

Suitable Ships and the Hard Work of Imperialism: Evaluating the Japanese Navy in the 1874 Invasion of Taiwan

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In the spring of 1874 the Japanese government dispatched a military expedition to southern Taiwan, known in most Japanese studies as the Taiwan Expedition. One purpose of the expedition was to punish a group of aborigines who had murdered several dozen people from Ryūkyū late in 1871,¹⁾ but another more important purpose was to establish colonies along the east coast of the island in the hope that Japan would be able to take over the entire island in a few year's time. The expeditionary force landed in southern Taiwan early in May, 1874 and after a few brief battles it established Japanese control over the area and began a six-month long occupation that turned out to be fairly uneventful. While the expeditionary force succeeded in its goal of punishing the aborigines it did not accomplish the goal of establishing colonies in Taiwan. There were a number of reasons why Japan's colonization of Taiwan did not begin in 1874, mainly because of strong opposition by the Qing government but also perhaps because the Japanese navy proved surprisingly weak in its effort to support the expedition. The experience of the Japanese navy in 1874 provides a striking contrast to the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, where the Japanese navy defeated the Chinese navy and Japan claimed Taiwan as a colony. It also contrasts with the gunboat diplomacy that Japan used successfully against Korea and that resulted in the signing of the Kanhwa Treaty in 1876. These events give the impression that Japan had a strong navy but the Taiwan Expedition suggests a different story. While sources about the Taiwan Expedition do not directly mention the matter, it is likely that one of the lessons that the expedition taught the Japanese government was the fact that Japan needed a stronger navy. The need for a strong navy arose, of course, in the wake of the Meiji Restoration when Japan began to exercise its power in East Asia in new ways, including the effort to establish new diplomatic relations with China and Korea and to establish a colonial empire. This paper will evaluate the role of the Japanese navy in 1874 in order to demonstrate some of the problems the Japanese government encountered when it tried to extend its power to Taiwan and establish colonies there.

The Importance of Naval Power in the Taiwan Expedition

From the outset people involved in planning and implementing Japan's invasion of southern Taiwan recognized the importance of naval power to the success of the expedition. One advisor, a former American diplomat named Charles LeGendre, anticipated war between China and Japan and in several memoranda he wrote for

the Japanese government in the fall of 1872 he described the preparations he thought Japan needed to make for the expedition, including details about how naval power would be necessary. LeGendre wrote the memos at the request of the foreign minister at the time, Soejima Taneomi, and his memos helped the Japanese government develop its strategy for how to deal with the so-called Taiwan problem.²⁾ In the memos LeGendre provided many specific ideas about how the Japanese government could justify annexing Taiwan and he may have also helped suggest the idea that Soejima should lead an embassy to Beijing in order to resolve the so-called audience question, a dispute about whether the Tongzhi emperor should permit Western diplomats to present their credentials to him. In any event LeGendre helped prepare Soejima for the embassy that went to China in 1873. LeGendre thus provided the Japanese with a wide range of suggestions and advice about how to deal with Taiwan and the Chinese government.

In the second of the memos he wrote for Soejima, LeGendre addressed the question of what military action the Japanese would need to take in the event of war between China and Japan over Taiwan.³⁾ The memo began with the simple prediction that during the planned negotiations in Beijing the *Zongli yamen*, the bureau in the Qing government that dealt with Western governments and the Japanese, would claim the Ryūkyū Kingdom as a dependency of China and the aboriginal territory of Taiwan as an integral part of the Qing empire. If the Chinese government did so then the responsibility to punish the parties who had murdered the Ryūkyūans in 1871 would fall to China, but the memo predicted that the Chinese government would likely deny its responsibility. The memo further predicted that if China denied its responsibility the conflict would probably result in war between China and Japan, but the memo suggested that before Japan resorted to war its negotiators should at least ask whether China would be willing to cede Taiwan to Japan.

The memo gave three rationales that might be used in pressing Japan's argument. First, because China had failed to extend its administration to the southeastern part of the island and foreign ships regularly passed that way it was inevitable that Westerners would eventually lay claim to the territory, and Japan would not welcome foreign control over Taiwan. Second, in contrast to the character of Chinese soldiers, the character of the Japanese "mountaineers" made them capable of defeating the aborigines, and Japan would be willing to devote the necessary time, expense and military power to the task of developing and educating them. Third, it would be better for China if Japan took control of Taiwan rather than a Western country because Japanese customs were closer than Western customs to those of China.

