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China's Lessons for Bakumatsu Japan

BOB TADASHI WAKABAYASHI

THE foreign invasions and massive internal rebellions that wracked Ch'ing-dynasty China in the mid-decades of the nineteenth century had serious ramifications for Japan and the Tokugawa regime. To give one example, in June 1858 China signed the Treaty of Tientsin that temporarily halted the Second Opium War.¹ And in the following month, U.S. Consul Townsend Harris forced the Edo bakufu to grant him a treaty that formally permitted foreign trade and residence in Japan.

By granting Harris's treaty, bakufu leaders revoked national isolation, or *sakoku* 鎖国, a hallowed state law then generally, although mistakenly, presumed to date from the start of Tokugawa rule. Moreover, they flouted the emperor's will that called for *jōi* 攘夷, or 'expulsion of Western barbarians'. To a large extent, Consul Harris achieved his diplomatic coup by forcefully stressing that Japan, like China, would suffer the evils of opium trafficking and war if Edo did not consent.² Thus, the bakufu and its supporters pledged themselves to *kaikoku* 開国, or 'opening the country'—at least to the Westerners.

Events on the Asian mainland loomed large in the minds of late-Tokugawa thinkers and leaders, whether pro- or anti-bakufu. They construed China's misfortunes as a 'mirror for Yin'—a warning of what to be on guard against. As they phrased it, 'The overturned cart left tracks' for all to see. But just how clear were those tracks? Edo's prohibition of foreign travel, the key element in *sakoku*, remained in effect throughout the 1850s; so Japanese nationals could

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¹ This is also known as the Anglo-French War with China, 1856–1860.

² Masuda Wataru 増田渉, *Seigaku Tōzen to Chūgoku Jijō* 西学東漸と中国事情, Iwanami, 1979, pp. 59–65 & pp. 269–79. This work introduces numerous primary sources related to the topic of China's impact on late Tokugawa and Meiji Japan through the medium of books. Joshua Fogel has translated portions of Masuda in *Sino-Japanese Studies*, 2:2 (May 1990), pp. 20–46, and 3:1 (November 1990), pp. 36–59.

not personally go abroad to verify fact from rumor in reports they received about the turmoil in China. How reliable were Chinese, as opposed to Dutch, accounts of that turmoil? How did Japanese perceptions of China based on those Chinese accounts affect bakumatsu strategic thinking, especially the fierce debates over *kaikoku*, *sakoku*, and *jōi*?

To my knowledge, R. H. van Gulick's 'Kakkaron: A Japanese Echo of the Opium War' is the only English-language study devoted exclusively to these questions, and it appeared in 1939.³ Here, I try to redress our long-standing neglect of this important historical issue by focusing on *Kaigai Shinwa* 海外新話, a work published in 1849 by Mineta Fūkō 嶺田楓江, 1817–1883,⁴ and tracing the impact that it and other accounts based on Chinese sources had on bakumatsu thinkers such as Yoshida Shōin 吉田松陰, 1830–1859.

The First Opium War, from November 1839 to August 1842, drastically altered long-held Japanese perceptions of Japan's place in international power relations. Until 1839, informed Japanese students of the world scene had viewed it as an arena of 'rival states' in which China was the greatest power in East Asia, Western countries were middle-class powers, and Japan was relatively small and weak. An early example of such thinking is found in *Bōkaisaku* 防海策, written by Satō Nobuhiro 佐藤信淵, 1769–1850, in 1806:

The Great Ch'ing Empire is mighty and close at hand. Should some crafty emperor come to power with designs on us, the resulting disasters would be far worse than [attack by] Russia. We now should exhaust all the self-effacing words and diplomatic grace at our command to ally with China and reap great profits through trade with her.⁵

Tokugawa thinkers employed the classical Chinese metaphor of 'teeth and lips' to describe relations between China and Japan. In 1825, the *jōi* advocate Aizawa Seishisai 会沢正志齋 wrote: 'If the lips [Japan] crumble, the teeth [China] are naked and exposed.'⁶ This metaphor implied interdependence, if not formal alliance, between the two nations. When Watanabe Kazan 渡辺崋山, 1793–1841, used it in his *Gaikoku Jijōsho* 外国事情書, written on the eve of the First Opium War in 1839, he argued that Russia and Britain both harbored designs on China, and if either started a war with Japan, the other would immediately exploit that opportunity to attack the Ch'ing.⁷ But Watanabe perceived the Japanese lips to be far weaker than the Chinese teeth. As he

³ *Monumenta Serica*, 4 (1939), pp. 478–545.

⁴ I used the edition in Harvard-Yenching Library, but do not cite page numbers because pagination is not consecutive throughout the work.

⁵ Satō Kenji 佐藤堅司, ed., *Satō Nobuhiro Bugaku-shū, jō* 佐藤信淵武学集, 上, Iwanami, 1942, p. 322.

⁶ See B. T. Wakabayashi, *Anti-Foreignism and Western Learning in Early-Modern Japan*, Harvard U.P., 1986, p. 199.

⁷ Satō Shōsuke 佐藤昌介 et al., ed., *Watanabe Kazan, Takano Chōei, Sakuma Shōzan, Yokoi Shōnan, Hashimoto Sanai* 渡辺崋山, 高野長英, 佐久間象山, 横井小楠, 橋本左内, *Nihon Shisō Taikei* 55, Iwanami, 1971, p. 50.

admitted, ‘One European [Russian] warship would suffice to annihilate a large Japanese army.’⁸ Or, as the Mito daimyo Tokugawa Nariaki 徳川齊昭 also wrote in 1839:

Say what you will, the Ch’ing Empire is a great power; so the [Western] barbarians will not undertake any attack on it lightly. Ryukyu and Korea are poor, weak little countries not worth bothering about. That means Russia most probably will decide to invade Japan first and then go about conquering China. This is a fearful, hateful situation.⁹

Thus, informed Japanese strategists up to 1839 tended to believe that Western states wished to conquer both China and Japan, but were not strong enough to do so at the same time. So they first would attack Japan, which was easier to conquer, and then take on the much more formidable Ch’ing Empire. This world view changed radically when official and non-official Chinese and Dutch reports of the First Opium War became available in Japan.¹⁰ Reactions tended to vary depending on which set of accounts, the Dutch or the Chinese, a thinker accepted as more reliable. And later, when Chinese reports of the Taiping Rebellion entered Japan, Japanese perceptions once again changed radically.

Below, I introduce one influential source of information about the First Opium War derived from Chinese sources: Mineta Fūkō’s *Kaigai Shinwa*, 1849. Its impact on bakumatsu strategic thinking warrants careful scrutiny, for the British victory it describes is far less decisive than the one we modern historians are used to telling.

Mineta Fūkō and His Work

Mineta Fūkō was born in 1817 in Edo as the second son in a samurai family serving the Makino 牧野 daimyo of Tanabe domain in Tango province, now part of Kyoto prefecture. Mineta’s education largely came under two Confucian scholars who held official bakufu posts in Edo. One was Satō Issai 佐藤一齋, 1779–1852, ostensibly a Chu Hsi scholar but with clear leanings toward Wang Yang-ming. The other was Hayashi Fukusai 林復齋, 1800–1859, who headed the official Bakufu academy in Edo and was a son of the more renowned Hayashi Jussai 林述齋, 1768–1841. Mineta’s academic training, then, was in Chu Hsi studies. He gave lectures on a stand-in basis for his mentor and received honoraria from various daimyo; so he must have had solid academic credentials. Mineta also studied Chinese poetry under the loyalist thinker, Yanagawa Seigan 梁川星巖, 1789–1858, and won fame as one of the ‘Four Giants of the Yanagawa School’.

⁸ Satō, *Watanabe Kazan*, p. 30.

⁹ *Mito-han Shiryō Bekki, jō* 水戸藩史料別記, 上, Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1970, p. 98.

¹⁰ An analysis of the differences between the official Chinese and Dutch accounts, that is, the *fusetsugaki* 風説書 tendered to the bakufu by Chinese and Dutch officials in Nagasaki, is given in Katō Yūzō 加藤祐三, *Kurofune Zengo no Sekai* 黒船前後の世界, Iwanami, 1985, pp. 247–304.

