, 1995), vol. 10, pp. 160-61.

⁸⁹ Tsuji, *Zōtei kaigai*, p. 312; Sakuma, *Nichi-Min kankei*, pp. 359-60. See also *Zenrin kokuhō ki*, pp. 138-44.

⁹⁰ *Zenrin kokuhō ki*, p. 140.

⁹¹ *Mansai Jugō nikki*, vol. 2, p. 65.

Kitabatake Chikafusa's 北畠親房 *Jinnō shōtōki* 神皇正統記.⁹² Toyotomi Hideyoshi deified himself by fabricating a legend of his birth and exploited the claim of Japan's divinity as justification for overseas conquest.⁹³

The Tokugawa bakufu appeared to be under the sway of this traditional ethos, as its decree on banning Christianity in 1613 began with the proclamation: "Our Japan is a divine land."⁹⁴ *Tōshōsha engi* 東照社縁起 explains this notion in detail: "It is said that there were once three golden rings floating above the vast blue ocean. After the world was created, yin and yang were divided, and the three golden rings turned into three shining sanctities and appeared there. Hence our country is a divine land."⁹⁵ Engelbert Kaempfer, a German serving as physician for years at the Dutch factory in Nagasaki in the late seventeenth century, also noted that the Japanese claimed to be the descendants of deities.⁹⁶

The Japanese beliefs in the divinity of their country and the "unbroken" imperial lineage was also counted as a rationale for Japanese superiority over others, including China. *Tōshōsha engi* claimed that the divine origin of Japan and the unbroken line of imperial rulers, whose ancestry was believed to trace back to Amaterasu, placed the country in the center of the world, which the Japanese had described as having three constituents—Japan, China, and India. "Time passed until the deities counted tens of thousands of generations," it continued, "and until the imperial lineage counted a thousand generations, and no dynastic change has ever occurred, and so imperial descendants have been. Is there any land as well ruled as this in this world? It is hence clear that Japan is the root and India (*Indo* 印度) and China (*Shina* 支那) are branches and leaves."⁹⁷ Yamaga Sokō 山鹿素行, a prominent scholar in the late seventeenth century, stated: "Our country (*honchō* 本朝) is descended from Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大神, and its imperial lineage has remained unchanged from the times of the deities until today." As a Confucian, he valued this as evidence of Japanese moral superiority.⁹⁸ His contemporary and another notable Confucian of the Yamasaki Ansai 山崎闇齋 School (*Kimon* 崎門), Asami Keisai 淺見綱齋, shared Sōkō's view.⁹⁹ Later Confucian and non-Confucian scholars also inherited this claim.¹⁰⁰

⁹² *Zenrin kokuhō ki*, p. 10. Kitabatake Chikafusa, *Jinnō shōtōki*, in *Jinnō shōtōki, Masukagami* 神皇正統記、増鏡, *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 日本古典文学大系, vol. 87 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1965), p. 41.

⁹³ *Zenrin kokuhō ki*, pp. 380-84; Ishige, "Shokuhō seiken no seiji shisō," p. 26.

⁹⁴ Konchiin Sūden, *Ikoku nikki*, pp. 33-34.

⁹⁵ *Tōshōsha engi* 東照社縁起, *Zokuzoku Nihon emaki taisei: denki, engi hen* 続々日本絵巻大成：伝記・縁起編 (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1994), vol. 8, p. 3.

⁹⁶ Engelbert Kaempfer, *Kaempfer's Japan: Tokugawa Culture Observed* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), p. 51.

⁹⁷ *Tōshōsha engi*, p. 3.

⁹⁸ Yamaga Sokō 山鹿素行, "Haisho zanpitsu" 配所残筆, in *Yamaga Sokō* 山鹿素行, *Nihon shisō taikei* 日本思想体系 (NST), vol. 32 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1970), p. 333.

⁹⁹ Asami Keisai 淺見綱齋, "Chūgoku ben" 中国辨, in *Yamazaki Ansai gakuha* 山崎闇齋学派, NST, vol. 31 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1980), pp. 416-19.

¹⁰⁰ Aizawa Seishisai 会沢正志齋, "Taishoku kanwa" 退食閑話, in *Mitogaku* 水戸学, NST, vol.

The Tokugawa Vision of Status Relations with Ming China

What vision of status relations with China did the Tokugawa bakufu have when it abandoned the option of becoming a tributary? Some historians have argued that equal relations were what the bakufu sought. Nakamura Tadashi has argued that the 1611 Honda letter designated the bakufu's will to obtain parity with China.¹⁰¹ Fujimura Michio 藤村道夫 has contended that if the letter had been accepted by Ming China, an equal association could have been established between the two countries.¹⁰² Concerning these arguments, the following problems can be pointed out. Nakamura would still need to explain what specific aspects of the letter demonstrated the Tokugawa regime's intention of parity with Ming China. Fujimura's argument is little more than speculation, failing to suggest evidence that the Tokugawa sought an equal status with Ming China.

Kamiya Nobuyuki has offered an interpretation regarding the Tokugawa vision of status relations with Ming China. Like the tally system, the reception of a *kin'in* 金印 (gold seal) and the title, *Nihon kokuō* 日本国王 (King of Japan), bestowed by the Chinese emperor would symbolize subordination to China. Examining the 1600 and 1611 letters, Kamiya notes the point that the Japanese intended to dispatch an envoy bearing the gold seal, along with a tally granted in advance, and saw normalization in that way as following a "precedent" (*zenki* 前規). He interprets "precedent" as referring to the visit of the Chinese envoy in 1596 and the gold seal which was brought, along with the state letter from the Wanli Emperor to Hideyoshi.¹⁰³ In the Muromachi period, the investiture of the gold seal, as well as the title of king, meant the Ming emperor's recognition of the Ashikaga shogun as his vassal. Seeking a "victor's peace," Hideyoshi on the other hand had no intention of becoming a foreign vassal and hence became furious and rejected the peace settlement. Kamiya refuses to regard the Tokugawa request for a tally and the reference to a gold seal as evidence of Ieyasu's intention of joining the queue of Chinese vassals. He instead interprets the reference to the gold seal as revealing Ieyasu's desire for Chinese recognition of him as "King of Japan," in which the shogun and the Japanese emperor were incorporated, and concludes that Ieyasu, as King of Japan, was aiming to associate with the Chinese emperor as a peer.¹⁰⁴

This interpretation is not, however, convincing for the following reasons. First, as mentioned above, I agree that the vermilion seal denied the exclusive authority which the tally had enjoyed in previous centuries in Sino-Japanese trade. However, it simultaneously referred to no specific Tokugawa view of status relations with China.

53 (Tokyo Iwanami shoten, 1973), p. 240; Ōkuni Takamasa 大国隆正, "Hongaku kyoyō" 本学挙要, in Hirata Atsutane, *Ban Nobutomo, Ōkuni Takamasa* 平田篤胤・伴信友・大国隆正, *Nihon shisō taikai*, vol. 50 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1970), pp. 412-13; Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長, *Motoori Norinaga zenshū* 本居宣長全集, (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1968), vol. 18, p. 405.

¹⁰¹ Nakamura Tadashi, "Higashi Ajia to sakoku Nihon," pp. 343-44.

¹⁰² Fujimura Michio 藤村道夫, "Taikun gaikō taisei no ronri: Meiji zenki gaikō shiron josetsu" 大君外交体制の論理：明治前期外交史論序説, *Nagoya Daigaku Nihon shi ronshū* 名古屋大学日本史論集 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1975), vol. 2, pp. 382-83.