LeGendre believed that these rationales offered little chance for success, however, and that war between China and Japan was more or less inevitable. He devoted the balance of the memo to an explanation of various preparations Japan should make in order to fight the war with China that would result from the expected failure of Soejima's negotiations. Before Soejima departed for Beijing, the memo argued, the government should lay up food and weapon stores for the military and station eight thousand troops on Miyakojima, in Ryūkyū. It should also have on hand a large warship and a smaller steam vessel to patrol the South China coast and the Taiwan Straits. If war broke out those ships could blockade the ports of the Pescadores, and

three additional gunships would be sufficient to protect the troop transports traveling from Miyakojima to Taiwan and they could control the open ports of Taiwan if necessary. LeGendre gave over the balance of the memo to a description of the key ports in the area and their defensive fortifications, how the Japanese troops and warships should be deployed in and around Taiwan and how the campaign to capture the western half of the island should be conducted. An addendum to the memo noted that since it would be difficult to mount a sea offensive from Miyakojima the Japanese troops should be based instead at Nagasaki. The memo thus shows that the government was discussing new ideas about Japanese territorial expansion soon after the Meiji Restoration, that the government understood territorial expansion might provoke a war between China and Japan and that naval power was necessary to Japanese territorial expansion.

Another memorandum that LeGendre wrote for Soejima around the end of 1872 or beginning of 1873 spelled out an even more aggressive vision of the new role that Japan might play in East Asia.⁴⁾ This memo, the fourth that LeGendre wrote, framed the discussion of Japanese policy toward Taiwan in terms of power politics and it proposed a regional view of Japanese foreign policy that linked a wide range of problems that Japan faced in its relations with Russia, Korea, Ryūkyū, Taiwan and China. The memo began by stressing the threat of foreign colonization in the region. Western powers hoped to extend their influence in East Asia, it argued, and they had an ideal opportunity in the potential colonization of Korea to Japan's north and Taiwan to its south. In order to protect itself from this threat Japan should use the failure of the Chinese government to punish the aborigines of southern Taiwan as a pretext for annexing Taiwan and the Pescadores. LeGendre justified this argument based on an assessment of international conditions at the time. As the conflict between Britain and Russia over the "Eastern Question" grew worse the danger of war between the two countries would increase and Russia might conspire to have Prussia occupy Taiwan in order to draw it into an alliance against the British in East Asia. The memo assumed that Western powers would use force to annex Taiwan but the powers had a problem in that they had no pretext for war with China. The audience question might provide a justification for war if it could not be resolved satisfactorily, and Japan should take advantage of this opportunity by dispatching an embassy to Beijing to open negotiations about the Ryūkyūans who had been murdered in southern Taiwan. When the negotiations had reached their most precarious point Japan should seize the initiative and occupy Taiwan and the Pescadores by force or through negotiations. The memo predicted that the Western powers would not intervene because Britain and Russia would prefer to see Japan rather than a rival power occupy Taiwan.

LeGendre next broadened his analysis of geopolitics to link Japan's interests in Korea to the vision of annexing Taiwan. "If Japan were to occupy the Korean peninsula," the memo argued,

Japan would gain free rein for its influence as far as the Yellow Sea. It cannot be said that Japan currently controls the shore of the Japan Sea on the Korean side and it would cause Japan ceaseless worries if Russia or another power

came to that opposite shore and occupied it. It would be the same, for example, as the constant deceit and bickering Turkey receives and the abuse it suffers because it is separated by only a single expanse of water from a great power [Russia].

The memo identified Korea as the most important point in northern Asian because of its convenient position for trade and communication and its easy defensibility. It also suggested that Japan could protect itself from the twin threats of Russian expansion and Chinese collapse by occupying Korea, Taiwan and the Pescadores. The memo spelled out some of the strategic possibilities that had been created by Japan's new foreign policy after the Meiji Restoration. The memo assumed Japan's alignment with the West, reflecting a major policy shift that had taken place only months after the new Meiji government took power in 1868. The memo also assumed that Japan could escape Asia and enter Europe, to borrow Fukuzawa Yu-kichi's famous phrase, and it proposed a sweeping enlargement of Japanese foreign policy that envisioned the use of coordinated geopolitical thinking, territorial expansion, the ideology of a civilizing mission for Japan in East Asia and warfare. The overall purpose of this effort would be, of course, for Japan achieve its security by replacing China as the dominant power in the region.

In spelling out this vision of Japan's new role in East Asia LeGendre did not explicitly address the necessity of naval power, but it is obvious that naval power would be needed to achieve the goals outlined in his memos. The course of action that LeGendre proposed had a considerable influence on the Japanese government's policy toward Taiwan and China, but there were many problems with his proposals and they were far from universally popular in the Japanese government. Perhaps the most serious problem posed by the memos is that they accepted war between China and Japan as a given. Soejima embraced this assumption wholeheartedly but his willingness to resort to war caused alarm among other members of the Japanese government. Strong disagreements about Soejima's intentions led to protracted debates about what he should try to accomplish during his mission to Beijing and what limits should be placed on his actions, and Soejima in fact asked LeGendre to prepare his fourth memo in order to address some of the concerns that had been raised by others in the government. The aggressive nature of LeGendre's fourth memo produced even more alarm, however, especially because Soejima would be dispatched to Beijing as a minister plenipotentiary and as such would have considerable latitude in deciding whether to commit Japan to war with China. Consequently the Japanese cabinet pressed Soejima to clarify his intentions in a fifth memorandum. The cabinet rejected the first draft of that memo as too belligerent because it still accepted the possibility of war with China in order for Japan to colonize Taiwan, but even the second draft was not much less belligerent. Soejima obstinately stuck to his position despite the cabinet's reservations.⁵⁾ The possibility of war with China was the sticking point in the government's debate, and in order to restrain Soejima the cabinet eventually issued orders that specifically restricted him to the purpose of fulfilling the state's duty to its people (*kokumin ni taisuru gimu*), a reference to the Ryūkyūans who had been murdered in Taiwan, and it enjoined him from pursuing