In early 1839, before the First Opium War broke out, Mineta also began to tackle Dutch studies under Mitsukuri Gempo 箕作阮甫, 1799–1863. Mineta's tutelage would last until early 1841. The timing was fortunate because Gempo and his son Shōgo 省吾 were then compiling *Kon'yo Zushiki* 坤輿図識, a comprehensive gazetteer of the world's nations. Later, Mitsukuri Gempo and Shionoya Tōin 塩谷岩陰, 1809–1867, the subject of van Gulick's 1939 study, would compile a Japanese edition of *Hai-kuo t'u-chih* 海国図志 by Wei Yuan 魏源, 1794–1857.¹¹

Under Mitsukuri, Mineta learned a great deal about recent world history and geography that would go into writing *Kaigai Shinwa*. Mineta's career included a trip from Ōshū to Ezo undertaken to observe coastal defenses, and he was fond of debating affairs of the day with prominent loyalist friends such as Rai Mikisaburō 頼三樹三郎, 1825–1859, and Umeda Umpin 梅田雲浜, 1815–1859.

Mineta composed *Kaigai Shinwa* in 1849, so it was not the earliest Japanese account of the Opium War. But he based it on the following Chinese sources cited in his work. His most important was clearly *I-fei-fan-ching-lu* 夷匪犯境錄. This document is no longer extant in China and is known to have entered Japan sometime between 1844 and 1847, after which it was officially proscribed. Other important sources cited by Mineta were: (1) *Chapu chih-yung* 乍浦集詠, a collection of odes composed by residents of Chapu during the war, which arrived in Japan in manuscript form in 1846; (2) *Sheng-wu chi* 聖武記, compiled by Wei Yuan in 1842, which reached Japan in 1844; (3) *Yin-yu lu* 隱憂錄; and (4) *Ching-shih wen-pien* 經世文編.¹²

In writing *Kaigai Shinwa*, Mineta combined information gained from these Chinese sources with Japanese accounts of the Opium War by Satō Nobuhiro. Mineta also probably read *Ahen Shimatsu* 鴉片始末 by Saitō Chikudō 斎藤竹堂, 1815–1852. These works by Satō and Saitō derived largely from similar Chinese documents of the 1830s and 1840s.

Mineta's Preface says that he embellished his work in the language of, and in a style patterned after, medieval war tales such as *Gempei Seisuiki* 源平盛衰記 and *Taiheiki* 太平記. His avowed aim was to enable as many people as possible, 'even unlettered children', to read the work with pleasure and profit. *Kaigai Shinwa* was published as a *yomihon* 読本 printed from wood-blocks. Even today it makes for an easy yet engrossing read for anyone familiar with *hentaigana* 変体仮名 and cursive script.

Mineta neglected to obtain bakufu consent before publishing his work, and

¹¹ On Wei Yuan, see Peter M. Mitchell, 'The Limits of Reformism', and Susan Barnett, 'Protestant Expansion and Chinese Views of the West', both in *Modern Asian Studies*, 6:2 (April 1972). Also see Peter M. Mitchell, 'Wei Yuan (1794–1857) and the Early Modernization Movement in China and Japan', doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 1970; and Jane Kate Leonard, *Wei Yuan and China's Rediscovery of the Maritime World*, Harvard U.P., 1984.

¹² For information on the arrival of these works in Japan, see Ōba Osamu 大庭修, *Edo Jidai ni okeru Tōsen Mochiwatarisho no Kenkyū* 江戸時代における唐船持渡書の研究, Kansai Daigaku Shuppanbu, Osaka, 1967, pp. 156–99.

found himself in prison from 1849 to 1851. On his release, the bakufu prohibited him for life from entering Edo, Osaka, or Kyoto, and he was disowned by his family. Mineta then spent several years studying coastal defenses on the Bōsō Peninsula, which formed part of Edo Bay. But by 1864 he managed to turn his fortunes around, re-establish himself in Tanabe domain, and serve it as an advisor on coastal defenses.

The illustrator who collaborated with Mineta in publishing *Kaigai Shinwa* met a harsher fate; he went to prison and died there. This severe punishment indicates how sensitive the bakufu was about Mineta's subject matter—contemporary military and political affairs in a neighboring land that had dangerous implications for Tokugawa rule in Japan. Mineta lived to see the new Meiji government established, and it considered him enough of a loyalist to grant him the honor of fifth court rank.¹³

Kaigai Shinwa seems to have enjoyed a broad circulation in late Tokugawa times, although exact figures are impossible to come by. As well, it helped create a whole genre of fictionalized or semi-fictionalized accounts of the Opium Wars and Taiping Rebellion in late Tokugawa and early Meiji Japan. Some works in this genre, such as Iwagaki Gesshū's 巖垣月洲 *Saisei Kaishin Hen* 西征快心篇, were fantastic forms of escapist literature. Iwagaki, for example, has Tokugawa Nariaki leading an army overseas to chastise the British.¹⁴ On the other hand, many works in this genre were serious writings that depicted recent events with some degree of accuracy. But however accurate or inaccurate, they did much to shape popular Japanese images of key historical events and personages.

Although *Kaigai Shinwa* was semi-fictional, bakufu prosecutors convicted Mineta of translating the proscribed Chinese work, *I-fei-fan-ching-lu*, into Japanese.¹⁵ This leads us to infer that his accounts were reasonably faithful to those found in that original Chinese source. Mineta's implied proposals on how the Edo bakufu might reform and strengthen itself, publicly expressed as these were in *Kaigai Shinwa*, were far more controversial than Hayashi Shihei's 林子平, 1738–1793, more celebrated proposals in *Kaikoku Heidan* 海国兵談, written but not published half a century before.

Mineta did not verify dates, people, places, and events in his narrative; but to be fair, that was not easy in his circumstances. For instance, when recounting the Battle of Canton fought in the spring of 1841, he used original sources for the first Battle of Tanghai fought in June–July 1840. In many cases, however, he took such liberties in order to improve the popular literary appeal of his work. The following two episodes underscore this point.

The first involves the seventeen-year-old daughter of a Tanghai literati,

¹³ Biographical information on Mineta is from Masuda, pp. 100–07, and *Nihon Jimmei Daijiten* 日本人名大辞典, Heibonsha, 1979, 6, p. 100.

¹⁴ I have used the copy held by the Kyoto University Library.

¹⁵ Masuda, p. 103.

Ch'en Chih-hsien 陳之賢. Unable to deliver supplies of rice demanded by the pillaging English, Ch'en offered her as a concubine to Commodore Bremer 布爾里. But she soon caught the eye of a Colonel Burrell 爵子伯麥 and suffered yet another outrage; and so, distraught, she threw herself into a well.¹⁶ A similarly hideous fate awaited Chinese men who failed to hand over rice stocks: 'They were made barbarian citizens, had their heads shaved, forced to drink a concoction that left them dumb, and required to toil like black barbarians.'¹⁷

The sections in Mineta's *Kaigai Shinwa* that I summarize below provide distorted accounts of the battles of Canton and San-yuan-li 三元里, and by extension, the First Opium War as a whole. But for historians trying to discover how late-Tokugawa Japanese misperceived current events in China and how these misperceptions affected their thought and actions, Mineta's document is of high value. Indeed, it is arguably more significant than the Dutch reports, which were more accurate but lacking in detail. If nothing else, semi-fictional works such as *Kaigai Shinwa* were published. So even if proscribed, as this work was, they were accessible to far more readers than the top-secret Dutch reports, which few aside from high bakufu officials could obtain.

Moreover, factual veracity was not something that the Chinese themselves were noted for in those days. Arthur Waley remarks about the many official Ch'ing reports of lopsided Chinese victories in the First Opium War: 'Their truthfulness was not then and has never since been doubted in China, except by historians writing under direct Western influence.'¹⁸ Mineta's *Kaigai Shinwa*, then, is a valuable primary source because it accurately conveys distorted Chinese accounts of the war that were widely believed but impossible to confirm or disprove owing to bakufu bans on foreign travel.

A Different Echo of the Opium War

To aid his readers' understanding, Mineta prefaces *Kaigai Shinwa* with a short 'factual' account of England. Then comes the main body of his work, divided into five chapters. Chapter One is titled 'The Poison of Opium Spreads, and Huang Ch'ieh-tzu's 黃爵滋 Memorial on Banning the Drug.' The saga ends with Chapter Five, 'The Armies Make Peace, and a Text of the Treaty.' Mineta's readers, then, could examine for themselves the humiliating results of China's surrender in 1842. Here I summarize key accounts from chapters 1 through 3.

Mineta begins his saga by outlining the history of opium use in China. The poisonous opiate had first arrived from Arabia and India about three hundred

¹⁶ Bremer was a stock figure in Chinese accounts of the war; apparently there were several 'Bremers'. See Arthur Waley, *The Opium War Through Chinese Eyes*, Stanford U.P., 1958, pp. 112-13. It seems that the kanji Mineta used to transcribe 'Burrell' were also widely employed to represent 'Bremer'. So, in sum, correct identification is not possible.

