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**The termination of the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo: an investigation of
the *bakumatsu* period through the lens of a tripartite power
relationship and its world**

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Note on Usage

Japanese words are transcribed according to the Hepburn system. Names are written in Japanese fashion, with family names first and personal names second. Macrons are added to all Japanese place names except for Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto, which are commonly printed without them in English-language publications. Macrons have also been excluded on those common nouns, such as daimyo, bakufu and shogun, found in English dictionaries. All translations of primary sources in the text are my own unless stated otherwise. Prior to 1873 Japan used a lunisolar calendar; for dates in the translation of primary sources I have followed the historiographic convention to express them in the year/month/day format. I provide the conversion of those dates to the Gregorian calendar in the text or in the notes.

Introduction

In this study I argue that the kingdom of Ryukyu played a significant and hitherto unacknowledged role in Japanese politics of the *bakumatsu* era. I will use the missions scheduled to be dispatched from Ryukyu to Edo during those turbulent years as a lens through which I will try to demonstrate my argument. Below, I will first explain in which terms I intend to conceive of these embassies in this study.

The tributary system which developed in Han dynasty China (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) was based on the concept of sino-centrism and on the assumption of the superiority of Chinese culture (*ka* 華) with regard to the surrounding barbarian states (*i* 夷). The common keystone of this *ka-i* structure was the logic of difference. The bilateral relationship between China and the barbarian states was, in fact, characterized as one of superior and subordinate where the barbarian rulers were expected to send envoys (tributary missions) to the Chinese emperor bearing gifts as tokens of respect and submission. Furthermore, the tributary system and its notions of inequality constituted the model for multiple and intertwining relations between states in the East Asian arena.¹

There can be no doubt about the fact that all the measures and regulations which the Tokugawa bakufu enacted in the 1630s and 1640s constituted an integral part of an attempt to redraw the traditional *ka-i* view of the world from a Japan-centered perspective. To claim a place at the center of the world, it was indeed necessary for Japan—as it had been for centuries in China—to receive tribute from the barbarian

¹ David C. Kang, *East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 3.

states on its periphery. Within this order, the Ryukyuan embassies, *Edo dachi* 江戸立 or *Edo nobori* 江戸上り, played a key function. In fact, they were sent throughout most of the Edo period, on the occasion of the appointment of a new Tokugawa shogun (congratulatory missions or *keigashi* 慶賀使) and upon the enthronement of a new Ryukyuan king (missions of gratitude or *shaonshi* 謝恩使). The Ryukyuan missions, as well as the Korean embassies (*Chōsen tsūshinshi* 朝鮮通信使), started within the context of this new international order centered on the *Nihon koku taikun* 日本国大君, the title which the shogun used from 1636 in foreign relations. The creation of this new title constituted a very important transition in bakufu policy, marking the beginning of a progressive separation from the Chinese world order and the creation of a new interstate Japan-centered order, to which recent historiography refers with the expression *taikun gaikō* 大君外交, or *taikun* diplomacy.²

Regarding the dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo, some of the most important works in English have provided the following insights. Ronald Toby argues that during the first phase of government by the Tokugawa bakufu the Korean and Ryukyuan missions were a central element for its legitimation and authority within and without Japan. Subsequently, the shogunate used those embassies to shape a new Japanese self-awareness in the East Asian framework and to create an ideal interstate order that was centered on Japan.³ Tessa Morris-Suzuki asserts that the bakufu through its relationships with Ainu and Ryukyu could boast off its supremacy over foreign populations. To this end, it organized such relations in order to heighten the

² The “*taikun* diplomacy” will be explained in detail in chapter one.

³ Ronald Toby, “Carnival of the Alien. Korean Embassies in Edo-Period Art and Popular Culture,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 41, no. 4 (Winter 1986), p. 415; Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan: Asia in the Development of the Tokugawa Bakufu* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984)

heterogeneity of those people. In particular, in the relations between the Satsuma domain and Ryukyu the tribute missions sent to Edo were of crucial importance because they explicitly represented the unequal nature of those connections inasmuch as “each mission was an extravagant and elaborately staged dramatization of the logic of *ka-i*.”⁴ Gregory Smits states that on the occasion of the dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo the Shimazu of Satsuma made a great effort to display the exotic aspect of the Ryukyuan envoys while the shogunate took advantage of those rituals to exhibit its power.⁵