the long-term geostrategic plans that had been spelled out in LeGendre's memos.⁶⁾

LeGendre's memos also included a second problem that did not provoke any comments at the time and apparently did not attract any notice but that became quite obvious during the expedition that took place in 1874: the plan assumed that the Japanese navy was strong enough to carry out simultaneously the colonization of Taiwan and a potential war with China. LeGendre had served as an officer in the Union army during the American Civil War and his army service undoubtedly colored his understanding of warfare, so he may have underestimated the importance of the role the navy would play. Nevertheless, during the years he spent as the U.S. Consul in Amoy LeGendre had worked closely with several U.S. navy officers and he learned from his experiences how much he needed U.S. naval support in order to be effective in his job as consul. As a result of his experiences in Amoy and Taiwan LeGendre understood the need for naval power, and his memos expressed that understanding, clearly envisioning the possibility of sea-based warfare against the Chinese. For whatever reason, however, LeGendre never assessed the ability of the Japanese navy to support the ambitious plans outlined in his memos, and apparently no one openly challenged Soejima's plans for an expedition to Taiwan on the basis of the weakness of the Japanese navy.

In the end war did not break out between China and Japan in 1874, and even if it had broken out it probably would have unfolded very differently from what LeGendre envisioned. Still, his plan shows us what some of the navy's goals might have been in case of war: to protect the Japanese troops being sent to Taiwan, to defend the ports of Taiwan and to control the Pescadores. Other participants in the expedition besides LeGendre also made observations about the importance of naval support, and the invasion of southern Taiwan undoubtedly taught the Japanese government several important lessons about using naval power to establish a colonial empire.

The Early Modern Sources of Japan's Naval Weakness

It is likely that one of the lessons that the government learned from the Taiwan Expedition is that the Japanese navy was too weak to sustain an overseas empire. The Japanese government must have taken the navy's weakness into consideration when it discussed the risks of war with China after the expedition had been dispatched, but there are few records that openly assess the strength of the navy.⁷⁾ The biggest weaknesses were obvious and may not have needed to be mentioned. In fact, most of the weaknesses of the navy were nothing new and could be traced back to the policies of the Tokugawa bakufu.

In the early Meiji period the Japanese navy, while weak, was still stronger than it had been in the early modern period, and by the time of the Taiwan Expedition efforts to strengthen the navy had been ongoing for nearly two decades. The weakness of the Japanese navy in the early Meiji period can be traced back to the policies of the bakufu toward foreign trade and coastal defense that dated in some cases to the seventeenth century.⁸⁾ In the early modern period the bakufu limited seaborne trade in order to control the Japanese population and especially to prevent rival lords (*daimyō*) from attaining wealth that might permit them to challenge the power

of the Tokugawa family. Because it had banned large, sea-going vessels the bakufu had to rely on land-based coastal defenses rather than a navy in order to protect Japan from potential foreign threats. In effect the bakufu's policies assumed that a strong navy was not necessary because Japan's geographical isolation was sufficient to protect the country from foreign military threats, and in the rare cases where foreign ships might approach Japan coastal gun batteries would be sufficient to defend the country.

The bakufu's policies worked well enough until Western powers, starting with Russia in the late-eighteenth century and continuing with Britain and the United States in the nineteenth century, challenged Japan's reliance on geographical isolation and land-based coastal defenses. As early as 1791 Hayashi Shihei identified the danger posed by European naval power in his book *Kaikoku heidan* (*Discussion of the Military Problems of a Maritime Country*). Hayashi warned that "From Nihonbashi in Edo to China and then to Holland stretches a sea route without limit,"⁹⁾ in other words nothing but water separated Japan from its potential enemies, and he argued that Japan needed naval forces in addition to coastal gun batteries in order to defend the country from seaborne threats. More than a century earlier the bakufu had banned the large ships that were necessary to defend Japan from the sea, and Hayashi's open criticism of the bakufu's policy led to his arrest.¹⁰⁾ Japan's vulnerability from the sea continued unabated, however, and the bakufu responded by not by introducing a navy but rather by attempting to strengthen coastal defenses. In 1825 the bakufu attempted to address the growing Western threat from the sea by issuing the *Ikokusen uchiharai rei* (Foreign Ship Expulsion Edict), a hard line edict that ordered domains in coastal areas to fire on and drive off Western ships that might approach Japan.¹¹⁾