¹⁷ Waley, pp. 163-64, cites both of these episodes, derived from Chinese sources, with minor variations.

¹⁸ Waley, p. 130.

years ago. At that time, only people on the Canton coast used the narcotic; so it was not a widespread social evil. Soon, however, all social strata in China were taking the drug, from imperial princes to commoners; and the Western barbarians quickly exploited this situation. They brought vast amounts of opium to Canton, where foreign trade was legal, and sold it for Chinese gold and silver, thus garnering huge profits.

The narcotic had been strictly banned as early as the Ch'ien-lung 乾隆 era, 1736–1795, and for a time, fear of the severe penalties shut down the trade. But after a while, government officials stopped enforcing these laws rigorously, and the evil sprang up again. In 1815, Ch'ing officials confiscated and destroyed three thousand chests in an attempt to crack down on violators. But by then, the habit was so ingrained among Chinese that trafficking could not be stopped. Why was this? The main reason was that nefarious Chinese merchants kept bartering with the Western barbarians at sea to obtain the illicit drug, and then sold it to people who smoked it secretly in dens all over the empire.

In 1827–1828, the English barbarians had feared that the Ch'ing emperor would issue another edict prohibiting the drug trade. They bribed greedy and corrupt Canton officials into ignoring the existing bans so that trafficking could go on. Opium became China's most important import, running to 60 million cattles per year. This prompted Director of State Ceremonial Huang Ch'ieh-tzu to petition the throne in the summer of 1838. Mineta quotes that document in part:

The opium epidemic has recently depleted gold and silver in China, to say nothing of causing popular distress. Before, it was only the wealthy who squandered money on this drug. Now, the poorest of the poor also become addicted to it, often to the point of selling their homes and fields to purchase it; and so they end up losing their livelihood. This produces bandits and other roving outlaws in the land, whose ever-increasing numbers cannot be controlled. Unless we stop this evil, all of China's wealth will end up in foreign clutches We must act now, before a great calamity befalls us.

Mineta then relates how the Tao-kuang 道光 emperor, r. 1821–1850, responded to this crisis, how Lin Tse-hsü 林則徐, 1785–1850, became High Commissioner at Canton, and how Lin's valiant actions there provoked the tragic war. The Tao-kuang emperor and his ministers proclaimed Huang's hard-line proposal into law as part of the *pao-chia* 保甲 system of collective responsibility.¹⁹ They also instituted the death penalty for anyone caught with opium or opium pipes. Huang then commanded the English merchants to take home all opium stored on their ships or in their factories; and he warned them not to bring any more. The English grieved over their lost lucrative trade, but

¹⁹ On the *pao-chia* system used as a possible institutional mechanism through which the ban on opium might be enforced, see Waley, p. 23; also, Hsin-pao Chang, *Commissioner Lin and the Opium War*, Norton, New York, 1970, p. 129.

could not protest. 'In a few days, scores of [English] merchant ships set sail to leave Canton harbor.'

This happy solution to the crisis proved short-lived. As Mineta explains, nefarious Canton merchants continued selling their illegal hoards of the narcotic, and Chinese outlaws in coastal areas kept violating the law. The emperor and his ministers concluded that it was pointless to confiscate the opium stocks held by Chinese merchants. The barbarians kept smuggling opium into China through the foreign trade at Canton, so the drug's inflow had to be shut off at its source. Court officials then chose Lin Tse-hsü as the man best suited for this task and granted him plenipotentiary powers at Canton.

In 1839, Lin assumed his post there as the emperor's High Commissioner. Touring the English factories on shore, Lin found that all the barbarian merchants had returned to Canton after having departed only the year before, and that Cantonese merchants frequented the English factories to do a brisk business in opium. Realizing how hard it would be to stamp out the illicit trade, he and his colleague, Governor-General Teng T'ing-chen 鄧廷楨, decided first to admonish the Chinese people:

Englishmen know about the poisonous nature of opium and so they forbid their own people to smoke it at home. Yet they cheat Chinese people out of their money and entice them into ruining their health. You are being deceived by them and do not know it. You throw away your lives, just like insects attracted to a flame. . . .

Then Lin and Teng turned their attention to the English merchants and gave them three days to surrender all opium stocks. The English were so terrified that they failed to respond within the time allowed. This enraged Lin, who threatened them with death if they did not comply, and he sent several hundred armed men to surround the factories. In this way, he hoped to make an example of the English, in case the Dutch, French, and American barbarians should attempt to bring opium to China as well.

In consternation, the English surrendered 1,317 chests of the drug to Lin.²⁰ Aware that they were hiding more, he evicted Chinese servants from the factories and seized all small craft in the harbor in order to cut off the merchants from their ships anchored offshore. Then he ordered that no provisions be brought to the English either by land or sea. After hunger and thirst had driven them to the brink, Lin proposed a deal: their Chinese servants could return if they surrendered one-quarter of the remaining opium stocks, food would be allowed in if they surrendered one-half, and regular trade would resume if they surrendered three-quarters.²¹

²⁰ Chang, p. 147, cites a figure of 1,036 chests surrendered on 21 March 1839. But this was only a small part of the opium that would be destroyed in June of that year. Chang's figure is based on John Slade, *Notices on the British Trade to the Port of Canton, with Some Translations of Chinese Official Papers Relative to That Trade*, 1830.

²¹ Based on a Russell & Company document, Chang, pp. 156-57, cites the same blockade

The English merchants apologized deeply for their crimes and relinquished all their opium. Lin promptly burned it, mixed the ashes with salt and lime, and discarded this mixture into the sea to prevent commoners from consuming it.²² The English merchants bitterly resented Lin's harsh treatment, even though they admitted being in the wrong. Several hundred of them left the factories and reported this incident to British military officials stationed in their various Indian colonial outposts. From there, these reports went to Queen Victoria.

Mineta observes that Lin's destruction of the English opium stocks at Canton became the *casus belli* that led to Ch'ing calamities. But long before Lin's 'opium-burning', Mineta takes pains to note, a Ch'ing government official named Ch'eng Han-chang 程含章, d. 1832, had presciently warned:

If we really want to cut off the opium at its source, we must stop the English from coming by refusing to trade with them. If we try to eradicate the problem after it becomes entrenched, war and catastrophe will result. Within a few short years, nefarious commoners in coastal regions—greedy as they are for profit—will collaborate with the barbarians in secret. The strategist must deal with both victory and defeat. Should we allow China to suffer even one small defeat, lewd creatures will soon arrive in packs to attack us.

Mineta exclaims, 'What clear vision he had long before all of this actually took place!' It seemed to Mineta that enlightened Chinese leaders such as Ch'eng recognized the virtues of national isolation, even though that policy was impossible for the Ch'ing Empire to implement.

In the meantime, Ch'ing officials in Fukien were busy trying to tighten up coastal defenses. Their main problem was that evil Chinese merchants ignored the ban on opium, and kept rowing their smuggling skiffs out to the English ships anchored offshore in order to obtain the drug. So the Ch'ing generals decided to attack and burn one such English ship that was operating in the port fairly close to shore. A local official recruited 380 'water braves' (*shui-yung* 水勇) at his own expense, and entrusted them to a commander who devised a highly unusual strategy. He recruited another three hundred local braves and put his total of 680 men aboard Chinese merchant ships. They hid their weapons in the fold of each ship and disguised themselves as merchants out to buy opium. This ruse duped the English, a battle ensued, and the Chinese won by using explosives and boarding the enemy craft to fight hand-to-hand. The enemy's mast and sails were destroyed by fire, and eight Bengal and ten English crewmen died. The Chinese braves, by contrast, suffered only eight killed and wounded. A Ch'ing government official arrived at the scene, but

measures by Lin and a similar deal, but with slightly different conditions. Servants could return after one-quarter, boat service would resume after one-half, guards would leave after three-quarters, and trade would reopen after all the opium had been surrendered.

²² Actually Lin dissolved the opium by mixing it with salt and lime, and then discarded it in the sea. Chang, pp. 173–74.

only as the English ship was reeling toward the open sea. The lesson to be learned from this first battle was that the English were vulnerable to unorthodox tactics by irregular units.