It is thus evident that many earlier studies in English have considered the dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassies mainly from the Japanese perspective; that is, from the perspective of the bakufu or that from the Satsuma domain. In these works the delegations from Shuri appear as symbolic actions conceived for the purpose of sustaining the ideology of a civilized Japan surrounded by a series of barbarian countries, as well as for increasing the prestige and authority of the shogun and the daimyo of Satsuma. Both boasted about control over the Ryukyu kingdom, which was put under the indirect command of Kagoshima (the seat of the Shimazu castle) after the invasion by Satsuma in 1609. In fact, since the beginning of the seventeenth century, a power relationship between Shuri (the capital of the Ryukyu kingdom),⁶ Kagoshima and Edo came into being in which the Tokugawa bakufu considered the Ryukyu kingdom a foreign state inside the *baku-han taisei* 幕藩体制, the feudal political system of the Tokugawa shogunate, and Edo accorded to the Shimazu of Satsuma the

⁴ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, “The Frontiers of Japanese Identity,” *Asian Forms of the Nation*, Stien Tønnesson and Hans Antlöv, ed., (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1996), p. 51.

⁵ Gregory Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu: Identity and Ideology in Early-Modern Thought and Politics* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 27-28.

⁶ In this study I will refer to the Ryukyuan royal government with the following terms: Ryukyu, the Ryukyus, the Ryukyu kingdom, Shuri, the Shuri royal government, the Shuri government.

special intermediary role in the relations between the small archipelago and Japan. The above-mentioned scholarship, therefore, tends to consider the role of the Ryukyu kingdom in its diplomatic relations with Edo as minor.

The ceremonial employed for the Ryukyuan embassies constitutes one of the numerous protocols elaborated by societies in East Asia during the period characterized by tributary diplomacy; it represents moreover a diplomatic rite of high symbolic value that evokes the wide range of practices labeled as “ritual” by Catherine Bell in her illuminating *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. Here Bell deconstructs the classic idea of “ritual” conceived as a mere action and adopts the expression “ritualization” for depicting a new conception of “ritual” that she defines as a culturally strategic way of acting. Following in the footsteps of Foucault’s study of the relations of power,⁷ Bell states that “the deployment of ritualization [...] is the deployment of a particular relationship of domination, consent and resistance. As a strategy of power, ritualization has both positive and effective aspects as well as specific limits to what it can do and how far it can extend.”⁸ In other words, another important dimension of the ritual construction of power is that it involves forces that may also empower those parties who may at first appear in a subordinate position. This aspect describes the actual limits of most ritual practices as a means of power.⁹

From works concerning the relations of power of Foucault and those concerning ritual of Bell, we can infer that almost every phenomenon labeled as ritual can correspond to an implicit form of opposition or resistance by the part that does not hold

⁷ According to Foucault, relations of power are not simply engendered from top down, but from the bottom up as well. On both micro and macro levels, “there are always movements in the opposite direction, whereby strategies which co-ordinate relations of power produce new effects and advance into hitherto unaffected domains.” Michel Foucault, *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, Colin Gordon, ed., (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), pp. 199-200.

⁸ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 206.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

power in that precise historic context. In line with this, this study intends to examine the dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo by according greater importance to the point of view of Shuri with respect to the strategies of Edo and Kagoshima. Even though Shuri was subordinate to Satsuma/the bakufu, it enjoyed a fair degree of independence in its internal affairs and played a significant role in the dispatch of the missions. This approach aims at detecting further elements to clarify the numerous meanings that such missions entailed for the parties involved. Seen in this light, this research aspires to proceed along the interpretative traces drawn not only by Japanese scholars such as Takara Kurayoshi, Nishizato Kikō, Kamiya Nobuyuki, Tomiyama Kazuyuki, and Maehira Fusaaki, but also by non-Japanese scholars such as Gregory Smits, who in recent decades have shed light on aspects until then ignored, reversing the vision of the historical evolution of the Ryukyu kingdom as a mere outgrowth of Japanese or Chinese developments, and re-evaluating the actual function the Ryukyus had carried out for centuries in the East Asian context. Their works have assigned to Shuri the subjectivity that had been denied by earlier studies, and have begun to consider the Ryukyus as an integral part of the history, the culture, as well as the political and economic relationships in East Asia.¹⁰