Hayashi's book and the expulsion edict are examples of what historians now call the debate about maritime defense (*kaibōron*). The debate became more prominent after China's shocking defeat in the Opium War in 1842 and it effectively ended with the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between the United States and Japan (*Nichibeī shūkō tsūshō jōyaku*) in 1858. That treaty opened Yokohama to foreign trade and left the bakufu with little choice but to accept the presence of foreign ships in Japanese waters. Not everyone in Japan acquiesced to the presence of Westerners in Japan and samurai from Chōshū domain famously attacked Western ships passing through the Straits of Shimonoseki in 1863, but such resistance was sporadic and ineffective. Consequently, after Yokohama opened as a treaty port the bakufu, along with several of the large coastal domains, began to take serious steps toward creating a modern naval force that could protect Japan from the sea. While the process of creating a modern navy began in the 1850s it was not very advanced and at the time of the Taiwan Expedition in 1874 the Japanese navy was still rather weak.

The Weaknesses of the Japanese Navy in the Early Meiji Period

Primary sources from 1874 suggest that the biggest weakness of the navy was a lack of adequate ships. The bakufu and a few of the larger domains began buying and building a small number of Western-style ships in the 1850s but their number was inadequate and the lack of ships was exacerbated by other weaknesses. Accord-

ing to D. Eleanor Westney the Japanese navy modernized slowly for several reasons. To begin with, the government allocated more resources to expanding the army than to the navy because it feared the threat of domestic rebellion more than the threat of foreign invasion. A second reason is that Japan lacked the industrial base needed to manufacture ships and the government could not afford to buy them from foreign countries. For example, while the first Japanese warship was built before the Meiji Restoration the second was not finished until 1876, and the Meiji government ordered only six new warships before 1886. Three came from Japanese shipyards and the remaining three came from Britain, but the British ships were not delivered until 1878. A third reason is the political weakness of the Navy Ministry. Many of the leading figures in the navy had served in the bakufu and they did not enjoy the same power and prestige as leaders who had fought to overthrow the bakufu and install an imperial government. This led to considerable factionalism and infighting within the Navy Ministry and limited the ministry's influence in the government. A final reason is that it took a long time to train a modern officer corps in the navy. Students who went abroad for training typically spend about a decade overseas and they did not begin to return in sizeable numbers until 1878. In the mid-1870s the Navy Ministry established a naval academy and other schools to train officers but the navy did not see the benefit of these efforts until the 1880s.¹²⁾ For a variety of reasons, then, the modernization of the navy proceeded slowly and at the time of the Taiwan Expedition in 1874 the navy simply did not have enough good ships or trained personnel to carry out the fairly modest invasion of southern Taiwan much less to establish or sustain colonies there.

The lack of adequate ships was obvious early in the invasion, and we can see this in an interesting comment written by an American naval officer named Douglas Cassel who went with the invasion force to southern Taiwan as an advisor. One of his jobs was to help establish a colony on the east coast of the island at Pilam (present-day Taidong), in an area that would be difficult to reach without a good steamship. In a long letter that he wrote to LeGendre he included a brief passage that expressed his frustration about the poor quality of Japanese ships:

Every day since I came here the advantages, nay, the necessity, of a suitable vessel for this work has been more and more forcibly brought home to me, and I feel more convinced than ever that the "Tabor" is the only suitable vessel attainable. Do not fail to insist upon her presence here at the earliest moment... I consider her as a necessity to the work upon the East Coast.¹³⁾

Cassel, an accomplished naval officer, wanted a reliable steamship to land Japanese troops and supplies on the east coast of Taiwan in order to establish a colony there, and in his view there was literally only one ship in Japan that was adequate for that task. In March, 1870 the Japanese government bought the French paddle steamer *Thabor* and put the ship at the disposal of the Ministry of Engineering (*Kōbushō*). The ministry hired the British captain Albert B. Brown to command the vessel and put him in charge of establishing and maintaining a network of lighthouses in Japan.¹⁴⁾ The vessel Cassel wanted to use was not, in fact, even a navy ship but

the navy could easily have had the *Thabor* temporarily reassigned just as the government had temporarily reassigned Brown to assist the expedition.¹⁵⁾ In the end the *Thabor* was never sent to Pilam as Cassel hoped, probably because the government decided not to follow through with its plans to establish colonies. Cassel's letter shows, however, that Japan simply did not have enough suitable ships to carry out the hard work of imperialism.