Back in England, Queen Victoria devised a clever war plan. She decided right from the start not to try to conquer the whole Ch'ing empire, and not to use native English forces any more than need be, since she could always recruit fighting men in her colonies. And above all, she vowed to meet English war costs by making China pay an indemnity. A fleet of warships soon left London, powered more by sail than by steam. It first went to the Canary Islands, cruised down the west coast of Africa, and went on to the Cape of Good Hope, an English colony. There, following Victoria's war plan, the squadron recruited several thousand fierce native soldiers. It then sailed to the island of Chi-ning-pu (Ceylon?) and to the country of Chen-la, or Cambodia.²³ In those areas, too, the natives were destitute and lacked the means to sustain life. These men, whom Mineta denigrated as 'blackies' (*kurombō* 黒坊) eagerly sought to enlist in England's army when they heard about the pay to be received.²⁴

As well, Chinese fugitives who had fled to Chi-ning-pu offered to sell their skills as guides and interpreters; and the English gladly accepted because they themselves were ignorant of the Chinese terrain and language. Fortified by these recruits, English forces numbered 'in the tens of thousands'. By the Fifth Month of 1840, their assault force of 'fifty large warships and an untold number of smaller ones' headed for Tinghai, located on Chushan Island, just off Chekiang province.

After easily capturing Tinghai, the English used it as a base for further operations: the Bogue leading to Canton, and Amoy. Perturbed by these defeats, Tao-kuang suddenly dismissed Lin Tse-hsü in favor of Ch'i-shan 琦山 and I-li-pu 伊里布. English Commander (Captain Charles) Elliot 義律 at Tinghai was delighted to hear the news. As Mineta explains, Lin had always been a tough nut for Elliot to crack—the only Chinese who had ever proved a match for the doughty English commander. Elliot immediately went to T'ientsin, perilously close to the imperial court in Peking, where he presented I-li-pu with a letter for the emperor that offered to return the conquered territories of Tinghai, the Bogue, and Amoy in return for an imperial pledge to restore Anglo-Chinese trade under the old arrangements.

I-li-pu knew what catastrophes would result if he allowed Elliot to stay this close to the imperial capital, or worse still, if Elliot should actually enter it. Massive disorder, uprisings, and a grievous loss of dynastic prestige would surely ensue. So I-li-pu quickly informed Elliot that a hallowed law forbade

²³ See Numata Jirō 沼田次郎 et al., ed., *Yōgaku, jō* 洋学, 上, Nihon Shisō Taikēi 64, Iwanami, 1976, pp. 524–25, headnote, for 'Cambodia'. The correct designation should be 真臘; Mineta cites it as 十臘. I cannot identify Chi-ning-pu 咭嚨埠.

²⁴ Throughout *Kaigai Shinwa*, Mineta follows Chinese accounts when referring to Bengal troops as 'black barbarians'.

foreigners to remain in the area. He suggested that Elliot return to Canton, and promised that he, I-li-pu, would go to Peking and persuade the emperor to grant a favorable reply, which C'hi-shan would relay later on.

Tao-kuang's response was not what I-li-pu and Ch'i-shan had hoped for. In a rage, he ordered the barbarians expelled from China and roared that no truce was permissible. Elliot should be taken captive and sent to Peking, and any foreigners who got in the way should die. Ch'i-shan trembled at the thought of having to face Elliot with this imperial edict. When the Englishman finally managed to confront him, Ch'i-shan meekly granted all that Elliot demanded. And after seeing just how distraught Ch'i-shan was, Elliot decided to extract a few more spoils, such as Hong Kong.



Thus, Mineta describes the signing of what historians later would call the Chuenpi Convention of January 1841, the first of China's unequal treaties with the West. A woodblock print of the scene shows Ch'i-shan concluding his unauthorized peace with Elliot and would catch Yoshida Shōin's eye in the context of bakufu negotiations with Perry. Mineta's less-than-flattering portrayal of the Ch'ing envoy does not stop there. Ch'i-shan soon held a lavish feast to curry favor with the English. He invited Elliot and 'several hundred white and black [Bengal] barbarians' to attend this banquet. Wine flowed from numerous fountains, and Chinese maidens, 'with the purest skin and loveliest faces', provided entertainment.

But for Mineta's readers, the war raged on. Chinese commoners in Kwangtung and Fukien were in an uproar, eagerly awaiting the government



troops whom they knew would come to their rescue. The people greeted these men and the generals leading them ‘as if they were clouds during a drought.’ General Yang Fang 楊芳—who in truth was seventy years old and stone-deaf—led ten thousand Manchu and Hunanese troops.²⁵ General Lung-wen 隆文 and General I-shan 奕山, the emperor’s cousin, arrived with twenty thousand imperial troops from Honan, Kweichou, Kiangsi, and Kwangsi. Other provinces also contributed men, for a total of over fifty thousand strong.

Led by these three generals, the Chinese forces supposedly attacked and drove the English from Canton. When they returned shortly in three steamships and forty-five more warships, the Chinese again used unorthodox tactics to defeat this great naval squadron. They attacked with fire rafts and fishing boats loaded with burning piles of straw. That destroyed many English men-of-war and drew the enemy fleet close to shore, within range of coastal batteries. The English lost two steamships and seven large warships, but Elliot escaped on the one remaining steamship. Survivors from the sinking English men-of-war—both white and black troops—swam to shore, only to be cut down by local braves. The crews on the twenty or so British ships still afloat suffered many casualties, and could render no assistance. Thus Mineta describes how the Chinese supposedly scored two impressive victories over the English at Canton, one on land and one at sea, when in fact the Chinese lost seventy-one war junks and sixty shore batteries.

Ch’i-shan’s diplomatic treachery did not go undetected for long in Peking.

²⁵ On Yang Fang, see Waley, p. 137.

Tao-kuang indicted this culprit on eight counts of 'besmirching the nation's honor' (*kokutai* 国体) through his secret peace deal. These were:

1. Doing nothing to oppose the foreigners despite his position as commander of defenses.
2. Slandering Lin Tse-hsü and Teng T'ing-chen.
3. Holding the lavish feast for Elliot and conspiring with him against the Chinese people.
4. Employing street criminals in his administration and in negotiations with the English.
5. Surrendering Hong Kong, the Bogue, and Amoy to England despite having promised to defend these at any cost.
6. Communicating secretly with Elliot instead of turning over all documents to the imperial court.
7. Violating the ban on providing food and fuel to foreign ships.
8. Embezzling public funds allocated for casting new cannon to defend Canton.

In the Fifth Month of 1841, English forces attacked Canton again, this time in forty warships. The city's defenders beat them off at first, but the tenacious invaders soon landed two thousand troops. Aided by one hundred or so Cantonese outlaws hired as mercenaries, they later managed to land at yet another spot on the coast. Szechwanese troops tried to counterattack outside the city, but Chinese cannon fire fell short of the mark and ended up killing them, not the English. This mishap led to a humiliating Chinese defeat, for which Mineta ridicules them.

The Chinese dispatched one thousand elite government troops from inside Canton to repulse the English attack. But their heroic deeds aroused the jealousy of Hunanese troops, who began to fire on the government forces. At that point, local peasant braves roused themselves to defeat the Hunanese turncoats, and this allowed loyal Chinese troops to continue their valiant defense outside the Canton city walls. But other government troops meekly remained inside. Except for Commander Tuan Yung-fu's 段永福 regiment, they just looked on, refusing even to fire their eight-thousand-catty cannon.²⁶ Commander Tuan and his unit stormed and destroyed an English steamship that had run aground. But then, those Chinese generals inside the city became envious of Tuan's success and conspired to relieve him of his command. Quick to exploit this break, the English pressed their attack on Tuan's inept successor, who fled for his life. Mineta says of Tuan's dismissal, 'The people of Canton shed tears of vexation.'

Soon ten thousand fresh English troops attacked Canton's northern gate, and the defenders fled. Having captured the Chinese artillery emplacements on all four sides of the city's outer walls, the English turned these guns inward

²⁶ On the 'eight-thousand-catty cannon' never fired, see Fredrick Wakeman, Jr., *Strangers at the Gate*, University of California Press, 1966, p. 54.

and began a devastating rocket and artillery attack. When I-shan and Yang Fang tried to flee, General Wang T'ing-lan 王廷蘭 remonstrated with them, insisting that Chinese troops still outnumbered the enemy and pleading that he would recapture the gun emplacements if granted command of all forces.