¹⁰³ Kamiya, "Taikun gaikō to kinsei no kokusei," pp. 89-102.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

Second, Kamiya fails to cite any direct evidence that Ieyasu wanted that particular title from the Chinese emperor. No reference to the title can be found in any documents, although he probably drew that conclusion from the reference to the gold seal in the 1600 letter. In addition, he would need to prove that the Japanese, or at least Ieyasu's, understanding of "King of Japan," which had traditionally implied inferiority to the Chinese emperor, had changed, as had the understanding of the tally. It is unlikely that the bakufu was interested in this issue, as it continued to reject the Korean request of the shogun's use of the title.¹⁰⁵

Examining existing primary sources, it might be better not to go beyond arguing that the Tokugawa bakufu had no intention of being reintegrated into the Chinese tributary system. The Japanese letters to Ming China contain no reference to or indication of subordination to Ming China. The Japanese refused to comply with the form of *biao*; they denied the traditional authority the tally had enjoyed for centuries and the Chinese *Weltanschauung*. So far from seeking subordination, their letters threatened China with another military assault unless China acceded to the Japanese vision of normalization. The traditional Japanese diplomatic and ideological perceptions of China, which the Tokugawa policymakers inherited, suggested the possibility that Tokugawa Japan would seek at least equality or perhaps more. The letters did not, however, show anything but a rejection of reintegration into the tributary system. The Tokugawa attitude toward Ming China was thus, with respect to status relations, ambiguous, outside of their rock-ribbed stance against becoming a Chinese tributary.

This ambiguity toward status relations may partially have reflected the limitations of the Tokugawa regime's ability in foreign policy. Rejecting Chinese tributary status, the Japanese would be left with the following options—obtaining either a superior or an equal status vis-à-vis China, leaving status relations behind, or giving up on restoring a relationship itself. Nevertheless, establishing both a negotiation route and a relationship with Ming China had traditionally required foreign countries to comply with a certain set of manners, such as behaving as a subject and paying tribute to China. To try to establish a relationship with China based on either of those options, aside from giving up on the process, would have, therefore, required the Japanese to take forcible measures to compel China to surrender to the Japanese vision of Sino-Japanese relations. Otherwise, they would have had to accede to diplomatic relations acceptable to China. While consistent in not subordinating themselves to China, the Japanese seemed to be historically aware that they would need to give way to the Chinese to a certain degree. For example, as mentioned above, eighth-century Japan defined China as a peer but simultaneously understood the necessity of compromising in order to maintain diplomatic relations with Tang China. In 733, the Japanese state letter, written in Chinese, styled the Japanese emperor *sumeramikoto* 主明樂美御德, instead of styling him *Tennō* 天皇 or *Kōdai* (*Kōtei* 皇帝). "Sumeramikoto" was the Japanese vernacular for the emperor, but it had never been employed in diplomacy before. The Japanese probably used it intentionally, by spelling it with six Chinese characters (C. *zhu, ming, le, mei, yu, de*), in order to conceal the contradiction between the Chinese and Japanese diplomatic perceptions. The Chinese seemed to misunderstand it as the surname and given name of the Japanese

¹⁰⁵ As for the Tokugawa attitude toward the title, for example, see Miyake Hidetoshi 三宅英利, *Kinsei Nit-Chō kankeishi no kenkyū* 近世日朝關係史の研究 (Tokyo: Bunken shuppan, 1986).

“king,” as the Japanese perhaps expected.¹⁰⁶ The Tokugawa bakufu also compromised in a different way. The bakufu, which did not take forcible measures against even the much smaller state of Korea, chose to tame the Chinese claim of being the Middle Kingdom by calling Ming China “*Chūka*” (C. *Zhonghua* 中華) and “*Tenchō*” (C. *Tianchao* 天朝) in the letters of 1600 and 1611.¹⁰⁷

The ambiguity perhaps may also have grown out of the complexity of the Japanese perception of China. As noted above, at least since the early seventh century, parity had been the diplomatic and political stance which successive imperial and warrior rulers had deemed adequate. Even Japanese superiority based on religious and intellectual rationales had been claimed and discussed among political and intellectual elites as mentioned above. The Japanese had, on the other hand, continued to revere China and had depended on its civilization since antiquity. Even claims and discourses on Japanese superiority had depended on Chinese rhetoric, consciously or unconsciously.¹⁰⁸ The Japanese knew that China was far larger than their own country.¹⁰⁹ The cultural dependency, the sentiment of reverence, and the awareness of smallness could possibly engender an inferiority complex.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, Uete Michiari 植手道有 has noted that the Japanese distinguished China as a state from China as a civilization; the notions of equality and superiority indicated that cultural dependency did not determine the Japanese perception of status relations with China.¹¹¹ Notions of equality and superiority might have been a reaction to such an inferiority complex and may have produced desire for emulation or a sense of rivalry. This would have been a natural human response of self-esteem and respect. Tokutomi Sohō 徳富蘇峰 (Iichirō 猪一郎), a noted journalist in the Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa periods, wrote that the Japanese, fascinated, adoring, envying, and yearning after the civilization of China, had tried to preserve their independence and individuality by fostering a sense of rivalry, which generated the ideology of Japan as a divine land.¹¹² The Japanese claim to be *dai Nihon*

¹⁰⁶ Nishijima, *Nihon rekishi*, pp. 177-78.

¹⁰⁷ *Kyūki zatsuroku kōhen*, vol. 3, no. 1025; *Hayashi Razan bunshū*, vol. 1, pp. 131-32.

¹⁰⁸ For example, see *Arai Hakuseki zenshū*, vol. 4, p. 724; vol. 5, pp. 603-04, 649-50.

¹⁰⁹ *Zoku zenrin kokuhō ki*, pp. 372-75; Yamaga Sokō, *Chūchō jijitsu* 中朝事實 (Tokyo: Chūchō jijitsu kankōkai, 1985), pp. 35-36, 150; Nishikawa Joken 西川如見, *Nihon suido kō, Suido kaiben, Zōho kai tsūshō kō* 日本水土考、水土解辯、増補華夷通商考 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1944), pp. 25-26.

¹¹⁰ Satō Seizaburō 佐藤誠三郎, “Bakumatsu, Meiji shoki ni okeru taigai ishiki no shoruikei” 幕末明治初期における対外意識の緒類型, in Satō Seizaburō and Roger Dingman, eds., *Kindai Nihon no taigai taido* 近代日本の対外態度 (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku shuppankai, 1974), pp. 4-10.

¹¹¹ Uete Michiari 植手道有, *Nihon kindai shisō no keisei* 日本近代思想の形成 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1974), p. 281.

¹¹² Tokutomi Iichirō 徳富猪一郎, “Tokutomi Iichirō sensei kyōjutsusho” 徳富猪一郎先生供述書, in Kobori Keiichirō 小堀桂一郎, ed., *Tōkyō saiban Nihon no benmei* 東京裁判日本の弁明 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), pp. 284-85. See also Furukawa Tetsushi 古川哲史, “Shinkoku shisō no keisei to tenkai” 神国思想の形成と展開, in *Nihon shisō shi kōza*, 3: *Chūsei no shisō* 日本思想史講座, 3: 中世の思想 (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1976), pp. 57-81.

大日本 (great Japan) and the center of the universe was, he mentioned, due to the indomitable spirit which grew out of the Japanese awareness that their own country was small and poor. Sohō claimed that without this spirit, Japan would otherwise have become China's subordinate.¹¹³

The following episode indicates that the sense of inferiority displeased the Japanese rather than persuaded them to recognize China's superiority. One day, Ieyasu questioned Hayashi Razan about the education system of China. When Razan replied that the Chinese education and school system was superior to that of Japan, Ieyasu looked displeased and terminated their talk.¹¹⁴ Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles's speech in Batavia in 1815 may also indicate the Japanese sense of rivalry with the Chinese. Based on the report of W. Ainslie dispatched to Nagasaki for the purpose of resuming trade with Japan four years earlier, he mentioned that the Japanese detested being compared to the Chinese.¹¹⁵ The Japanese also refused to accept the disparity in size as a rationale for China's superiority (Japan's inferiority).¹¹⁶ Although the assumption of equality or superiority might thus have grown out of an inferiority complex and such sentiments as emulation and a sense of rivalry, the undeniable facts of Japan's cultural importations and its territorial size, along with the lack of measures to overcome the Chinese claim of superiority, might simultaneously have prevented the bakufu from finding a concrete status relationship with Ming China.