However, with regard to the role of the Shuri royal government in the deployment of the embassies to Edo, rather than a form of opposition/resistance, it seems to be more appropriate to speak of a capacity for adaptation or a form of complicity.¹¹ One of the

¹⁰ Takara Kurayoshi, *Ryūkyū ōkoku no kōzō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1987); Nishizato Kikō, *Shinmatsu Chū-Ryū-Nichi kankeishi no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Kyōto Daigaku Gakujutsu Shuppankai, 2005); Tomiyama Kazuyuki, *Ryūkyū ōkoku no gaikō to ōken* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2004); Kamiya Nobuyuki, *Bakuhansai kokka no Ryūkyū shihai* (Tokyo: Azekura Shobō, 1990); Maehira Fusaaki, “Ryūkyū ni okeru kashindan hensei to bōeki kōzō–tabiyaku–chigyōsei no bunseki,” Fujino Tamotsu, ed., *Kyūshū to Hansai (II)*, (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1984); Gregory Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*.

¹¹ According to Pierre Bourdieu, in fact, “all forms of symbolic domination presuppose a kind of

factors that for a long time contributed to veiling the function of the Ryukyus on the occasion of the dispatch of the missions, concerns the general tendency, which has become almost a conventional orthodoxy, of earlier studies in Japanese to interpret the instructions issued by Kagoshima to Shuri in the course of the preparations of the embassies as intended to impose upon the Ryukyuan envoys the adoption of Chinese clothes, to prevent them from speaking Japanese, and to force them to appear foreign even in their behavior once they had reached Japan.¹² Recently, however, Tomiyama Kazuyuki has provided a new interpretation of the Ryukyuan embassies' appearance. With respect to the orders delivered by Satsuma to the Kingdom, he asserts that Kagoshima did not "impose" Chinese-style dress on the Ryukyuan envoys, but instead gave instructions "to emphasize" the complex foreign appearance of the missions. He also stressed that there are no injunctions concerning the envoys' clothes in the directives of Satsuma, and that we should keep in mind that for centuries the formal dress of the king and the principal officials of the royal government was Chinese, received as gifts from the Beijing court.¹³

It is well known that Ryukyuan envoys wore clothes which the kingdom had received from the Chinese court and we cannot negate the fact that it was Satsuma who ordered the Ryukyuan envoys to make themselves appear exotic and foreign when in Japan. Nevertheless, Tomiyama's claims should encourage us to investigate the reasons why the Ryukyuan envoys readily cooperated with such policy.

complicity which is neither a passive submission to external constraint nor a free adoption of dominant values." John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), p. 45.

¹² Sōmubushi shihenshūshitsu, ed., *Naha-shi shi, shiryō hen*, daiichi kan ni (Naha: Naha-shi, 1970).

¹³ Tomiyama Kazuyuki, "'Edo nobori' kara 'Edo dachi' he: Ryūkyū shisetsuzō no tenkai," *Ryūkyū shisetsu, Edo he iku! Ryūkyū keigashi-shaonshi ikkō 2000 kiro no tabi emaki*, Okinawa Kenritsu Hakubutsukan-Bijutsukan, ed., (Itoman: Okinawa Kenritsu Hakubutsukan-Bijutsukan, 2009), p. 62.

In this study I will conceive of the Ryukyuan embassies as a multiform reality by virtue of the different meanings that they had for all the subjects involved. A peculiar characteristic of these missions was that they were able to satisfy in a harmonious and complementary way the expectations of their maneuverers, allowing thus the well-balanced coexistence of very different visions. I will consider the Ryukyuan missions to Edo as the result of a tripartite power relationship, from which the bakufu, the Satsuma domain and the Shuri government each tried to obtain maximum benefit.¹⁴ In other words, like Satsuma and Edo, the Ryukyu kingdom was an active subject too. For Ryukyu the embassies to Edo constituted a service to accomplish in honor of the shogun; a service, however, through which Ryukyu could pursue its own peculiar interests.