But I-shan was set on deserting, and no other generals backed Wang. The English pressed their attack, and Canton suffered tremendous slaughter. Generals I-shan, Yang Fang, and Lung Wen promptly fetched two comprador-rogues: Yü Pao-jen 余宝仁 and Wu Shao-jung 伍紹榮, better known to history by his alias, 'Howqua'.²⁷ The Chinese generals urged Howqua to propose peace talks and arrange a surrender because he was Captain Elliot's friend. At first, Elliot showed no interest. He argued that the Chinese had violated their earlier peace agreement (the Chuenpi Convention?) and killed two English merchants; so they were in the wrong. But the compradors, Yü Pao-jen and Howqua, begged for a truce and Elliot finally agreed, under two conditions: payment of six million dollars and the safe return of an English princess, Queen Victoria's sister, whom Chinese forces had captured at Yü-yao in the previous year.²⁸

Mineta portrays the aged and deaf Yang Fang as a valiant commander turned dissolute. At first, Yang fought hard in Canton's defense. But after suffering defeat in the second English attack, he lost his stomach for military life; and on top of that, Yü Pao-jen depraved him with six beautiful women. So, while the English were capturing Canton, Yang and I-shan indulged in debaucherous revelry. This earned for Yang the contempt of his own men, and also that of the English troops, who occupied the city and foraged in the surrounding countryside. 'White and black barbarians', Mineta emphasizes, went on orgies of rape and pillage: 'Every night, five- to six-hundred women, their lives ruined, would end their miserable lives.'

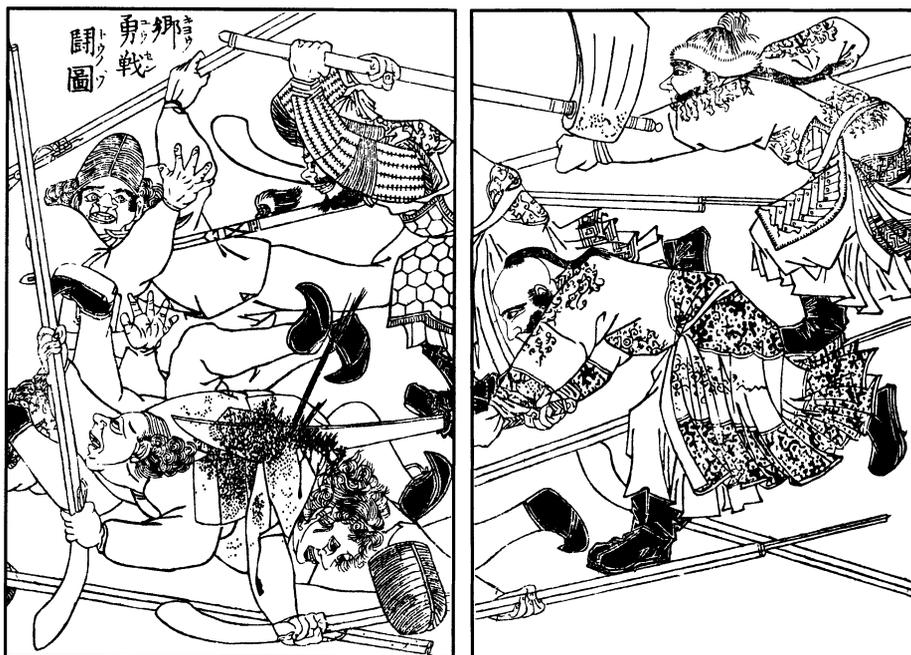
Hunanese troops, following the example of Commander Yang, suffered a total breakdown in discipline. Some cut off their queues and deserted to the British, eager to serve as paid informers and guides; some practiced cannibalism in broad daylight, believing that would cure the venereal diseases they had contracted.²⁹ All this caused immense suffering to the people of Canton, so they drafted petitions and manifestos to the emperor and government outlining their plight and pleading for help.

²⁷ Mineta, however, reverses the order of the kanji in his given name, citing him as 'Wu Jung-shao'. He cites a figure named 鮑鳴; this may be one of the renditions of 'Howqua'.

²⁸ The woman was Mrs Anne Noble, captured from the *Kite* in 1843. Because her surname implied aristocratic birth, her identity became garbled in the Chinese accounts and so she comes out as an English princess. See Katō, p. 277. Mineta probably got this account of her from Saitō Chikudō's *Ahen Shimatsu*, 1843, which in turn was based on Chinese sources. See van Gulick, p. 506. The story would be popularized in *Kaigai Yowa* 海外余話, which Katō incorrectly cites as *Kaigai Shinwa. Kurofune Zengo*, p. 304.

²⁹ Wakeman, p. 56, describes similar rumors circulated by xenophobic Cantonese about troops from Hunan—their alleged propensity to rape and contract venereal disease.

Mineta then describes San-yuan-li and the great Chinese victory that putatively took place there, although he does not actually refer to the battle by name.³⁰ Basing himself on contemporary Chinese sources, he corroborates for his Japanese readers the stab-in-the-back myth that Chinese universally accepted then, and still widely believe today.³¹



The local Cantonese finally came to realize, Mineta writes, that Ch'ing-government commanders and troops were as much of a scourge as the barbarian invaders. So they took matters into their own hands by forming 'bands to subdue the English'. These militia of 'local braves', *hsiang-yung* 鄉勇 as they were called, numbered only five thousand. But they immediately attacked the English regulars stationed at coastal batteries that the Ch'ing government troops had abandoned. Victory at first seemed doubtful, but another two thousand braves concealed in woods nearby joined the attack and helped surround the enemy.

Just when the beleaguered English troops were begging for mercy, Yang Fang ordered the local braves to stop their attack and disband because Chi'shan had already concluded peace, and he also let the trapped English troops retreat to safety. The braves grudgingly did as told, but insisted that

³⁰ For an excellent short account, see Wakeman, pp. 11–58, but the details in *Kaigai Shinwa* differ.

³¹ As Wakeman writes, p. 21, for Chinese historians on the mainland today, San-yuan-li remains 'a great popular victory, blemished only by the cowardice of Ch'ing officials. . . . a Bunker Hill and an Alamo, rolled into one.'

two conditions be met: the English must surrender the Canton city batteries and board their warships, never to return.

All English troops ended up leaving Canton and were afraid to return. Mineta notes with satisfaction: 'The generals in the city had tens of thousands of troops and mountains of splendid weapons under their imperial command but could not match the exploits achieved by masses of righteous local braves. Indeed, those generals were no more than fawning servants of the rebel-chief, Elliot.'

Thus, the local Cantonese braves expelled barbarians in accordance with their emperor's will—only to be betrayed by Ch'ing government leaders. The war went badly for China thereafter, and Mineta concludes *Kaigai Shinwa* with a text of the Treaty of Nanking, which put a temporary end to Chinese humiliations.

What conclusions about China's performance in the First Opium War might Tokugawa readers have drawn from *Kaigai Shinwa*? Mineta's work shows that England did not win the war as much as China lost it. At Canton, the Chinese are portrayed as having achieved victory on land and at sea; they proved they could win when they had a mind to. Moreover, China did not lose any battles because of vastly superior English military technology in the form of cannon and warships. If anything, the Ch'ing commanders had more firepower at their disposal and certainly more men.

Rather than technological inferiority, more mundane tactical factors explain Ch'ing defeats. Personal and regional rivalries spawned insubordination. Generals and field-grade officers were cowardly in battle. Morale and discipline degenerated among the rank and file. Deserters and bandits victimized civilians. Commanders refused to use the militia units and unorthodox tactics that were effective early in the conflict and would have greatly enhanced China's chances to attain final victory.

But socio-political factors were even more devastating to China: the internal weakness that stemmed from a deficient sense of national unity and patriotism. *Kaigai Shinwa* makes it appear that *han-chien* 漢奸,³² or Chinese traitors, abounded at all levels of society. Above, weak-kneed negotiators such as Ch'i-shan and I-li-pu surrendered Chinese sovereign rights and territory in direct violation of imperial orders. At the middle level, sleazy compradors such as Howqua and Yü Pao-jen cut lucrative deals with the English invaders and depraved Chinese generals such as Yang Fang. Finally, at the level of the masses, poverty and desperation had driven Chinese commoners to become renegades or outlaws who eagerly aided and abetted the British as mercenaries or as paid guides, interpreters, and informers. Much of this poverty and weakness stemmed directly or indirectly from opium and its attendant evils,

³² Mineta himself uses the derogatory term.

and these in turn had derived from trade with Westerners. If China had prohibited this foreign trade to start with, or if China had controlled it strictly at Canton, opium trafficking would never have occurred.

The Transformation in 'Jōi'

These Chinese lessons were not lost on contemporary Japanese who found themselves in similar frightening circumstances when Commodore Matthew C. Perry's Black Ships landed a small armed contingent at Uraga near Edo in 1853. At Kurihama he presented diplomatic messages to the bakufu's Uraga magistrates; and the following queer Chinese poem, complete with instructions to decipher it, appeared in the shogun's capital.