Tokugawa China Policy after 1611

The 1611 letters became a last attempt at a direct approach to Ming China, but Ming China did not reply to either of them. The *Ming shilu* 明實錄 states that the 1600 letter reached Fuzhou and was transmitted to the Ming imperial court in Beijing.¹¹⁷ Meanwhile, inasmuch no reference to the 1611 letters has been found, it is likely either that Zhou Xingru did not deliver the letters to the Fuzhou authorities, or that local Chinese officials received them but did not transmit them to Beijing. After the two Chinese ships which the Wanli Emperor had dispatched suffered an attack from Japanese pirates in 1601, the Ming authorities maintained vigilant observation of Japan. Informed of Satsuma's conquest of the Ryukyus in 1609, the Ming authorities tightened their maritime prohibitions. The military governor of Fujian Province, Chen Zichen, was in fact one of the firmest advocates of stricter precautions against Japanese piracy.¹¹⁸ To send a letter to such a person without fulfilling the necessary conditions for communicating with the self-proclaimed Middle Kingdom and to anticipate a reply was a fatuous expectation.

¹¹³ Tokutomi Ichirō, *Shōrisha no hiai* 勝利者の悲哀 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1952), p. 52; Tokutomi Ichirō, *Haisen gakkō kokushi no kōgi* 敗戦学校國史の講義 (Tokyo: Hōunsha, 1948), pp. 23-25.

¹¹⁴ Hori, *Hayashi Razan*, pp. 164-65.

¹¹⁵ Kamigaito Ken'ichi 上垣内憲一, "Sakoku" no hikaku bunmeiron: Higashi Ajia kara no shiten 「鎖国」の比較文明論：東アジアからの視点 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1994), p. 107.

¹¹⁶ *Zoku zenrin kokuhō ki*, pp. 372-75; Yamaga Sokō, *Chūchō jijitsu*, pp. 35-36, 150; Nishikawa Joken, *Nihon suido kō, Suido kaiben, Zōho kai tsūshō kō*, pp. 25-26.

¹¹⁷ *Ming shilu*, entry for the first day of the seventh month, 1600.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* For example, on the sixteenth day of the eleventh month, 1610, Military Governor Chen proposed to the imperial court that maritime defenses and prohibitions be reinforced.

Because its direct approach had been frustrated, the Tokugawa bakufu came to concentrate on indirect approaches via China's tributaries—Korea and the Ryukyus. Some accounts of Tsushima's request for "borrowing a route to Ming China" are found in Korean documents, which, however, present no details of what instructions the bakufu passed to the domain.¹¹⁹ No such account can be discovered in bakufu documents either. It should also be remembered that Tsushima secretly and wrongly continued to manipulate the Tokugawa regime's Korea policy by forging and distorting Japanese and Korean diplomatic letters for several decades until the Yanagawa 柳川 Affair exposed its malpractice in the early 1630s. Kondō Morishige 近藤守重 (Seisai正齋), the editor of *Gaiban tsūsho* 外蕃通書, noted that this would make it difficult to credit those documents.¹²⁰ All we know is that the Japanese still expected the Chinese tributary state to mediate in negotiations with its suzerain, as Ieyasu had in 1607. The bakufu, however, seemed to be more conscious of possible influence from these diplomatic actions on Japan's and its own dignity and prestige after Saishō Jōtai's remonstrance with Ieyasu. The founder of the bakufu had once thought of contacting the Korean king by writing to him directly; his successors never intended to ask the Yi dynasty to mediate with China directly and instead used the Tsushima channel. As Korea rejected Tsushima's request, this attempt also failed. The Koreans may have been afraid that helping Japan would incur the displeasure of Ming China. They also would not have wanted to invite the Japanese to their territories, because the transit of the Ashikaga tributary missions to China via the Korean peninsula gave the Japanese the opportunity to acquire knowledge of Korea and helped them to invade in the 1590s. Korea did not, therefore, allow the Japanese to go beyond the southern port city of Pusan, except for the 1629 Tsushima mission which went up to Seoul.

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

¹¹⁹ Ō Suk-kwōn 魚叔權, comp., *Kosa ch'waryo* 攷事撮要 (Seoul: Keijō Teikoku Daigaku hōbun gakubu, 1941), p. 120; Tsuji, *Zōtei kaigai*, p. 473.

¹²⁰ Kondō Morishige 近藤守重, *Gaiban tsūsho* 外蕃通書, in *Kondō Seisai zenshū* 近藤正齋全集 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1905), vol. 1, pp. 21-22.

¹²¹ Nanpo Bunshi 南浦文之, *Nanpo bunshū* 南浦文集, vol. 2, in *Shin Sappan sōsho* 新薩藩叢書 (Tokyo: Rekishi toshosha, 1971), vol. 4, p. 513.

¹²² *Tokugawa jikki* 徳川實記, in *Shintei zōho kokushi taiki* 新訂増補国史大系 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1976), vol. 38, p. 530; *Butoku hennen shūsei* 武徳編年集成 (Tokyo: Meicho shuppan, 1976), vol. 2, p. 134.

commercial vessels annually to the Ryukyus for trade. Third, both countries would communicate by exchanging envoys.¹²³

In his *Nanhei kikō* 南聘紀行, Ijichi Sueyasu 伊地知季安 states that in 1612 Shimazu Yoshihiro, receiving the order of Ieyasu, also instructed Shō Nei to pass the three options mentioned above for restoring trade.¹²⁴ Nanpo Bunshi 南浦文之, a Zen monk in charge of drafting diplomatic notes for Satsuma, was to draft a letter to be addressed to China. Satsuma let a Ryukyu tributary mission deliver the letter, dated the spring of 1613; this letter suggested the three options to Ming China. First, Ming China would allow Japanese commercial ships to trade in its border region. Second, Chinese commercial ships would come to the Ryukyus to trade with the Japanese. Third, China and Japan would trade with an exchange of envoys.¹²⁵ The border trade referred to in the letter may suggest trade in the coastal region of Taiwan, located on the opposite shore of Fujian Province. Expeditions by Arima Harunobu 有馬晴信, a Catholic daimyo in Kyushu, in 1609, and Murayama Tōan 村山等安, Nagasaki Deputy (*Nagasaki daikan* 長崎代官), in 1616 were carried out under the sanction of the bakufu deriving from the latter's interest in Taiwan as a potential trade spot.¹²⁶ The third option, in these two letters, is not clear but should be understood as repeating the same request as that in the 1600 and 1611 letters.

After suggesting these three options, both Iehisa and Yoshihiro continued that Chinese rejection of the options would result in China's being subjected to a Japanese military action. Satsuma followed instructions from the bakufu, as Yoshihiro said to Shō Nei that Ieyasu intended to dispatch troops should China reject all of them.¹²⁷ On April 3, 1610 (Keichō 15/leap 2/10), Honda Masazumi passed to Shimazu Iehisa an instruction, stating that Satsuma was exempted from the construction of the Nagoya Castle, which had been started in 1609. Masazumi continued that it would instead prepare to dispatch troops to China in case the effort to restore the tally trade failed.¹²⁸ In August or September 1610 (Keichō 15/7/u), Iehisa met with Itakura Katsushige 板倉勝重, Kyoto Deputy (*Kyōto shoshidai* 京都所司代), in Fushimi on his way to Edo, with Shō Nei captured in the conquest of 1609. Itakura told Iehisa that an expedition to China was more like a reason to other daimyo to exempt Satsuma from the construction.¹²⁹

¹²³ *Kyūki zatsuroku kōhen*, vol. 4, no. 876; Kamiya, "Satsuma no Ryūkyū shinnyū" 薩摩の琉球支配, in *Shin Ryūkyū shi kinsei hen* 新琉球史近世編 (Naha: Ryūkyū shinpōsha, 1989), vol. 1, p. 69.

¹²⁴ Ijichi Sueyasu 伊地知季安, *Nanhei kikō* 南聘紀行 (no publication information), p. 26. Although Shō Nei dispatched a tributary envoy to China within the year, it could not accomplish its mission. The Ryukyuans were merely allowed to pay tribute every ten years. Miyata Toshihiko 宮田敏彦, "Kinsei shoki no Ryū-Min bōeki" 近世初期の琉明貿易, *Nihon rekishi* 日本歴史 340 (September 1976), pp. 3-4.

¹²⁵ *Nanpo bunshū*, vol. 2, p. 508; Konchiin Sūden, *Ikoku nikki*, p. 40.