The Japanese navy also had problems getting relief personnel and supplies to Taiwan. A few months after the army arrived in southern Taiwan many of the soldiers and laborers there began to get sick with malaria, and by September the Japanese government had to send new troops and laborers to replace them. By early October the malaria epidemic had incapacitated the expeditionary force, and the government urgently needed to send more soldiers, laborers and medicine to Taiwan. The problem is that the navy did not have enough ships to transport people and supplies, and as a result it had to rely on Japanese commercial vessels.¹⁶⁾ The problems the navy encountered using its ships to support the army in Taiwan were exacerbated by the fact that just as the malaria epidemic in southern Taiwan reached its peak Ōkubo Toshimichi, with the support of the cabinet, decided to travel to China in Japan's most powerful warship, the *Ryūjōkan*, in order to engage in negotiations with the Qing government.¹⁷⁾ Ōkubo's trip involved more than just the *Ryūjōkan*, however, since it had to be accompanied by escort vessels, and even this largely symbolic example of gunboat diplomacy further limited the navy's ability to send supplies and reinforcements to the expedition army in southern Taiwan. The general impression given by various sources is that the Japanese navy had difficulty supporting an army that was merely occupying southern Taiwan and was not doing any fighting. If war had broken out the problem would have been much more severe and the navy would have been incapable of supporting an army that had been incapacitated by illness.

The Japanese navy also had serious problems maintaining professional behavior among its sailors. One incident involved the harassment of Chinese women by Japanese sailors whose ship stopped in the port of Keelung to take on coal. According to British diplomatic sources from June, 1874 Japanese soldiers engaged in "lawless conduct" toward women there.¹⁸⁾ A more damning description of the low morale and discipline on board Japanese navy vessels was offered by Captain Brown who paid a visit to the *Hokkai-maru* in Nagasaki at the beginning of May, 1874. Conditions on board the ship appalled him so greatly that he felt compelled to inform LeGendre, who passed the information on to Ōkuma Shigenobu, the civilian leader in charge of the expedition.¹⁹⁾ Brown expressed his concerns frankly in his letter to LeGendre.

I feel it is my duty to lay before you a statement shewing the disgraceful state of this vessel, both as regards the ship herself, and also the discipline on board. In the first place I may state that at present the "Hokai Maru" is in reality little better than a wreck, ropes and all gear rotten, and the rigging completely dropping off the mastheads, below everything in the greatest state of disorder, confusion, dirt and filth imaginable. In the saloon the ships property is being de-

stroyed, lost, and broken, for the want of someone able to look after it. The ship has evidently been greatly neglected for a considerable time...

On Saturday night-last it was blowing a gale and I considered it prudent to have an officer on deck to look after the safety of the ship, but found that Mr. Maida was sick, Mr. Nangau on shore, and as Mr. Frank had been working all day I could scarcely ask him to remain up all night, so that there was no one to do the duty required.

Yesterday afternoon on my going on board I found Mr. Nangau in the lower saloon entertaining a lot of singing girls, and I have reason to believe some of the sendoes [boatmen] were there also, thus making the ship little better than a Brothel.

I can only say in conclusion that I consider the "Hokai Maru" to be a disgrace to the Japanese flag, and beg some steps be taken to put matters on a more satisfactory footing, and with this brief I would suggest the following alterations.

That a foreign 2nd officer be appointed, and also five Manilla men for mending sails, steering etc., also a Head Boy to take charge of the saloon. Also that Mr. Maida be sent to Hospital, and Mr. Nangau severely reprimanded and the Paymaster compelled to live on board, and attend to his duties.²⁰⁾

Brown's description makes it clear that the condition of the ship left much to be desired. The ship was poorly maintained and discipline was so nearly absent that the Japanese officers could not or did not do their jobs. Undoubtedly some of the ships in the navy were maintained better than the *Hokkai-maru*, but this example suggests that the navy had not solved basic problems of how to train sailors and officers and how to maintain standards of discipline and maintenance.

Captain Brown's suggestion that the navy hire another foreign officer to serve on the *Hokkai-maru* points to another problem with the Japanese navy in the early Meiji period: it did not have enough people who could sail its ships, and it especially lacked ship captains. To be sure, all of the Japanese ships had Japanese commanding officers but the ships were effectively under the command of foreigners, nearly all of whom were British or American. One example of this problem can be seen in an incident that took place a few months before the Taiwan Expedition when a Japanese Army officer named Kabayama Sukenori wanted to visit Pilam. Kabayama began his explorations of Taiwan in August, 1873 by going to the Suao area, near the northeast coast of the island, where he hoped to establish a Japanese base of operations that would be used in the effort to colonize eastern Taiwan beginning with the Nanao area that lay just south of Suao. Although his efforts seemed to start well they ended in utter failure and the experience soured Kabayama on the prospect of establishing a Japanese presence in the north. Instead, he turned his attention to the southeastern coast of the island, focusing specifically on visiting the area around Pilam where he wanted to establish ties with an aborigine leader named Ansheng.