[Read each group of kanji in the numerical order shown and]
read the middle character four times:

異	倭	諸	東	乱	異	四	十	一
愁	国	自	變	国	治	九		七
驚	騷	強	船	成	来	三	三	六

*Ikokusen tōgoku ni kitaru
chikoku henjite rangoku to naru
shokoku odoroki ikoku tsuyoshi
jikoku ureu wakoku sawagu*

Ships of a foreign country came to our eastern land,
And a well-ordered state fell to disarray.

Daimyo domains are taken aback; the foreign land is mighty.
Our nation is in distress; Japan is in an uproar.³³

This unknown pundit summed up the bakufu's predicament quite nicely; for the first time in its illustrious history it knuckled under in shame before a military power stronger than itself. Yoshida Shōin and his teacher Sakuma Shōzan 佐久間象山, 1811–1864, were in Edo at the time; and Shōin noted a striking similarity between bakufu and Ch'ing negotiators:

The way they [bakufu magistrates] accepted the barbarian's message constitutes a national disgrace of the greatest proportions. It was just like Ch'i-shan's encounter with the rebel-chief Elliot as shown in the illustration found in *Kaigai Shinwa*. Just to mention that scene pains me deeply.³⁴

Perry returned in the following year and forced the bakufu to sign a 'Provisional Treaty of Amity'. Although it opened ports to sell coal and provisions to Western ships, it was not a formal commercial pact, and therefore did not

³³ Only the first two stanzas of a long poem are quoted here. For the original, see Sakuragi Akira 桜本章, ed., *Sokumenkan Bakumatsu-shi* 側面觀幕末史, Keiseisha, 1905, p. 12.

³⁴ Yamaguchi-ken Kyōikukai, ed., *Yoshida Shōin Zenshū* 吉田松陰全集 [YSZ], Iwanami, 1939, 8, pp. 178–79.

provide for regular foreign trade and residence without express bakufu consent—or so shogunal officials protested. But such details notwithstanding, Consul Townsend Harris arrived in Japan two years later. His aim was to extract a true commercial treaty from the bakufu that would open ports to unregulated trade. In 1858, he lectured *rōjū* 老中 Hotta Masayoshi 堀田正睦, 1810–1864, for two hours on the dangers that opium posed, and transcripts of his harangue soon leaked to the daimyo.³⁵ Harris argued that Western powers other than America were eager to sell the drug in Japan, especially Britain and France, who were then fighting the Second Opium War. But, he assured Hotta, if Edo first signed a formal trade agreement with him that explicitly banned opium imports and permitted commercial agents to reside in Japan, the other more dangerous powers would have to observe this precedent-setting U.S. treaty.³⁶ *Tairō* 大老 Ii Naosuke 井伊直弼, 1815–1860, ignored the wishes of Emperor Kōmei 孝明 and capitulated to Western demands for an unequal treaty in 1858—much as Ch’i-shan had disobeyed Tao-kuang in 1841.

Even so, some informed Japanese leaders and thinkers by the late 1850s had come to realize that *sakoku* was no longer tenable in the sense of prohibiting trade and diplomatic relations with Western nations. The question was how to open Japan without forfeiting territorial integrity or suffering the evils of foreign trade and residence; and as seen from China’s recent experience, opium was among the foremost of those evils.

Sakuma Shōzan, for example, would have bakufu negotiators honor the emperor’s wish to revoke Perry’s treaty because Japan had signed it under coercion. Moreover, Shōzan claimed that Harris’s speech to Hotta requesting a trade pact ‘seemingly took the form of friendly advice to Japan but in truth was replete with lies and threats.’³⁷ The bakufu should confront Harris boldly and expose his duplicity, especially on the issue of opium:

You [Harris] say that once trade starts, England plans to sell opium in Japan just as in China. Even the great power China could do nothing to stop the English, who violated the Chinese ban on opium and trafficked to their heart’s content. How is a small power like Japan supposed to stop England with a simple treaty outlawing opium? You say that if America writes this provision into your treaty, the English will be unable to delete it in theirs even though they wish to. But they violate all such prohibitions. So what difference would it make? Either way, our people would suffer great harm.³⁸

The bakufu should abrogate the original Perry treaty, reject Harris’s trade pact as unjust, and send its own envoy to the United States with orders to renegotiate fair treaties from a position of equality.

³⁵ Japanese accounts say that Harris’s lecture lasted six hours. See Fukuchi Gen’ichirō 福地源一郎, *Bakufu Suibō Ron* 幕府衰亡論, Tōyō Bunko, 1967, p. 59.

³⁶ Part of Harris’s speech to Hotta is translated in W. G. Beasley, *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853–1868*, Oxford U.P., 1955, pp. 159–65. For the original, I consulted Etō Jun 江藤淳, ed., *Katsu Kaishū Zenshū* 勝海舟全集, Kōdansha, 1973, 16, pp. 128–44.

³⁷ Satō, *Watanabe Kazan*, p. 294.

³⁸ Satō, *Watanabe Kazan*, p. 297.

Yoshida Shōin went beyond his mentor in laying bare Harris's deceit. Harris claimed that the U.S., unlike other powers, sought no colonies in the Far East and had never annexed any territory by force of arms. To this, Shōin replied, 'When you annexed New Mexico, wasn't that by force of arms?' America had never acquired colonies in the Far East because it lacked the power to do so, not because it lacked the will; it would behave just like the other Western powers if it were stronger. 'You try to pass off your weakness as virtue. How detestable!' Shōin also saw through Harris's calculated defamation of Britain: 'This is to play up the Opium War and portray the English as rapacious; it is to scare us into embracing America as a friend.'³⁹

Shōin was especially incisive about the crucial problem of opium under Harris's proposed trade pact. Just having a commercial agent stationed in China would not have averted the Opium War as Harris claimed. That war broke out because the English were bent on making profit by selling narcotics; they cared nothing about Chinese law or the well-being of Chinese people. Treaty provisions outlawing the sale of opium in Japan as well would mean nothing, particularly because Harris insisted on 'free trade'. This meant that the bakufu could not regulate trade as with the Dutch and Chinese at Nagasaki. Shōin also pointed out, 'According to Wei Yuan's *Ch'ou-hai p'ien* 籌海篇 [in *Hai-kuo t'u-chih*], English barbarians are not the only ones selling opium. Americans are too, and not to a small extent.'⁴⁰

So American merchants would try to smuggle opium into Japan despite all assurances to the contrary:

You Americans will not burn the opium yourselves while it is on your ships; you will let us burn it after unloading it in Japanese ports, thus creating an excuse for war. Moreover, you want free trade at ports throughout our land; but under such 'free' trade, smuggling would be impossible to stop. Stipulate as many prohibitions as you wish in the treaty. How will that prevent the spread of opium?⁴¹

Shōin's thinking clearly owed much to his perception of China's misfortunes: 'The war over opium shows that the great disasters that befell Ch'ing China were brought on by Chinese traitors [*Han chien*] from within.'⁴² As early as 1848, Shōin composed a laudatory afterword to a certain 'Manifesto by the Righteous and Brave in Eastern Kwangtung', one of the many anti-British proclamations that appeared in Canton in the 1840s.⁴³ He wrote:

The Ch'ing should be concerned about their people within, not barbarians from without. . . . Although the Ch'ing are weak, their land is vast and its

³⁹ YSZ 5, pp. 278-79 & 284-85.