¹²⁶ Uehara Kenzen 上原兼善, "Bōeki no tenkai" 貿易の展開, in *Shin Ryūkyū shi kinsei hen*, vol. 1, p. 124; *Dai Nihon shiryō* (1904), vol. 12, part. 6, pp. 138-39; *ibid.* (1925), vol. 26, part. 26, pp. 899-909.

¹²⁷ *Nanhei kikō*, p. 26.

¹²⁸ *Kyūki zatsuroku: kōhen*, vol. 4, no. 672.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 703, 716.

Complaints about the series of large-scale construction projects to which the bakufu obliged daimyo to contribute had reached the ears of the bakufu.¹³⁰ The bakufu probably considered that an excuse necessary to ease the discontent among the daimyo. At the same time, still uncertain of China's reaction to the conquest of its tributary, the bakufu wanted to make Satsuma concentrate on the China-Ryukyu issue.¹³¹ However, Itakura did not entirely reject the bakufu's consideration of using military measures. He told Iehisa that *bahan* 八幡 (piracy) would be proper.¹³² The term *bahan* originally came from the Chinese name for Japanese pirates, *bafan*, after the name of the Japanese deity of war, *Hachiman* 八幡(神), who was depicted on their flags.

This indirect approach did not, however, bear the fruit which had been anticipated. Although the 1613 letter was entrusted to the Ryukyu tributary mission in October 1614 (Keichō 19/9), Ming China refused to accept the mission itself.¹³³ Having been informed of Satsuma's conquest of the tributary kingdom in 1609, China was suspicious of the Ryukyus' relationship with Japan.¹³⁴ The Fujian authorities feared that the eastern coastal area of Taiwan, such as present-day Danshui 淡水, might be subjected to Japanese piracy and strengthened the maritime prohibitions and coastal defense of the mainland.¹³⁵ Konchiin Sūden later wondered if the Ryukyus had truly transmitted the Japanese request to China.¹³⁶ In late April or early May 1616 (Genna 元和 2/3), Shimazu Iehisa again ordered Shō Nei to mediate in negotiations with China.¹³⁷ Iehisa received a report from Shō Nei three months later that the Japanese request had been declined, though it has been an issue of debate among historians whether the Ryukyus truly transmitted the Japanese request to Ming China.¹³⁸ Along with this repeated indirect approach, in the same year, Murayama Tōan launched an expedition to Taiwan, under the sanction of the bakufu, for the purpose of opening a trade site on the island. In April (?) 1617 (Genna 3/3), the bakufu returned a Chinese captured in an expedition to Fuzhou.¹³⁹ This Japanese use of force, in parallel with the peaceful diplomatic measures via the

¹³⁰ *Tokugawa jikki*, in *Kaitei zōho kokushi taikai*, vol. 38, p. 210.

¹³¹ *Kyūki zatsuroku: kōhen*, vol. 4, no. 1280.

¹³² *Ibid.*, no. 672.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, no. 1281.

¹³⁴ *Ming shilu*, entry for July 28, 1612.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, entry for the fourteenth day of the seventh month of 1616.

¹³⁶ Konchiin Sūden, *Ikoku nikki*, p. 40.

¹³⁷ *Kyūki zatsuroku kōhen*, vol. 4, no. 1239.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 1356; Tomiyama Kazuyuki 豊見山和行, "Kinsei shoki ni okeru Ryūkyū Ōkoku no tai-Satsuma gaikō: Shō Nei, Shō Hō seiken ikōki o megutte" 近世初期における琉球王国の対薩摩外交：尚寧、尚豊政権移行期をめぐって, *Ryūkyū Daigaku kyōiku gakubu kiyō* 九州大学教育学部紀要 54.1-2 (March 1999), pp. 53-66. As Komiyama notes, it seems doubtful that the Ryukyus fulfilled Satsuma's instructions, as, for example, Shō Nei leaked news of Murayama's expedition to Ming China. In the *Ming shilu*, the entry of the fourteenth day of the seventh month of that year states that the King of the Ryukyus claimed that Japanese pirates may attack Jilongshan (present-day Jilong, Taiwan) with more than 500 battleships, warning that if it were seized by the Japanese other regions in Taiwan and along the Fujian coast would be endangered.

¹³⁹ Kamiya, *Bakuhansei kokka no Ryūkyū shihai*, p. 89.

Ryukyus, did not contribute to Tokugawa China policy. After these attempts resulted in failure, the indirect approach also ceased.

It has been argued that after the death of Ieyasu in 1616, his successors lost their enthusiasm for rehabilitating the relationship with Ming China. After the Ryukyu-route approach failed either because of Chinese rejection or because of Ryukyu sabotage, the bakufu never reiterated its request for restoration of diplomatic and commercial ties, nor did Japanese troops cross the sea to assault China. The success of the trade system of vermilion seals (*shuinsen bōeki* 朱印船貿易) and the visits of Portuguese and Chinese ships to Japanese ports, violating the Ming maritime prohibitions in the latter case, might have filled Japanese demands for foreign goods, especially Chinese silk. The bakufu might not therefore have wanted to waste any more energy on the difficult issue of its status relationship with China.¹⁴⁰

The bakufu's attitudes toward the Chinese envoy in 1621 revealed its declining interest not only in diplomatic relations but also in official commercial ties with the Ming dynasty. In April or May 1621 (Genna 7/3/u), more than fifty Chinese, led by the merchant Shan Fengxiang 单鳳翔, came to Nagasaki, carrying two letters dated 1619, from the military governor of Zhejiang Province. One of them was addressed to the shogun, and the other was addressed to the Nagasaki Magistrate.¹⁴¹ It was the first time Ming China had sent letters to Japan since the end of the war in Korea. The Chinese letters contained neither any suggestion of peace nor any reference to the restoration of the tally system but instead demanded that the Japanese control Japanese piracy.¹⁴² The fact that bakufu officials spent more than three weeks deciding on a response to the letter and more than three months on deciding how to treat the Chinese visitors, who had been detained in Kyoto, might indicate that they had not totally lost interest in rehabilitating ties with China.¹⁴³ However, the Chinese letter had a blemish from the Japanese point of view: It styled the Tokugawa shogun—Hidetada at the time—*shōgunsama* (C. *jiangjunyang* 將軍樣). *Jiangjun* (J. *shōgun*), namely shogun, had never been a diplomatic title in East Asian international relations.¹⁴⁴ Successive Japanese warrior rulers, including the Tokugawa shoguns, had never employed the title in diplomacy. Because of this odd feature of the letter, Konchiin Sūden even suspected that the letter might be a fake.¹⁴⁵ As Ii Naotaka 井伊直孝 noted when he conferred with other bakufu officials to decide on a shogunal diplomatic title after the Yanagawa Affair in 1635, the title could imply Japan's inferior status to China as it meant military commander and was employed as a title for a subject in both China and Japan.¹⁴⁶ The final decision was not to accept the letter, and the bakufu ordered the envoy to leave Japanese territory. The

¹⁴⁰ Toby, *State and Diplomacy*, pp. 63-64

¹⁴¹ Konchiin Sūden, *Ikoku nikki*, pp. 38-39; *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 5, pp. 556-58.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Konchiin Sūden, *Ikoku nikki*, pp. 38-39; *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 5, pp. 556-61.