An essential aspect of these missions is that they were ceremonials which appealed to the visual and auditory world. In other words, they were based on a language and symbols usable by everyone, whose apogee was represented by the procession of the long parade of envoys along the main streets of the most important centers of Japan, as well as by the music performance by the Ryukyuan musicians inside Edo castle. We can imagine the parade of the embassies as the nucleus of a comet followed by a long tail of viewers, artists, passersby, poets, illustrators and so on. The music performance inside the shogun's palace constituted the supreme cultural live performance which would have marked the sense of self and other among the military and intellectual Japanese elite that was invited to watch the magic and exotic event. These embassies were political acts translated into performance, they were theatrical

¹⁴ This conception is borrowed from the studies on the Ryukyuan missions to Edo of Kamiya Nobuyuki, see his *Ryūkyū shihai*.

representations.¹⁵ They intended to create a spectacular scenic effect to be able to catch the others' eyes, stimulated by the subjective will to show oneself to different others.¹⁶ Therefore they constituted a sort of mirror able to reflect the images that the involved actors had created for themselves *ad hoc* specifically for the event. The bakufu wished to enhance the majesty and prestige of the Tokugawa shoguns who in their hierarchically superior position were receiving the visits and homages of the envoys from a foreign realm, with regard to the military and intellectual elite, as well as to the rest of the Japanese population. The bakufu also aimed at asserting its legitimacy and authority within and without the country. The Shimazu daimyo of Satsuma took upon themselves the prestigious appointment of accompanying the Ryukyuan envoys from Kagoshima to Edo. They created their identity through the sense of uniqueness that they perceived within the military Japanese elite, being the only feudal lords who could assert the subordination of a foreign realm. Most of all, they took political advantage of the embassies for obtaining rank advancements from the shogunate. To use a famous phrase of Geertz's, we can state that through the ritual of the Ryukyuan embassies, the bakufu and the Shimazu created the perception that "the world as lived and the world as imagined [...] turn out to be the same world."¹⁷ On the other hand, the Ryukyu kingdom was able to use the Satsuma directives concerning the dispatch and appearance

¹⁵ Constantine Nomikos Vaporis states that daimyo procession to Edo for their alternate attendance service as political acts of demonstration of power and authority were dramatic representations, performance, in other words theater. Constantine Nomikos Vaporis, *Tour of Duty: Samurai, Military Service in Edo, and the Culture of Early Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), p. 71. With regard to the importance of theatrics in politics, see Watanabe Hiroshi, *A History of Japanese Political Thought 1600-1901*, translated by David Noble (Tokyo: International House of Japan, 2012), pp. 57-58.

¹⁶ According to Ronald Toby, Korean and Ryukyuan processions functioned around four important principles: to see (*miru* 見る), to show (*miseru* 見せる), to be seen (*mirareru* 見られる) and to cause to be seen (*miserareru* 見せられる). Ronald Toby, *'Sakoku' to iu gaikō: shinshiten kinseishi* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2008), p. 234.

¹⁷ Clifford Geertz, *Interpretazione di Culture* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1988), p. 143.

of the missions to craft exotic equipment, as well as to train talented musicians able to engulf the streets of Edo in a polyphony of alien sounds, aimed at meeting the expectations of both Satsuma and the bakufu with the precise intention of maintaining its independence from Japan.

Kamiya Nobuyuki argues that Shuri dispatched missions to Edo against the background of its tributary relationship with the Qing. In addition, he argues that the Ryukyu government made the most of Satsuma's orders and, through the embassies of congratulation and gratitude, succeeded in preserving its identity as a "foreign country" within the *baku-han* system.¹⁸

Another important peculiarity of these ceremonial practices was the ambiguity contained in their ritual symbolism. Ambiguity is an essential part of rituals. Ceremonies center on common symbols rather than on statements of belief.¹⁹ In the case of the Ryukyuan missions, too, we can assert that the interests of the three partners involved were not marked by precise boundaries or enclosed into explicit and unequivocal statements, thus everybody could freely move within this space of "ambiguity" and construct its own visions and interpretations without causing divergence from the other members. In his *Performing the Great Peace: Political Space and Open Secrets in Tokugawa Japan*, Luke Roberts used the terms *omote* (ritual surface), *uchi* (inside) and *naishō* (inside agreement) as key elements to investigate the political relations between daimyo and the Tokugawa bakufu concerning ritual submission, spatial autonomy, and informal negotiations during the Edo period. For the shogunate it was important that daimyo respected the bakufu's norms and orders on the

¹⁸ Kamiya Nobuyuki, *Rekishi no hazama wo yomu: Satsuma to Ryūkyū* (Ginowan: Yōjushorin, 2009), p. 77.