In his diary entry for March 9, 1874 Kabayama writes:

I hoped to do explorations from this port [Takao] around to the waters on the east side [of the island]. The plan was to do some exploring in the vicinity of

Butan and then to go up to Pilam to meet the aborigine [*banshajin*] named Anshin [Ansheng] who helped rescue our countrymen last summer, and to remain there in order to take advantage of the opportunity to guide [*yūdō*] that area. Of course I thought that if my plan was implemented the navy's future strategy would be easier, so I decided to travel once again on the warship [*Kasuga*], and since Mr. James had gone ashore this evening I went to the British Consulate where he instructed me about the difficulties involved in traveling around to the east of Taiwan. Not surprisingly some of the equipment on board has been damaged, and if it were physically impossible to sail around [the island] my indulgence would strand us in the middle of the sea. I felt a regret that I could not contain. So we will have to consider once again plans for the colonial reclamation [*shokumin kaikon*] in the Nanao area in the north.

James, an Englishman who had sailed with the *Kasuga* from Japan to help pilot the ship, promptly threw cold water on Kabayama's proposal to visit the southeastern coast because the ship had suffered damage and was not up to the task, a frank assessment that underscored the inability of the Japanese navy to its project force overseas because it did not have adequate ships.²¹⁾ The role James played in deciding how the *Kasuga* would be used also underscored the fact that a foreign captain exercised effective command of the ship.

The Japanese navy's reliance on foreign captains can be seen elsewhere as well. For example the Japanese government printed a landscape map of Shaliao Bay, where the expeditionary force intended to land, that included written instructions in both Japanese and English to help ship captains recognize the location of the bay.²²⁾ The print was prepared by Douglas Cassel, who had been recruited by LeGendre to help the Japanese carry out the invasion and occupation of southern Taiwan, and the image of the terrain in the print was based on a landscape drawing of the area that had been done during a visit by LeGendre to southern Taiwan in March, 1872. Cassel had also gone to Shaliao Bay at that time, as an officer on board a U.S. navy ship that transported LeGendre there. Several other Americans and Britons, such as Captain Brown, helped the Japanese navy carry out the expedition by serving as the effective captains of the Japanese troop transport ships and warships that brought the Japanese expeditionary force to southern Taiwan and helped sustain it once it was there. Since none of the Western ship captains or Japanese officers had ever been to southern Taiwan, with the exception of Cassel, they would have had difficulty recognizing Shaliao Bay, the primary anchorage at which the expedition planned to land its troops. Cassel's landscape print of the bay served as a bilingual aid to help the Japanese officers and foreign captains alike identify the anchorage. As these examples show the Japanese navy had to rely on foreign captains because they lacked the trained personnel needed to command their ships.

The fact that Japanese navy ships were under the command of foreigners would have caused a major problem if Japan had declared war on China, and concern about the involvement of foreign personnel in the expedition nearly led to its cancellation. The problem, in short, had to do with the special status that foreigners enjoyed in China under the unequal treaties. If foreign ship captains helped the Japa-

nese during a war against China their nations would no longer be considered neutral and they would lose the extraterritorial protection they enjoyed under the treaties. A major diplomatic problem arose because of this particular problem when Britain's Minister to Japan, Harry Parkes, voiced concerns about the participation of British personnel in the expedition.

By early April, 1874 Parkes had figured out that the expedition actually intended to colonize part of Taiwan and that punishing the aborigines was simply a pretext. Concerned that the expedition might provoke war between China and Japan, Parkes telegraphed Thomas Wade, the British minister in Beijing, on April 11 to alert him to the imminent dispatch of the expedition and its purposes.²³⁾ After that foreign opposition to the expedition began to spread. While British officials no doubt wished to protect their nation's commercial interests in China from the disruptions of war they also had a serious concern about maintaining British neutrality in a possible war between Japan and China. In a number of exchanges with Foreign Minister Terashima Munenori, Parkes sought a clarification of Japan's motives for sending the expedition to Taiwan and assurances that Japan had obtained China's assent. On April 13 he informed Terashima that "If the Japanese Government has come to a clear understanding with that of China on this subject no difficulty will of course occur, but if on the other hand the Chinese government should regard the expedition as hostile to themselves, Your Excellency will readily perceive that all British subjects engaged in it would have to be at once recalled."²⁴⁾ The Japanese government had been relying on verbal assurances made by the Qing government in June, 1873, and because it lacked written assurances that a Japanese force would be permitted to land in southern Taiwan Western diplomats remained skeptical about the participation of their countries' nationals in the expedition.²⁵⁾