¹⁴⁴ Konchiin Sūden, *Ikoku nikki*, p. 39.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁴⁶ *Kanei jūsannen heishi Chōsen shinshi kiroku* 寛永十三年丙子朝鮮信使記録 (ms. copy, collection of Tōkyō Daigaku shiryō hensanjo).

explanation given to the envoy was that the letter was discourteous to the Japanese and that communication between China and Japan had been to be handled through Korea.¹⁴⁷

The response of the bakufu to another Chinese letter also showed its declining interest in the restoration of relationships with China. In 1624, the bakufu received a letter, addressed from the Fujian authorities to the Nagasaki Magistrate. The letter again asked the bakufu to control piracy, though it is not clear whether Japanese piracy was as active at the time as the Chinese asserted.¹⁴⁸ It should be remembered that for Ming China, the tally trade with Ashikaga Japan had been a measure for coping with Japanese piracy, as well as a way to manifest its power as the Middle Kingdom. This would have been, accordingly, another chance for the bakufu to attempt the restoration of either diplomatic or commercial relations; a letter addressed from Hasegawa Gonroku 長谷川権六, who was Fujihiko's nephew and had taken over the office of Nagasaki Magistrate in 1614, contained no words indicating Japanese interest in reconciling China. It merely rebuffed the Chinese demand by asserting that Japanese maritime control was functioning efficiently and was sufficiently strict.¹⁴⁹

Some historians have seen the 1620s and the 1630s as a turning point in Japanese attitudes toward the Chinese world order. Ronald Toby, arguing that the Tokugawa bakufu once considered participating in the Chinese tributary system and also that the Tokugawa attitude toward China was ambivalent, has argued that the bakufu's rejection of the Chinese envoy in 1621 was a declaration of its rejection of participating in the Chinese tributary system.¹⁵⁰ Nakamura Hidetaka, stating that the bakufu had previously intended to be reintegrated into the Sinocentric international community, has understood "Taikun diplomacy," which refers to the diplomatic and foreign trade relations formed by the end of the 1630s and which was named after the shogunal diplomatic title, *Taikun*, as the Japanese declaration of independence from the tributary system.¹⁵¹

In this study, my position has been that those events merely revealed the continuity of Tokugawa attitudes toward Ming China. If the bakufu had accepted the letter of 1621, it might have implied that Japan admitted Chinese superiority. The rejection of the Chinese envoy and of the letters of the 1620s certainly showed the bakufu's declaration of not becoming a Chinese tributary. However, it simultaneously showed that the bakufu was behaving as it had before in the previous decades. That is to say, the bakufu maintained the stance of not humbling itself as China's inferior partner. The formation of Taikun diplomacy by the end of the 1630s was also no more than a reconfirmation of the bakufu's unchanging attitude toward the Chinese tributary system. Along with the new shogunal diplomatic title of *taikun* 大君, the bakufu decided to use a Japanese era name in its diplomatic letters. This decision was based on the claim that Japan was not a Chinese tributary, which had been indeed the bakufu's consistent stance toward China since the beginning of the seventeenth century.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ During the Muromachi period, some Ashikaga tributary missions to Ming China had passed through the Korean peninsula; after the virtual termination of Sino-Japanese tributary relations in the mid-sixteenth century, there had been no such fixed rule.

¹⁴⁸ *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 5, p. 563.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 563-64.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Nakamura Hidetaka, "Taikun gaikō no kokusai ninshiki," p. 16.

¹⁵² The second shogun Hidetada had already refused to use a Chinese era name because his

The Tokugawa Response to the Manchu Conquest of China and Attitudes toward the Qing Dynasty

History repeats itself. China was again fated to go through a dynastic change in the mid-seventeenth century. In 1644, the “mandate of heaven” slipped out of the hands of the house of Zhu 朱 into the house of Aisin Gioro 愛新覺羅 after more than 270 years of Ming rule. The Ming dynasty, failing to suppress a peasant uprising led by Li Zicheng 李自成, ended with the suicide by hanging of its last emperor. The new rulers were neither the rebels who had toppled the Ming nor Han Chinese, but the Manchus, a minority ethnic group originally dwelling in present-day northeastern China (Manchuria) and far eastern Russia. The alien conquerors, naming their dynasty the Great Qing (*Da Qing* 大清) in 1636, crossed the Great Wall, crushed the peasant uprising, and transferred their capital from Shenyang in southern Manchuria to Beijing in 1644. The Chinese mainland thereafter continued to be ruled by the Manchus until the last emperor, Puyi 溥儀 (r. 1908-1912), abdicated in 1912 following the Republican Revolution.

When the news of the Manchu conquest of China was brought to Japan by Chinese merchants arriving in Nagasaki early in October 1644 (Kan'ei 寛永 21/9), indifference was not the response of the Tokugawa bakufu to the event on the East Asian mainland.¹⁵³ The Tokugawa had in fact kept its eyes on the movements of the Manchus even before Ieyasu initiated the bakufu in 1603. The Japanese had already discovered during the Korea campaign of Toyotomi Hideyoshi in the 1590s that Manchu tribes were fighting for unification in the land called *Orankai* オランカイ (兀良哈) during the Korea campaign of Toyotomi Hideyoshi.¹⁵⁴ Ieyasu perceived the growing Manchu power in northeastern Asia as a potential obstacle to his China and Korea policies. The limited Japanese knowledge of geography furthermore generated the misunderstanding that *Orankai* was connected by land with Ezochi 蝦夷地 (present-day Hokkaido) and caused Ieyasu to fear that the Manchus would pose a threat to Japanese national security from the North.¹⁵⁵ When Korea suffered a major Manchu invasion in 1627, the bakufu proposed to offer relief, which the Korean government declined, through Tsushima.¹⁵⁶ The Japanese apprehension and even their hostile view of the Manchus may have been embedded not only in their common memories of the invasion of the Tatars some centuries earlier but also in their ideological view of the Manchus. In 1019, a Jurchen tribe dwelling in the Maritime Province, whom the Japanese called *Tōi* 刀伊, assaulted Tsushima, Iki 壱岐, and the northern Kyushu coast across the Sea of Japan. The Mongol empire and the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) made abortive attempts to conquer Japan in 1274 and in 1281, and the Mongol menace continued to cause the Japanese concern over

country was not a Chinese subordinate when he received the first Korean embassy in 1607. See *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 3, p. 187.

¹⁵³ Enoki Kazui 榎一男, ed., *Kai hentai* 華夷変態 (Tokyo: Tōhō shoten, 1981), vol. 1, pp. 3-8.

¹⁵⁴ For example, see *Katō Kiyomasa monjoshō* 加藤清正文書, *Kumamoto-ken shiryō: chūsei-hen* 熊本県史料中世編 (Kumamoto: Kumamoto-ken, 1969), vol. 5, no. 15.

¹⁵⁵ Kamiya, *Taikun gaikō to Higashi Ajia* 大君外交と東アジア (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1997), pp. 114-15.

¹⁵⁶ *Tokugawa jikki*, vol. 2, in *Shintei zōho kokushi taiki*, vol. 39, p. 451.

national security until the late fourteenth century.¹⁵⁷ In addition, the Japanese, who had adopted the Chinese distinction of civilized and barbarian in viewing the self and others, perceived the Tatars as inferior barbarians.¹⁵⁸

As previous studies have already noted, turmoil on the East Asian mainland seemed to affect the Japanese perception of China. Hayashi Gahō 林鷺鳳, Razan's son and the "rector of the Confucian college" (*daigaku no kami* 大学頭) did not recognize the emergence of the Manchu dynasty as an ordinary dynastic change of the sort China had undergone for the previous thousand years. Under the order of the bakufu, Gahō began in 1674 to compile information and documents regarding the events on the continent and gave his work the title, *Kai hentai* 華夷変態 (Metamorphosis from civilized to barbarian.) Its preface reveals that he understood the Manchu conquest as China's transformation from "civilized" (*ka* 華) to "uncivilized" (*i* 夷).¹⁵⁹ The fact that the vast neighboring country which had claimed its superiority to all others was conquered by the small ethnic group of the Manchus seemed to give strength to the Japanese claim of superiority. Yamaga Sokō, for example, discussed Japanese superiority by contrasting his own country, whose martial might he claimed had prevented foreign conquest, with China's repeated humiliations from barbarian conquests including that of the Manchus.¹⁶⁰

Given the policies of the bakufu and the Manchus toward each other, Japan's involvement in the continental convulsion and in a direct confrontation with the Manchus was a possibility. Prior to the events of 1644, when Korea suffered another major invasion by the Manchus and finally surrendered to their overlordship in 1636, the Manchus ordered the Yi dynasty to summon a Japanese mission to pay homage and tribute to them, instead of allowing the Koreans to continue trade with Japan. Probably acquainted with the Japanese attitude toward the Chinese tributary system, Korea sabotaged the order by instead promising to provide information on Japan.¹⁶¹ It was fortunate for Japan that the Manchus did not persist and finally lost interest in subjugating Japan. Meanwhile, the Tokugawa bakufu showed no interest in establishing either diplomatic or commercial relations with the dynasty of conquest, until the early 1860s. Nor did the bakufu even consider becoming a Chinese vassal. At the inception of the new regime in China, the bakufu did not even allow visits by traders from Manchu-occupied territories for several years after being informed of the Manchu conquest, while maintaining commercial relations with other Chinese coming from areas occupied by Ming loyalists.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ Kaizu, Ichirō 海津一朗, *Kamikaze to akutō no seiki: Nanbokuchō jidai o mitsumeru* 神風と悪党の世紀：南北朝時代を読み直す (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), pp. 25-27.