¹⁹ Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, p. 183.

omote or surface, whereas in the inside or beneath the appearances it granted them an ample margin of spatial autonomy where they could act differently.²⁰ The daimyo of Satsuma accompanied the ambassadors of Ryukyu to Edo as a form of service to the shogun; however, as Smits has observed, no matter the extent to which the Ryukyuan embassies may have enhanced the authority of the shogunate, in truth, they actually benefited and improved the reputation of the Shimazu even more.²¹ And at the same time, even though Ryukyu was ordered by the shogun through the mediation of Satsuma to dispatch envoys to the shogunal capital, the kingdom succeeded in re-conceptualizing those embassies from its own perspective. Considering that ritual communication is not an alternative way of communication but that it constitutes precisely the transmission of those concepts that cannot be uttered in any other way,²² we can assert that the delegations to Edo represented the supreme theatrical stage where in the *omote* sphere Shuri could “perform” her compliance to Satsuma and the bakufu. Ryukyu, as we shall see, took advantage of the embassies to Edo to heighten the significance diplomacy held for the small kingdom even more as well as to display its cultural refinement, shaping in this way an image for itself of a very civilized kingdom within the East Asian framework.²³

So far I have depicted the Ryukyuan embassies as a ritual project, which appealed to the visual and auditory world and which was created to achieve political ends, against the background of which operated a power relation between three partners, a situation

²⁰ Luke Shepherd Roberts, *Performing the Great Peace: Political Space and Open Secrets in Tokugawa Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012).

²¹ Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, pp. 27-28.

²² Rappaport Roy A., *Ecology, Meaning and Religion* (Richmond, Calif.: North Atlantic Books, 1979), p. 174.

²³ For example, Watanabe Miki depicts the attitude of the Ryukyu kingdom toward the dispatch of the embassies to Edo as a subjective will to heighten the self-awareness as a reign that has a good reputation in virtue of the fact that it maintains diplomatic relations with China and Japan. Watanabe Miki, *Kinsei Ryūkyū to Chū-Nichi kankei* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2012).

that existed until the 1830s. Below I will elaborate on the details of my research argument.

The main aim of this study is to try to demonstrate that the Ryukyu kingdom played a key function in Japanese politics during the final years of the Tokugawa regime through the investigation of the political reasons which affected the termination of the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo. Nevertheless, since the delegations came to an end during the so-called *bakumatsu* period, the conclusion of these rituals is necessarily linked to the opening of Japan, as well as that of the kingdom, to the West. The underlying motives which concurred to cause the end of the embassies should thus be sought in the relations between Kagoshima and Edo, and also in those between Satsuma and Ryukyu, against the background of the epochal changes taking place in Japan after the appearance of the Western powers in Asia. In this study I will, thus, examine multiple perspectives, i.e. those of the bakufu, the Satsuma domain, and the Shuri government on macro-micro levels of analysis. To this end, this research is mainly based on the philological analysis of Edo-period documents (written in the premodern Japanese writing style called *sōrōbun* 候文) composed by the representatives of the three above-mentioned groups.

Since the beginning of the seventeenth century the Ryukyu Kingdom maintained an ambiguous political status of dual subordination to China and Japan, and after the replacement of the Ming dynasty by that of the Qing in 1644 in Beijing, Shuri in particular—but also Kagoshima and Edo—made every effort to keep the real nature of the Japan-Ryukyu relationship hidden from the Chinese. Therefore, from the middle of the seventeenth century, Japan (Satsuma and the bakufu) and Ryukyu had become intertwined—albeit politically asymmetrical—in a kind of close relationship which

became more and more complicit.²⁴ In its dealing with the Qing dynasty, Ryukyu intentionally wore the mask of an independent realm which in an exemplary way fulfilled all the formalities regulating the tributary relations. This situation needs an important clarification. If we consider it from a Chinese perspective, we must acknowledge that Chinese investiture envoys, for example, had long known that Ryukyu was subordinate to Japan, but they—and the entire Chinese bureaucracy—chose to downplay those relations to facilitate trade. In other words, they knew about it, but chose to ignore it. Following Roberts' investigation of daimyo-bakufu relationships, we may reasonably assume that much of what took place both within Japan and in early-modern interstate diplomacy was choreographed acting. However, we know that the Chinese were well-aware of the actual situation, but that the Shimazu, the bakufu, and especially the Ryukyuan did not realize that the Chinese were feigning ignorance. And this is an invaluable viewpoint from which I intend to clarify several aspects raised in this research.