⁴⁰ YSZ 5, p. 286. On the American opium trade in China, see Michael H. Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship*, Columbia U.P., 1983, pp. 7-8. This draws on Jacques M. Downs, 'American Merchants and the China Opium Trade, 1800-1840', in *Business History Review*, 42 (Winter 1968). ⁴¹ YSZ 5, p. 286. ⁴² YSZ 2, p. 107

⁴³ For two examples, see Nishi Junzō 西順三, ed., *Genten Kindai Chūgoku Shisōshi* 原典近代中国思想史, Iwanami, 1976, 1, pp. 93-103.

population is enormous. If they could have unified the hearts of high and low, promoted the righteous and brave, and cut out the nefarious and fawning, encroachment by foreign barbarians would never have taken place.⁴⁴

In 1855, Shōin translated and adapted a Chinese account of events in China—from the First Opium War through the early stages of the Taiping Rebellion—which he titled *Shinkoku Kampō Ranki* 清国威豊乱記.⁴⁵ Its section on the Battle of Canton reads: ‘Peasants in various areas worked up their power, and all the righteous and brave proceeded to San-yuan-li. [But] the commanding general fled the city in terror and gave the English six million dollars to withdraw.’⁴⁶ Shōin glossed this passage: ‘He did not fear the barbarian marauders; he feared those [Chinese] trying to annihilate them. He gave no money to the righteous and brave; he gave it to the barbarians. That explains their loss at Canton.’⁴⁷ Thus, Shōin expressed high esteem for the Cantonese braves who proved they could beat the English, and utter contempt for Ch’ing officials who refused to let them. For him, weaponry was not the crucial factor in warding off Western invaders:

The barbarians depend on stout ships and fine cannon. These are machines. To rely on machines shows that one longs to stay alive; to be righteous and brave shows that one knows he is sure to die. Those who know they are sure to die will always triumph over those who long to stay alive. . . . I greatly lament that the Ch’ing could not employ [those braves].⁴⁸

Both Sakuma Shōzan and Yoshida Shōin knew that foreign trade was inevitable and would even benefit Japan if managed properly. As Shōin admitted:

You [Harris] talk of the advantages trade will bring, and there is much merit in what you say. I once discussed this with my teacher, Shōzan. He said, ‘It is a bad idea to stay in Japan; we must venture abroad to trade with foreigners.’ I replied, ‘As long as Japan is strong enough to control them, there is nothing wrong with staying at home to trade, and venturing abroad would be even better. But if we act just because we fear barbarian power, even venturing abroad to trade would be bad, and staying at home would be still worse.’⁴⁹

Even if foreign trade proved unprofitable, Shōin showed no desire to uphold national isolation—which he himself tried to violate in 1853—because it precluded foreign expansion. In 1855, he held: ‘. . . we should foster national strength and conquer Manchuland, Korea, and China, which are easy to take. Whatever we lose to Russia through trade, we should make up for in Korean and Manchu territory.’⁵⁰ This is noteworthy because it shows how earlier appraisals of Ch’ing-dynasty military power had changed;⁵¹ and because it

⁴⁴ YSZ, 2, p. 51.

⁴⁵ The original is titled *Man-Ch’ing chi-shih* 滿清記事 and is in Etō, 17, pp. 296–324. For a study of its authorship and transmission to Japan, see Masuda, pp. 280–320.

⁴⁶ YSZ 2, p. 220.

⁴⁷ YSZ 2, p. 220.

⁴⁸ YSZ 2, p. 52.

⁴⁹ YSZ 5, p. 292.

⁵⁰ YSZ 8, p. 423.

foreshadowed Japan's imperialist aggression in Asia, which was not possible until *sakoku* was revoked.

The issue was not whether to open the country or keep it closed; sovereignty was the crux of the matter, and opium was a litmus test. This is where proto-nationalists such as Shōzan and Shōin parted company with premodern xenophobes such as Aizawa Seishisai, who 'revered the emperor' only to the extent that this did not harm the shogun. Aizawa would have the bakufu open Japan under Western threats, taking care only to secure written promises that Westerners would refrain from impairing Tokugawa supremacy. He chose to ignore the possibility that Westerners might violate treaty agreements, as they indeed were doing in China; and he never mentioned the danger of opium smuggling that would likely accompany such violations.⁵²

By contrast, Shōzan and Shōin insisted that Japan, not Western nations, should dictate the conditions under which foreign trade and residence should take place. Their ideas came close to the modern concept of a 'sovereign state' that had the right to control internal matters like customs and immigration. As Beasley suggests, *sakoku* and *jōi* in this context should not be construed literally as 'national isolation' and 'the expulsion of barbarians.'⁵³ Instead, these terms took on new connotations. Thus, in 1855, Shōin criticized Wei Yuan's 'loose rein' idea of trying to 'use some barbarians to control others':

Wei says, 'Russia, America, and France all hate England; so we should suborn [those three countries] into helping us fight on land and at sea.' . . . Wei's astute vision makes him a giant among Chinese, but even he succumbs to their mistaken ideas. . . . The essence of an independent state is to make other nations reliant on us, not to make ourselves reliant on them.⁵⁴

Or, as Nakaoka Shintarō 中岡慎太郎, 1838–1867, put it:

Jōi is not peculiar to our Imperial Realm; all the world's nations practice it when necessary. America was once subject to England, but the English king, greedy for profit, oppressed the American people. Washington appealed for reduced taxes, but the king refused to listen. Then Washington led the people of the Thirteen Colonies to expel the English. That was *sakoku* and *jōi*.⁵⁵

⁵¹ But the image of China and the Chinese people—as opposed to the Ch'ing regime—as a great world power remained, especially after reports of the Taiping Rebellion reached Japan. As Shōin wrote in this same document of Fourth Month, 1855, 'If [Hung] Hsiu-chuan should conquer the Ch'ing Empire under false pretenses, he will subjugate Korea and Manchuland.' YSZ 8, p. 424. Or, as Kusaka Genzui 久坂玄瑞, 1840–1864, declared in 1862: 'England and France cannot unleash their power against our Imperial Realm because the long-haired [Taiping] rebels in China are fighting so ferociously. If the long-hairs surrender, England and France are sure to attack us.' Fukumoto Yoshisuke 福本義亮, ed., *Kusaka Genzui Zenshū* 久坂玄瑞全集, Matsuno, Tokuyama, 1978, p. 431.

⁵² For the case of Aizawa Seishisai, see B. T. Wakabayashi, 'Rival States on a Loose Rein', in James White, Michio Umegaki, and Thomas R. H. Havens, ed., *The Ambivalence of Nationalism*, University Press of America, 1990, pp. 11–37.

⁵³ Beasley, pp. 3–18.

⁵⁴ YSZ 4, pp. 51–52.

⁵⁵ Kunaishō, ed., *Shūho Junnan-roku Kō, kōhen* 修補殉難録稿, 後編, Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1933, p. 427.

Thus, *sakoku* and *jōi* took on a universal validity. *Sakoku* came to mean independence or autonomy for the nation. *Jōi* meant to preserve that autonomy in two ways. The first may be seen as a continuation of ‘expulsion’ in the literal sense—as Nakaoka perceived the Thirteen Colonies to have done. But *jōi* took on a second meaning: to control those foreigners who were admitted to Japan by forcing them to honor the treaties they had signed. Aizawa was at a dead-end once expulsion in the literal sense proved impossible. Shōin emphasized *jōi* in the second sense; but he also believed it could be achieved literally, as ‘proven’ by the Cantonese braves.

For Shōin, expelling militarily superior Westerners would not be impossible if bakufu and han leaders did what Ch’ing leaders refused to do: win the people’s hearts and minds through truly benevolent government. Lecturing on *Mencius* in the Seventh Month of 1855, Shōin quoted passages from ‘articles about Ch’ing China written by Westerners’, which he had probably obtained from the periodical, *Hsia-erh kuan-chen* 遐邇貫珍.⁵⁶

These articles described the wretched life of China’s destitute masses. In winter months, ‘Sick men and old women freeze to death. People just . . . toss their corpses under bridges or next to dikes at night; yet no official asks any questions.’ Or, ‘A great many terminally ill or physically disabled people beg on the roadside from passers-by.’ And, ‘The shrewdest of all are mothers who gouge out the eyes of their little girls . . . hoping to get more money by appealing for pity. . . . Some castrate and sell their little boys into court service, scheming to better their chances in life.’ The articles summed up: ‘Such evil customs arise owing to a lack of hospitals. And because poor people cannot afford to raise their small children, they abandon them by the roadside since there are no orphanages. In Peking, no less than 9,000 children are abandoned like this each year.’⁵⁷

Here was the true cause of Ch’ing military impotence as Shōin understood it. By refusing to succor the poverty-stricken masses, Ch’ing leaders failed in their moral obligation to provide virtuous government. But as well, they failed to foster patriotism in China; and in fact, they quashed the popular patriotic sentiment spontaneously manifested at Canton. That left them vulnerable to Western invaders who gladly paid money to win over the Chinese people. Given this bad example, Japanese rulers should know better. Shōin’s proposal on national defense in 1853 ran: ‘Everyone rants, “Defend our coasts, defend our coasts.” But no one rants, “Administer our people.”’⁵⁸ Two years later,

⁵⁶ Shōin cites having ‘finished issue number 1’ of *Hsia-erh kuan-chen* in the Tenth Month of 1854: YSZ 11, p. 24. *Hsia-erh kuan-chen*, or *Chinese Serial*, which numbered thirty-three issues in all, was published in Chinese by Hong Kong-based Western missionaries under the editorship of H. D. Medhurst between August 1853 and May 1858. See John K. Fairbank & Kwang-ching Liu, ed., *Cambridge History of China*, 2, *Late Ch’ing, 1800–1911*, Part 2, Cambridge U.P., 1976, pp. 169–70; and Masuda, pp. 305–06. In 1854, however, Shōin was also reading *Hai-kuo t’u-chih* and a work titled *Igirisu Kiryaku* 噶咭喇記略, which may be Chinese; and so it is possible that the ‘articles’ he quotes may have been from these latter two sources.