¹⁵⁸ For example, see *Kai hentai*, vol. 1, p. 3. The perception of the Manchus as barbarians seemed to remain among the Japanese throughout the Tokugawa period. See Nōtomi Kaijirō 納富介次郎, *Shanghai zakki* 上海雑記, in *Bakumatsu Meiji Chūgoku kenbunroku shūsei* 幕末明治中国見聞録 (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 1997), vol. 1, p. 11. Nōtomi visited Shanghai when the Tokugawa bakufu dispatched a mission consisting of the bakufu retainers and others from various domains in 1862.

¹⁵⁹ *Kai hentai*, vol. 1, p. 1.

¹⁶⁰ Yamaga Sokō, *Chūchō jijitsu*, p. 58; idem., "Takkyō dōmon" 謫居童問, in *Yamaga Sokō*, NST, vol. 32 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1970), p. 333.

¹⁶¹ Yamamoto Hirofumi, *Kan'ei jidai* 寛永時代 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1996), pp. 233-34.

¹⁶² *Nagasaki Oranda shōkan no nikki* 長崎オランダ商館の日記 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1957),

Some Japanese policymakers even wanted the Manchus, who had been perceived as a latent menace to Japan, to be removed from China and thought of taking actions to facilitate this outcome. In January 1646 (Shōhō 正保 2/12), a Chinese merchant named Lin Gao 林高 delivered two letters to the Nagasaki Magistrate, Yamazaki Gonpachirō 山崎権八郎. Those letters were from Cui Zhi 崔芝, who served under a known Ming loyalist, Zhang Zhilong 鄭芝龍, asking for Japanese military help to restore the Ming dynasty.¹⁶³ It would be easy to suppose that the Chinese request for military aid and words as flattering as those in the Chinese letters appealed to notions of Japanese superiority, especially their belief in their own martial superiority.¹⁶⁴ Receiving a second request in October 1646 (Shōhō 3/9), the shogun Iemitsu's uncle, Tokugawa Yorinobu 徳川頼宣 of Kishū 紀州, for example, considered an expedition to be a great opportunity to rescue China from its barbarian occupation. He even dreamed of demonstrating Japanese military prowess overseas and of obtaining overseas territories on the continent.¹⁶⁵

Anti-Manchu resistance continued until the early 1680s, and envoys “begging” for relief, which the Japanese called *Nihon kisshi* 日本乞師, came repeatedly to Japan until the mid-1660s; the bakufu never offered a favorable response to anti-Manchu (anti-Qing) forces.¹⁶⁶ Historians have offered different explanations for this. Tsuji Zennosuke 辻善之助 and Ronald Toby have maintained that the shogun, Iemitsu, was interested in a rescue expedition.¹⁶⁷ Toby argues that the bakufu was discouraged from dispatching troops to the continent when anti-Manchu resistance forces, led by Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功, Zhilong's son and also known as Coxinga (*Guoxingye* 国姓爺), had lost their continental foothold, Fuzhou, in November 1646.¹⁶⁸ Komiya Kiyora 小宮木代良 and Yamamoto Hirofumi 山本博文 contend that there was no convincing evidence that the top-ranking leaders of the bakufu, including the shogun, were involved in the expedition plan. Yamamoto states that the bakufu had already decided not to be involved in the turmoil on the continent before the fall of Fuzhou.¹⁶⁹

As the Manchus secured ever-larger territories on the continent, the bakufu seemed to accept the reality that the Qing was the new ruling dynasty of China and to assume a more pragmatic attitude. The Manchu conquest of China did arouse Japanese concern over the status of the Ryukyus and over their own security as well. The

vol. 2, pp. 96, 101-02.

¹⁶³ *Kai hentai*, vol. 1, p. 11-14. Regarding the Ming loyalists' request for Japanese military aid, the most detailed study is Ishihara Michihiro's work. See Ishihara Michihiro 石原道博, *Nihon kisshi no kenkyū* 日本乞師の研究 (Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1945).

¹⁶⁴ For example, Cui Zhi's letter called Japan a “great power” and praised Japanese gallantry.

¹⁶⁵ *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 5, p. 399.

¹⁶⁶ See Ishihara, *Nihon kisshi*; see also *Kai hentai* and *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 5.

¹⁶⁷ Toby, *State and Diplomacy*, p. 124; Tsuji, *Zōtei kaigai*, pp. 640-48.

¹⁶⁸ Toby, *State and Diplomacy*, pp. 128-29.

¹⁶⁹ Komiya Kiyora 小宮木代良, “Minmatsu Shinsho Nihon kisshi' ni taisuru Iemitsu seiken no taiō: Shōhō 3-nen 1-gatsu 12-nichi-zuke Itakura Shigemune shojō no kentō o chūshin to shite” 明末清初日本乞師に対する家光政権の対応：正保3年1月12日付板倉重宗書状の検討を中心として, *Kyūshū shigaku* 九州史学 97 (1990), pp. 1-19; Yamamoto Hirofumi, *Sakoku to kaikin no jidai* 鎖国と海禁の時代 (Tokyo: Azekura shobō, 1995), pp. 191-95.

archipelago to the south had paid tribute to the Ming dynasty since the late fourteenth century, that is, since before the Ryukyu chain was unified under the royal house of Shō in 1429. The Japanese—the bakufu and Satsuma—were concerned about what attitudes the Manchu conquerors would take toward the Ryukyus. For the bakufu, the subordination of the Ryukyus to the barbarian dynasty Qing was undesirable; it was afraid that the Ryukyus would be affiliated with the Manchus and become a menace to Japan.¹⁷⁰ As the central government, the bakufu was also concerned that the subjugation of the Ryukyus by the Qing would also damage Japanese national prestige which it was supposed to represent and sustain.¹⁷¹ For Satsuma, surrendering the Ryukyus, which had been granted by the bakufu as a reward for the military conquest of 1609, to the Manchus could cause the loss of a revenue source and of the honor of the house of Shimazu as a warrior house vis-à-vis other warrior houses.¹⁷² However, communications exchanged between the bakufu and Satsuma in the late 1640s and mid-1650s reveals that neither had been able to find decisive and effective measures against a possible Manchu menace to the Ryukyus. When they learned, by late 1649, of the intention of the Qing to set up tributary relations with the Ryukyus, the bakufu did not employ its prerogative in foreign affairs; instead it entrusted to Satsuma the final decision on the Ryukyu-Qing issue on October 26, 1650 (Keian 慶安 2/10/2).¹⁷³ Nor was Satsuma quite sure what to do. On October 15, 1651 (Keian 3/9/20), it instructed the Ryukyus to dispatch tributary missions both to the Qing and to one of the Ming loyalists, keeping an equal distance from both.¹⁷⁴

Whether the Ryukyans would accept Manchu customs such as the queue was another concern. On August 13, 1655 (Meireki 明曆 1/7/12), Satsuma pointed out that the Ryukyus' surrender to barbarian customs would bring disgrace upon Japanese national prestige and force the bakufu and Satsuma to take action against the Manchus.¹⁷⁵ On September 21 (Meireki 1/8/22), the bakufu, however, decided to tolerate the Ryukyus' inevitable acceptance of Manchu customs, ignoring Satsuma's firm voice.¹⁷⁶ It was again fortunate for the Japanese that their fear after all resulted in needless apprehensions, as the Qing in this instance did not compel their subordinates, including the Ryukyus, to comply with their customs. The Japanese never thought of renouncing the subordinate kingdom; Satsuma continued to station its retainers on the islands of the Ryukyu chain, to require the Ryukyus to surrender a prince to its domainal capital of Kagoshima as a hostage, and to oblige them to pay annual tribute.¹⁷⁷ Ryukyu missions continued to pay tribute to Edo, a total of fourteen in all before the end of the Tokugawa era.¹⁷⁸ On the other hand, they had no intention of coming into conflict with the Qing

¹⁷⁰ *Kyūki zatsuroku tsuiroku* 旧記雑録追録 ([Kagoshima-shi]: Kagoshima-ken, 1971), vol. 1, no. 283.