Above I have already mentioned the importance of the visual element in the Ryukyuan missions' theatrical representation; however, the images which were reflected in the mirror of the embassies had an important peculiarity: indeed, they were not created to be viewed by any "outsider" or "non-authorized" observer, but they were

²⁴ Shuri, Kagoshima and Edo had different reasons for masking their connections to the Qing court. We can briefly summarize these differences as follows. After the conquest of Beijing by the Qing in 1644, the Ryukyu government feared that if the Qing knew about its subordination to Japan they could have put an end to the Sino-Ryukyuan tributary relations. For Ryukyu the maintaining of such relations was the only way to preserve its political spatial autonomy between China and Japan. The Satsuma domain maintained a monopoly over the tributary trade between the Chinese and the Ryukyus so it was afraid that if the Qing halted those relations it could lose the profits coming from those commercial activities. The bakufu feared that if the Qing discovered that Ryukyu was subordinate to Satsuma/Edo they could use it as a pretext to attack Japan. However, since the shogunate did not establish official diplomatic relations with China (both with Ming and Qing), the stage where the policy of concealing the true connections between Japan and Ryukyu was performed was mainly the Ryukyu Islands. That is why I will give ample space to the Ryukyuan case.

conceived to be seen only by the actors involved (Shuri-Kagoshima-Edo). The only gaze on the delegations which did not belong to the politically entangled maneuverers was that of the spectators, portrait painters, poets and others, that is to say the entire Japanese population who—for geographic reasons or out of curiosity—had access to a glimpse of the embassies but who with their presence made an important contribution to the realization of these diplomatic rituals.²⁵ In addition, the Shuri government carefully avoided that an investiture mission from China would coincide with the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo.²⁶ Nevertheless, the intrusion of Western powers along the Ryukyuan and Japanese coasts during the nineteenth century placed new subjects, “observer-others,” in the East Asia framework. And, from the point of view of Shuri, Kagoshima, and the bakufu, this new presence threatened to unmask the true nature of the veiled connections between Ryukyu and Japan. Technically speaking, at least for Shuri and Kagoshima, the problem was not that Western powers could discover what was going on between Ryukyu and Japan; the real issue was that those Westerners (French, English, Americans) could reveal those relationships to the Chinese and that as a consequence the Qing court could have terminated the tributary relationship with the Ryukyus.²⁷

²⁵ Concerning the subjectivity of the Japanese people who saw the foreign embassies during the Tokugawa period, see Toby, “Carnival of the Alien.”

²⁶ Chinese investiture missions consisted of 300 to 800 people and remained in the Ryukyus for four to eight months.

²⁷ In addition, in the 1840s Satsuma feared that Westerners could also liberate the Ryukyuans from its hegemony over the small archipelago. Later, in the 1850s and ‘60s, however, the Shimazu came to consider the presence of the Western powers as an opportunity to establish an international trade centered in the Ryukyu Islands. For the bakufu the issue was somewhat different. Since the end of the eighteenth century, the shogunate had asserted in its dealing with Western powers that Ryukyu was a kingdom with which it maintained diplomatic relations. From 1854, however, the Western powers pressed the shogunate to provide detailed information about its relationship with Ryukyu, in this way urging the bakufu to investigate if it was opportune to reveal the true nature of those relations abroad. As we shall see, for the shogunate Ryukyu was a kingdom under the subordination of both China and Japan. Rather than a possible retaliation by the Qing if they had known that Ryukyu was subordinate to Japan, the bakufu was more concerned about the fact that the Western

Within this new international scenario, the Ryukyuan embassies indeed constituted more than any other ritual, event or practice, the greatest potential danger to reveal to the foreigners—and as a consequence to the Chinese—what the real relations between Shuri and Edo were. If for the partners involved one of the essential aspects of the missions was the visual element, from the middle of the nineteenth century precisely this peculiar feature of the delegations risked to lift the veil to expose the true relationship between Ryukyu and Japan to Western and consequently to Chinese eyes, since now the preparations, boats, and parades of the Ryukyuan envoys could be seen by the Westerners who were residing in the Ryukyus or in Japan.