Parkes found an ally in the *Japan Daily Herald*, which ran a story on April 17 that leveled scathing criticism at the U.S. Minister John Bingham for abetting the Japanese by permitting American ships—which had been chartered by the Japanese government—to participate in the expedition. The criticism, however unfounded, had the intended effect of prodding Bingham into action. Bingham contacted Terashima the following day and, citing the *Herald* article, inquired whether "any ships of the United States have been chartered under the authority of the government of Japan to engage in a military expedition against and hostile to Formosa, and whether any officers or citizens of the United States have been employed by the government of Japan in such expedition," and he protested the Japanese government's using U.S. citizens or ships in hostile action against China. Terashima offered assurances that the expedition had no hostile intent toward China, but Bingham refused to accept Terashima's explanation until Japan had received written consent to the expedition from China, and he reiterated his demand that U.S. citizens and ships not be used. In response to Bingham's protests the Japanese government agreed to "detach" from the expedition the U.S. transport ship *New York* and the advisors LeGendre and Cassel.²⁶⁾ The unexpected reaction from the foreign ministers in Tokyo prompted the Japanese cabinet to backtrack, and on April 19 it decided to postpone the expedition,²⁷⁾ but Saigō Tsugumichi, the commander in charge of the expeditionary force, dispatched part of the force from Nagasaki before it could be

recalled. The government, faced with a *fait accompli*, had little choice but to go forward with the expedition. Still, because of Bingham's pressure the chartered American ship withdrew from the expedition and the Japanese government had to scramble to buy transport ships that foreign merchants were happy to sell them at inflated prices.²⁸⁾

Because a potential Sino-Japanese conflict might affect the special rights they enjoyed under the unequal treaties, the stakes were quite high for the British and American governments. If war had broken out between China and Japan the British and Americans would have required all their people to stop working on Japanese ships, and that very likely would have crippled the Japanese navy because the Japanese captains were ill-prepared to command their own ships in case of war. Lack of trained personnel was a serious weakness of the Japanese navy at the time of the Taiwan Expedition.

Conclusion

It is obvious from Japan's invasion of southern Taiwan in 1874 that the Japanese navy simply was not prepared to establish or support a colonial empire. It was widely believed at the time that if Japan wanted to establish a colonial empire in East Asia then war with China would be unavoidable, and such a war would necessarily involve naval battles. It was also clear from the Taiwan Expedition that Japan was not prepared to fight those battles. The Japanese navy did not have enough ships to support a static occupation of southern Taiwan much less to fight effective battles at sea, and the quality of its ships was poor. The navy's lack of well-trained personnel, especially captains, to operate and command its ships was nearly as important a problem. The navy barely managed to support an occupation army that had abandoned its plans to establish colonies and it was even less prepared to fight the naval battles that would have resulted from war with China if Japan had followed through with the plan to colonize Taiwan. In sum, in 1874 the Japanese navy was not up to the hard work of imperialism.

Notes

- 1) This article follows the general practice of calling the indigenous inhabitants of Taiwan aborigines.
- 2) Memos No. 1–3, Waseda Daigaku Shakai Kagaku Kenkyūjo ed., *Ōkuma monjo* (6 vols.; Tokyo: Waseda Daigaku Shakai Kagaku Kenkyūjo, 1958), 1: 17–33 (hereafter *Ōkuma monjo*).
- 3) *Ōkuma monjo* 1: 26.
- 4) "Dai yon oboegaki," Gaikō Shiryōkan, ref. code B20030301137, Army-Navy Record file R34. See also Fujimura Michio, "Meiji shoki ni okeru Nisshin kōshō no ichi danmen: Ryūkyū buntō jōyaku o megutte (jō)," *Nagoya Daigaku bungakubu kenkyū ronshū* (shigaku) 16 (1968): 1–3.
- 5) For an example of Soejima's continued interest in colonizing all of Taiwan see Soejima to Ōkuma, 1873/2/17, "Ōkuma monjo" B26, Waseda University Library, cited in Wayne C. McWilliams, "East Meets East: The Soejima Mission to China, 1873," *Monumenta Nipponica* 30 (1975): 243.
- 6) Dajōkan satasho to Foreign Minister Soejima Taneomi, 1873/2/27, "Meiji rokunen Shinkoku haken chokushi jirei dai-kyūten," *Soejima-ke monjo* 97, Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan Kensei Shiryō Shitsu; cited in Chō Ko, "Soejima tai-Shin gaikō no kentō: Soejima gaimukyō ate chokushi o hyōzai ni shite," in Meiji Ishinshi Gakkai ed., *Meiji ishin to Ajia* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2001), 45.
- 7) By contrast the government prominently discussed the lack of readiness of the army, for example