¹⁷¹ *Rekichō seido* 歴朝制度, in *Hanpōshū* 藩法集, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1969), vol. 21, no. 1228.

¹⁷² Yamamoto, *Sakoku to kaikin no jidai*, p. 200.

¹⁷³ *Rekichō seido*, vol. 21, no. 1228.

¹⁷⁴ *Kyūki zatsuroku tsuiroku*, vol. 1, no. 396.

¹⁷⁵ *Rekichō seido*, vol. 21, no. 1228, 1231

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 21, no. 1233.

¹⁷⁷ Kamiya, *Bakuhansei kokka no Ryūkyū shihai*, p. 196.

¹⁷⁸ Miyagi Eishō 宮城栄昌, *Ryūkyū shisha no Edo nobori* 琉球使者の江戸上り (Tokyo: Daiichi

over the Ryukyus and chose to compromise. The bakufu seemed to recognize the Qing as the new Chinese dynasty by late 1655. On November 3, 1655 (Meireki 1/10/6), the bakufu acceded to the Ryukyu subordination to the Qing, informing Satsuma that the Ryukyu throne, to which the Ming imperial throne had lent authority and legitimacy, could not be preserved without the bestowal of the title of king from the Qing.¹⁷⁹ Satsuma also came to hide any signs of Japan and the Japanese from the eyes of the Qing during each of the visits of its missions; in 1719 it prohibited its retainers from contacting the Qing missions visiting the Ryukyus.¹⁸⁰

Although it did not intend to establish official relations again until the very last years of the era, the bakufu continued to allow Chinese merchants to visit Nagasaki in Kyushu. It was the only trade port open to them until the 1850s, inasmuch as the bakufu had moved the Dutch factory from the other trade port in Kyushu, Hirado 平戸. The bakufu made the Chinese who came to Nagasaki stay in the settlement called *Tōjin yashiki* 唐人屋敷 (Chinese Compound) to prevent them from smuggling. The segregated settlement was based on the example of *Dejima* (or *Deshima* 出島), which was an artificial island constructed to segregate the Portuguese and then the Dutch.¹⁸¹ Since the bakufu prohibited Japanese from going abroad in 1635 with only few exceptions, the unilateral visits of Chinese merchants to Nagasaki maintained direct contact between the two countries.

A comparative analysis of Tokugawa diplomatic protocols and trade credentials which the bakufu introduced in 1715 indicates that the bakufu placed China at the lowest status within its international order and succeeded in establishing Japan's superior status over China.¹⁸² While Korea and the Ryukyus were categorized as diplomatic partners, the Dutch and the Chinese were given lower statuses as trade partners. The Dutch East India Company maintained trade relations with Tokugawa Japan after the temporary termination of their relationship from the late 1620s until the early 1630s. The bakufu actually regarded the Dutch as more than simply merchants. A minor military conflict between the Dutch and Japanese traders, led by Hamada Yahyōe 浜田弥兵衛, dispatched by Nagasaki Deputy Suetsugu Heizō 末次平蔵 in Anping 安平, Taiwan, in May 1628 (Kan'ei 5/4) terminated the relationship between the two countries. The rupture ended

shobō, 1982), pp. 11-20. Also see Yokoyama Manabu 横山學, *Ryūkyū shisetsu torai no kenkyū* 琉球使節渡来の研究 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1987). Shō Nei's tribute to Edo in 1610 is not usually counted.

¹⁷⁹ *Rekichō seido*, vol. 21, no. 1238.

¹⁸⁰ When the Qing envoy visited the Ryukyus to bestow the title of king upon Shō Tei in 1683, the Satsuma retainers met with Qing officials. But the retainers called themselves "Tokarajin", the dwellers of the Tokara Chain, composed of the northern part of the Seinan Islands, hiding the fact that they were Japanese. Kamiya Nobuyuki notes that this concealment policy was established in the early eighteenth century. See Kamiya, *Bakuhansei kokka no Ryūkyū shihai*, pp. 200, 228-36, 260.

¹⁸¹ The bakufu originally constructed Dejima to segregate the Portuguese in 1636. After ousting them from Japan, it made the Dutch Factory in Hirado move to the segregated island. Before constructing the "Tōjin yashiki," the bakufu allowed the Chinese to stay together with the Japanese in Nagasaki. Because of the increase of smuggling, it constructed the settlement and segregated the Chinese in 1689.

¹⁸² Toby, *State and Diplomacy*, pp. 156-59.

when the Dutch officials at Batavia surrendered the governor of Taiwan, Peter Noits, as a prisoner to Japan in 1632.¹⁸³ Trade with the Dutch was then restored. The representatives of the Dutch East India Company, led by the *Oranda kapitan* 阿蘭陀カピタン (かびたん), had been allowed to visit Edo and were honored with an audience with the shogun, as the only Europeans who retained the favor of the Tokugawa bakufu, in the third month of every year after 1633.¹⁸⁴ The Japanese stance was that Dutch-Japanese relations had been rehabilitated as a result of the Dutch apology for their misconduct in Taiwan and their subjugation to Japan. The bakufu as a result came to regard the Dutch as hereditary shogunal vassals (*fidai no gohikan* 譜代の御被官) and adopted a quasi-official character in their presence. It called their service *chūsetsu* 忠節 (fidelity) and *hōkō* 奉公 (duty).¹⁸⁵

On the other hand, the Chinese merchants coming to Nagasaki were treated with less form than the Dutch and were not so honored. Kaempfer noticed that the Japanese treatment of the Chinese was different from that of the Dutch, pointing out that Japanese officials and interpreters actually treated the Chinese discourteously.¹⁸⁶ The Nagasaki Magistrate's Office (*Nagasaki bugyōsho* 長崎奉行所) was the highest ranking Japanese office with which they were allowed to communicate.¹⁸⁷ The bakufu did not give them the quasi-official status which it gave the Dutch and instead treated them in the same manner as it did Japanese merchants (*akindo dōzen* 商人同然).¹⁸⁸ Hayashi Gahō called the Chinese merchants barbarians (*ban'i* 蕃夷) in his annotation of the collection of the writings of his father; he considered this treatment of the Chinese at Nagasaki to be proper.¹⁸⁹

Nevertheless, it would be premature to conclude, on this evidence alone, that the Tokugawa bakufu placed China at the lowest status. Because it did not regard either the Dutch or the Chinese as diplomatic partners, as mentioned above, the bakufu did not

¹⁸³ For the Hamada Yahyōe Incident and its aftermath, see *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 6, pp. 306-15; Katō Eiichi 加藤栄一, "Sakoku to bakuhansei kokka" 鎖国と幕藩制国家, in *Sakoku* 鎖国, in *Kōza Nihon kinsei shi* 講座日本近世史 (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1981), vol. 2, pp. 83-92

¹⁸⁴ The arrival of the envoy of the Dutch East Indian Company followed the restoration of the relationship in 1632. See *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 6, pp. 306-07. After 1790, the tribute to the shogunal capital was held every five years. Arano, "Taikun gaikō taisei no kakuritsu," p. 58. See also, Katō Eiichi, "Sakoku to bakuhansei kokka," vol. 2, p. 92; Hirai Kiyoshi 平井聖, ed., *Edojō to shōgun no kurashi* 江戸城と将軍の暮らし (Tokyo: Gakushū kenkyūsha, 2000), p. 50.

¹⁸⁵ See *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 6; Nagazumi Yōko 永積洋子, "Orandajin no uketa goon to hōkō" オランダ人の受けた御恩と奉公, in Kawakatsu Heita 川勝平太, ed., "*Sakoku*" o hiraku 鎖国を開く (Tokyo: Dōbunkan, 2000), pp. 24-34. As Nagazumi points out, in *Tsūkō ichiran*, Dutch affairs are referred as "gohōkōsuji." See also Fujii, "Junana seiki no Nihon," p. 61; Katō, "Sakoku to bakuhansei kokka," p. 89. The Dutch began to use the term "keizers eigen volck" for the purpose of flattering to the Japanese in order to secure and facilitate the Japan trade.