⁵⁷ YSZ 3, pp. 54–55.

⁵⁸ YSZ 8, pp. 213–14.

he wrote: 'We should cut expenses wasted on the military and use those savings to bestow blessings to our people. . . . Even Western barbarians establish facilities for the poor, the sick, the orphaned, or the deaf. . . .' ⁵⁹

In another 1855 lecture on *Mencius*, Shōin compared Japan to the feeble state of Wei and glossed the following passage directed to its King Hui 惠, who feared attack by powerful enemies: 'Dispense benevolent government to your people. That will make them, although armed with nothing but staves, triumph over the strong armor and sharp weapons of Ch'in and Ch'u. Don't lack faith.' ⁶⁰

In this way, Shōin defended expulsion in the literal sense against those who criticized him for being 'unrealistic'. Judged by conventional military factors, he held, Wei standing armies were no match for Ch'in and Ch'u—just as regular bakufu and daimyo forces were now helpless against the Western powers. So in either case, spending money on arms was futile. The only truly realistic way to defend Japan in the current foreign crisis was to 'exploit the tactic of constricting oneself in order to lunge forward,' and thereby achieve 'unorthodox victories'. ⁶¹ Bakufu and han leaders should conduct virtuous government, and thereby foster in Japanese commoners a love of country and rulers; then, Shōin hoped, they would fight like the Cantonese braves. In sum, he was calling for guerrilla warfare by the Japanese people.

By 1858, this particular type of *jōi*, informed by a vision of what reportedly took place at San-yuan-li, developed into Shōin's idea of an 'uprising of grassroots heroes', which was needed because the bakufu, daimyo, and samurai could no longer be relied on to defend the country. After his death, this type of *jōi* inspired the creation of Chōshū's *kiheitai* 奇兵隊, or irregular militia recruited from all strata of society. ⁶² Far from being just 'irregular', these fighting units were revolutionary in that they ended the samurai monopoly on the right to bear arms and so eventually paved the way for conscription in the national armed forces of Meiji Japan.

Conclusions

In his classic, *Sakoku: Nihon no Higeiki*, Watsuji Tetsurō grieved: 'Our defeat in the Pacific War laid bare just how truly pathetic a race we Japanese are. . . . What is it we are deficient in?' And he answered: 'The scientific spirit. . . . We detest rational thinking and act according to hidebound, biased beliefs.' ⁶³ Watsuji attributed these putative mental defects to *sakoku*, which he believed

⁵⁹ YSZ 2, pp. 275–76. ⁶⁰ YSZ 3, pp. 28–29. ⁶¹ YSZ 3, pp. 30–32 & 179–80.

⁶² In tracing the development of Shōin's *Sōmō Kukki Ron* 草莽崛起論, Yoshida Toshizumi stresses the influence of Mitogaku and especially the role played by village schools in Mito. There, politicized peasants received military training and mobilized themselves in movements to revere the emperor and expel Westerners. See Yoshida, *Kōki Mitogaku Kenkyū Josetsu* 後期水戸学研究序説, Hompo, 1986, pp. 101–07. I agree, but believe that attention should be given as well to Shōin's appraisal of the Cantonese braves.

⁶³ Watsuji Tetsurō 和辻哲郎, *Sakoku: Nihon no Higeiki* 鎖国：日本の悲劇, Chikuma, 1964, p. 1. The first edition appeared in 1950.

had cut Japan off from beneficial contact with Western culture just when the scientific and democratic revolutions were about to take place in Europe and the New World.⁶⁴

From such assumptions, many of us infer that bakumatsu thinkers who advocated *jōi* did so to uphold *sakoku* in the literal sense. Hence they must have ‘detested rational thinking’ and embraced ‘hidebound, biased beliefs’ in varying degrees owing to a scant knowledge of Western science and world affairs. Yoshida Shōin would seem to be a case in point. He wished to pit the flesh of ‘those who know they are sure to die’ against naked steel; and he argued that ‘righteous and brave’ peasants, ‘although armed with nothing but staves,’ could triumph over the material might of vastly superior foreign invaders. Shōin’s Yamato spirit of *jōi* was later glorified by Japan’s military masters, who sent into combat navy pilots incapable of landing planes on aircraft carriers,⁶⁵ and who placed their faith in mass mobilization plus ‘bamboo spear’ tactics to defend emperor and homeland in a decisive last battle. Thus, in June 1945, even women and adolescents were placed in Japanese Righteous and Brave Fighting Units (*Kokumin giyū sentōtai* 国民義勇戦闘隊).

Especially in Japan, such sentiments still tend to color historical analyses of *sakoku* and *jōi*. Above, I have tried to re-examine these two ideas in the context of their time and in light of available information on foreign affairs. Although more research on this topic is needed, I would tentatively conclude the following:

1. Plausible but false Chinese accounts of the Opium Wars and Taiping Rebellion, transmitted through sources like Mineta Fūkō’s *Kaigai Shinwa*, found widespread acceptance in the bakumatsu era.
2. The image of China gained from those Chinese accounts bolstered certain arguments for *sakoku* or *jōi* that were rational and sensible, if overly optimistic.
3. The threat of Western opium trafficking decisively altered the ideas of *sakoku* and *jōi* in ways that overcame premodern xenophobia and fostered modern nationalism in Japan by introducing the concept of state sovereignty.

Bakumatsu anti-foreignism was not monolithic in nature; a particular thinker’s position on the opium issue revealed the precise character of his anti-foreign thought. Aizawa Seishisai hated Westerners because their presence in Japan threatened bakufu and warrior class supremacy, not because they threatened Japan’s autonomy as an independent state. Aizawa abandoned *jōi* for *kaikoku* out of fear. By refusing to discuss the potential problem of

⁶⁴ Some Japanese scholars, writing mainly in the prewar era, have argued that there were also merits to *sakoku*. But no one in the West examined the controversy, if even to reject it as irrelevant, until Ronald P. Toby, ‘Reopening the Question of Sakoku’, in *JJS* 3:2 (1977), pp. 323–63. He later published his detailed findings as *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan*, Princeton U.P., 1984.

⁶⁵ At Leyte, ‘most of our pilots were so deficiently trained that, once they took off from a carrier, they couldn’t come back and land.’ Yamamoto Chikao 山本親雄, *Daihon’ei Kaigunbu* 大本營海軍部, Asahi Sonorama Bunko, 1982, p. 180.

opium, he showed that he was willing to let foreigners into Japan but unwilling to make them honor Japan's sovereignty. Although he parroted stock Confucian phrases about the need for benevolent rule, he distrusted the masses bitterly; and in 1858–1860, he urged that they be ruthlessly suppressed when they banded together to implement *jōi*.⁶⁶

Yoshida Shōin, by contrast, hated Russians and Americans not so much because they were 'barbarian' in Confucian terms, but because they sought to do harm.⁶⁷ He felt that only strong and responsible leadership would allow Japan to escape the perils of opium and war, perils that were crystal clear given Chinese accounts of recent Western actions in that land. For Shōin, *jōi* ultimately came to mean two things. First, it meant controlling Westerners admitted into Japan by forcing them to obey their own treaties that outlawed opium imports; that is, by subjecting them to Japanese authority in matters of immigration and customs. Second, it logically entailed arming commoners in order to expel any Westerners who refused to respect Japan's sovereignty if bakufu and han authorities proved unwilling to perform that task. But prerequisite to all this was fostering national unity and a sense of patriotism by creating the kind of good government that Japan's masses would want to die for.

Perhaps it can be said that China's 'mirror for Yin' reflected both negative and positive images. Ch'ing government officials and commanders, who abused and betrayed their people, represented China's 'bad' example for Japan. As time passed, these Ch'ing leaders came to resemble bakufu and daimyo rulers who had to be repudiated. On the other hand, the local braves at Canton provided a 'good' lesson; they exemplified what Yoshida Shōin hoped could be achieved in Japan.

⁶⁶ See Wakabayashi, 'Rival States on a Loose Rein', pp. 28–33.

⁶⁷ See his rebuttal of Yamagata Taika's 山県太華 criticism on this point in ysz 3, p. 551.