- when Yamagata Aritomo informed the cabinet that Japan was not ready to fight a war against China. Ishii Takashi, *Meiji shoki no Nihon to higashi Ajia* (Yokohama: Yürindō, 1983), 101–105.
- 8) Ronald P. Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan: Asia in the Development of the Tokugawa Bakufu* (1984. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Arano Yasunori, *Kōza Nihon kinseishi 2: sakoku* (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1981); Arano Yasunori, *Kinsei Nihon to Higashi Ajia* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1988).
 - 9) Quoted in Marcia Yonemoto, “Maps and Metaphors of the ‘Small Eastern Sea’ in Tokugawa Japan (1603–1868),” *Geographical Review* 89(2), (April 1999), footnote 6, 186.
 - 10) Conrad Totman, *Early Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 484.
 - 11) Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, *Anti-Foreignism and Western Learning in Early-Modern Japan: The New Theses of 1825* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1986), 60.
 - 12) D. Eleanor Westney, “The Military,” in Marius B. Jansen and Gilbert Rozman, eds., *Japan in Transition: From Tokugawa to Meiji* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 181–182.
 - 13) Douglas Cassel to Charles LeGendre, 1874/5/26, in Robert Eskildsen ed., *Foreign Adventurers and the Aborigines of Southern Taiwan, 1867–1874: Western Sources Related to Japan’s 1874 Expedition to Taiwan* (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica, 2005), 216. For a Japanese version see Gaimushō Chōsabu, ed., *Dai Nihon gaikō bunsho* (12 vols.; Tokyo: Nihon Kokusai Kyōkai, 1936–1940), 7: 125 (hereafter DNGB).
 - 14) Lewis Bush, *The Life and Times of the Illustrious Captain Brown: A Chronicle of the Sea and of Japan’s Emergence as a World Power* (Tokyo and Rutland: Voyager’s Press Ltd. and Charles E. Tuttle, 1969), 26–27. Ōkurashō ed., *Kōbushō enkaku hōkoku* (Tokyo, 1889), 669–673.
 - 15) “Kōbushō e Burōn kariire no gi ōkan nitsū,” Kokuritsu Kōbunshokan, naikaku, tankōsho, banchi shori, tankōsho-shoban shimatsu-kinoeinu [1874] 4 gatsu no 1-dai 5 satsu (JACAR A03030103400).
 - 16) “Shikyoku yori Kanagawa-maru hoka ni kan Taiwan shuppan narabi ni Takasago-maru kōkai unun denshin,” 1874/9/24, Kokuritsu Kōbunshokan, naikaku, tankōsho, banchi shori, tankōsho-shoban shimatsu-kinoeinu [1874] 9 gatsu no 11-dai 51 satsu (JACAR A03030262500); “Hayashi kaigun taisei hoka ichimei Ōkuma chōkan e banchi byōsha Kanagawa-maru nite unō unun raishin,” 1874/10/13, Kokuritsu Kōbunshokan, naikaku, tankōsho, banchi shori, tankōsho-shoban ruisan (JACAR A03030789100); “Shikyoku yori Miyazaki ken boshūhei todokazu Keiho-maru bankō unun denshin,” 1874/11/5, Kokuritsu Kōbunshokan, naikaku, tankōsho, banchi shori, tankōsho-shoban shimatsu-kinoeinu [1874] 11 gatsu no 4-dai 74 satsu (JACAR A03030331100).
 - 17) Ishii, 122–126.
 - 18) Thomas Wade to Earl of Derby, 1874/6/10, in Ian Nish ed., *Treaty Revision and Sino-Japanese Dispute over Taiwan, 1868–1876, vol. 21 of British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Pt. 1, From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the First World War, Ser. E Asia, 1860–1914*, gen. eds., Kenneth Borne and D. Cameron Watt (Bethesda, Md.: University Publications of America, 1994), 236.
 - 19) “Dai sanjūgō Rijendoru oboegaki, Ōkuma dono ate Hokkai maru sen ichijō,” 1874/5/4, Kokuritsu Kōbunshokan, naikaku, tankōsho, banchi shori, tankōsho-shoban ruisan Forumosa rekorudo ōbun-banchi jimukyoku ōbun kiroku sōmokuroku-dai ichi gō kiroku (JACAR A03030002200).
 - 20) Albert Brown to Charles LeGendre, 1874/5/4, Papers of Charles William LeGendre, Library of Congress.
 - 21) Kabayama Sukenori, “Taiwan kiji,” in Saigō Totoku Kabayama Sōtoku Kinen Jigyō Shuppan Inkai, ed., *Saigō totoku to Kabayama sōtoku* (Taihoku: Saigō Totoku Kabayama Sōtoku Kinen Jigyō Shuppan Inkai, 1936), 263, 288.
 - 22) Sialiao Anchorage—the Liang Kiau Bay of the Maps,” 1874, National Central Library, Taiwan Branch, Taipei.
 - 23) Ishii 48–53; Sophia Su-fei Yen, *Taiwan in China’s Foreign Relations, 1836–1874* (Hamden, Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, 1965), 214–215.
 - 24) DNGB 7: 31.
 - 25) DNGB 7: 34–37.
 - 26) United States Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1874* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1874), 678–681. Cassel ignored Bingham’s pro-

test and went to Taiwan as planned.

- 27) Rinji Teishitsu Henshūkyoku ed., *Meiji Tennō ki* (13 vols.; Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1968–1977), 3: 244.
- 28) Kanai Yukiyasu, “Kanai gonnoshō naishi shisaki nisshi,” Kokuritsu Kōbunshokan, naikaku, tankōsho, banchi shori, tankōsho-shoban shimatsu-kinoeinu gogatsu no go-dai jūyon satsu (JAC-AR A03030150700).