¹⁸⁶ Kaempfer, *Kaempfer's Japan*, p. 226.

¹⁸⁷ The China trade became concentrated in Nagasaki in 1635. See *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 5, p. 228. The Chinese merchants at Nagasaki usually communicated with the Chinese language interpreters serving in the Magistrate's Office.

¹⁸⁸ Arano, "Taikun gaikō taisei no kakuritsu," p. 11.

¹⁸⁹ *Hayashi Razan bunshū*, vol. 1, p. 136.

actually identify the Chinese merchants as representatives of a Chinese state—the Ming or the Qing. The expression *akindo dōzen* implied that those Chinese were unrelated to either of the Chinese regimes.¹⁹⁰ The treatment of mere merchants, as distinguished from that of the quasi-shogunal vassals, was quite reasonable, because the Tokugawa class stratification, known as *shi-nō-kō-shō* 士農工商, accorded merchants the lowest status. This different treatment did not thus mean that the bakufu placed China in a lower position than Korea, the Ryukyus, and Holland in the Tokugawa diplomatic order.

In February 1715 (Shōtoku 正徳 5/1), the bakufu introduced a trade credential called the *shinpai* (*Nagasaki tsūshō shōhyō*) into the China trade at Nagasaki. It was a part of the new trade regulations the bakufu enacted, known as *Shōtoku shinrei* 正徳新例 (*kaihaku goichi shinrei* 海舶互市新例).¹⁹¹ Arai Hakuseki played a pivotal role in policymaking and drafted the regulations. At the time, the exodus of mineral resources through the Nagasaki trade had caused shortages which had restrained trade and increased smuggling (*nukeni* 抜荷). The regulations aimed at restricting the Nagasaki trade according to the availability of the mineral sources, especially copper, and the bakufu limited the number of Chinese ships visiting Nagasaki to thirty per year. Only those who swore to comply with the regulations and accepted the credentials were permitted to come back to Nagasaki.¹⁹² Arai Hakuseki not only played a crucial role in drafting these new regulations, but he was also concerned about Qing China's expansionist policy and had a suspicion that the fourth emperor Kangxi 康熙 (r. 1662-1722) was maneuvering to weaken Japan's national strength by exhausting its mineral resources.¹⁹³

The argument that the credential system marked Japan's success in claiming its superiority over China may seem valid if one sees the credential as an analogy to the Chinese tally, *kangō*, which the Ming dynasty had granted to its tributary states.¹⁹⁴ Just as the tally was unilaterally issued by the Ming dynasty, the trade credentials were also issued unilaterally to a restricted number of Chinese merchants. In either case, those who refused to surrender to the authority of the trade regulations were excluded from trade with either China or Japan. The Japanese era name, *Shōtoku*, was used in the trade credential, and the Chinese, who believed that their emperor was the only one in the universe who was privileged to set an era name, surrendered in this instance to the Japanese era name.¹⁹⁵ This might reinforce the impression that it was a Japanese version

¹⁹⁰ Arano, "Taikun gaikō taisei no kakuritsu," p. 11.

¹⁹¹ See *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 4. As to the *shinpai*, see *ibid.*, 375-76; Ōta Katsuya 太田勝也, *Sakoku jidai Nagasaki bōeki shi no kenkyū* 鎖国時代長崎貿易史の研究 (Kyoto: Shibunkaku, 1992), pp. 524-628.

¹⁹² Kikuchi Yoshimi 菊池義美, "Shōtoku shinrei to Nagasaki bōeki no henshitsu" 正徳新例と長崎貿易の変質, in *Kinsei taigai kankeishi ron: zōhoban* 近世対外関係史論：増補版 (Tokyo: Yūshindō, 1979), pp. 154-61. See also Arano, "Taikun gaikō taisei no kakuritsu," pp. 103-06.

¹⁹³ Miyazaki Michio 宮崎道生, *Arai Hakuseki no kenkyū* 新井白石の研究 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1969), pp. 188-92, 380-81; *idem.*, "Arai Hakuseki" 新井白石, in *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* 国文学解釈と鑑賞 61.9 (September 1996), p. 117.

¹⁹⁴ Toby, *State and Diplomacy*, p. 198.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 198-99.

of the tally, and Chinese merchants' acquiescence to the Japanese era name suggests their recognition of Japan's superior status.

The trade credential was, however, designed neither to deprive China of the diplomatic symbols of its claims to superiority and centrality nor to demote it to the lowest level of the hierarchical order of Tokugawa international relations. It should be first remembered that the use of a Japanese era name had merely been a diplomatic practice from the 1630s. Otherwise, the bakufu would have had to justify why only Chinese merchants were exempted from such diplomatic practice. In the trade credential, China was referred to not by the formal state name, "Great Qing" (*Da Qing*) or Qing, but with the term, *Tō* 唐; this too cannot be evidence of a Japanese claim of superiority over China, inasmuch as the term itself had no connotation of Chinese inferiority. The employment of the term was rather congruent with the bakufu's stance that the Chinese merchants were unrelated to the Chinese state.

Furthermore, while the Chinese tally was an officially issued, or more specifically emperor-issued, trade permission bestowed on tributaries, the Tokugawa bakufu intentionally avoided giving an official character to the trade certificate. Nagasaki Magistrate Ōoka Kiyosuke 大岡清相, another central figure in forming trade regulations, testified that the bakufu considered it *kōken* 公驗, a credential issued by public authority, namely the bakufu, would be a better way to regulate the number of Chinese ships.¹⁹⁶

This might have derived from its dream of spelling out Tokugawa Japan's superior status over Qing China. However, concerned that its authority would be compromised in case the Chinese ignored the new trade regulations, the bakufu decided to wait for several years until it ascertained that the Chinese were complying with these trade regulations.¹⁹⁷ The trade credential as a result took the form of being issued by Chinese language interpreters (*Tōtsūji* 唐通詞).¹⁹⁸

Not even once did the bakufu make an attempt to upgrade *shinpai* to *kōken* until the very end of its rule.¹⁹⁹ The trade credential soon ignited a dispute in China. Some Chinese merchants, who failed to receive the credential and lost their access to the Japan market because they had not come to Japan in 1715, took this matter up with Qing officials. They charged that the acceptance of the Japanese era name could be considered treason to the Qing. Local Qing officials in Fujian and Zhejiang Provinces responded by confiscating the Japanese trade credentials and reported the matter to the imperial court in Beijing.²⁰⁰ Informed of the dispute, probably by Chinese on one of the seven ships which narrowly escaped and returned to Nagasaki with the credentials, through a letter, the bakufu accused the Qing dynasty of ignoring foreign statutes.²⁰¹ Despite this firm response, the bakufu did not want to antagonize Qing China further. It also stated that the

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

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 4, pp. 375-76, 428, 429.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ For the dispute in Qing China, see Matsuura Akira 松浦章, "Kōkitei to Shōtoku shinrei" 康熙帝と正徳新例, in *Sakoku Nihon to kokusai kōryū* 鎖国日本と国際交流 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1988), vol. 2, pp. 29-53.

²⁰¹ *Kai hentai*, vol. 2, p. 2702.

trade credential was a contract made between the interpreters, not the Nagasaki Magistrate's Office, and the Chinese merchants, and was like a private pledge.²⁰² In 1717, the dispute in China was eventually settled by a direct decision of the Kangxi Emperor. The emperor, considered one of the wisest monarchs in all of Chinese history, knew the indispensability of Japanese copper for the economy of his country.²⁰³ As a result, Chinese ships, bearing the proper trade credentials, continued to visit Nagasaki throughout the rest of the Tokugawa era, and the trade credential, which was originally designed as a temporary and transitional measure, continued to regulate the Nagasaki trade.

Conclusion

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

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

²⁰² Ibid; *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol. 4, pp. 430-31.

²⁰³ Matsuura, "Kōkitei to Shōtoku shinrei," p. 50.