As a consequence, the missions became the source from which could have emerged all the contradictions embedded in the dual subordination of the Ryukyu kingdom to China and Japan. Concerning the predisposition of the royal government in relation to the dispatch of the missions in the last phase of the *bakumatsu*, Nishizato Kikō assumes that from 1859 Shuri desired that these ceremonials came to an end, since by then the delegations could have been seen by the Westerners and this could have compromised the tributary relations with the Qing dynasty.²⁸ As a matter of fact, the Ryukyu kingdom never revealed to the Qing its subordination to Japan. Only in 1878, for the first time the Ryukyu government indirectly acknowledged the fact that Ryukyu was subordinate to Satsuma in a petition addressed to the Tokyo-based Dutch and Chinese Consuls.²⁹ The above suggests that concealment from Western eyes was indeed

powers could invade and take control of the Ryukyu kingdom.

²⁸ Nishizato Kikō, “Kanpō-dōchiki (bakumatsu Ishinki) no Chū-Ryū-Nichi kankei kōsatsuō: ShōTai sakuhō mondai to sono shūhen,” *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 64 (Kyoto: Seikei Shoin, 2006), p. 689.

²⁹ Fukki nijūshūnen kinen Okinawa kenkyū kokusai shinpojiumu jikkōin inkai, ed., Nishizato Kikō, “Sappō taisei hōkaiki no shomondai: Ryūkyū mondai wo chūshin ni,” *Okinawa bunka no genryū o saguru. Kantaiheiyō chūiki no naka no Okinawa, Fukki nijūshūnen kinen Okinawa kenkyū kokusai shinpojiumu*, (Naha: Fukki nijūshūnen kinen Okinawa kenkyū kokusai shinpojiumu jikkōin inkai, 1994), p. 205.

a major concern for Shuri after the arrival of Western ships in Ryukyu. In the chapters that follow I will give ample proof of this argument through an analysis of documentary sources.

The presence of the Westerners hence forced Shuri, Kagoshima, and Edo to hide from them the nature of the real connections between the kingdom and Japan (content/truth=Ryukyu is subordinate to Japan) by resorting once again to a mask (form/mask=Ryukyu appears as an autonomous kingdom).³⁰ It was in this new vision that Shuri concealed from the Western powers the relations with Japan under the mask of entertaining relationships that were exclusively commercial with the Tokara Islands (an archipelago sited to the south of Satsuma), as it had been doing since the beginning of the eighteenth century with the Qing. And, at the same time, in 1854 the bakufu officials asserted to Commodore M. Perry that Ryukyu was a distant land over which the shogun had little authority.

From a macro-perspective it will thus be necessary to consider accurately the extent to which the presence of the foreigners and the articles inserted in the treaties they imposed on both Edo and Shuri resulted in affecting the dispatch of the Ryukyuan missions. For this purpose, it is opportune to follow the interpretative lines drawn by a series of recent studies which aim to re-think in broader terms the significance of the so-called “Unequal Treaties.”

A precursor of the re-evaluation of these treaties is John K. Fairbank, who pointed out that the opening of China to the Western powers did not entail the immediate and

³⁰ According to Nietzsche, the question of the mask is the question of the relation between “form” and “content,” where “content” can appear only as a camouflage. “The camouflage [indeed] is something that does not belong naturally to man, but that he adopts deliberately with a view to achieve some purpose, pushed by some necessity.” Gianni Vattimo *Il Soggetto e la Maschera. Nietzsche e il Problema della Liberazione* (Milano: Bompiani, 1974), pp. 17, 23, 43.

complete dismantling of its traditional institutions. China tried to adapt its institutions to face the new international scenario, and this attempt succeeded in creating a situation in which at the beginning the treaty system was an “outgrowth” of its traditional tributary system.³¹ More recently and focusing on the opening of Japan, Michael Auslin explained that the bakufu and the Meiji government employed the same tactic of “negotiation” in their dealings with Western powers. Through this strategy Japanese officials aimed at defending specific ideological, intellectual, and physical boundaries and they were also able to exert influence on treaty relations.³² Thus Auslin depicts a Japan that was not a passive victim of the Unequal Treaties. Furthermore, he highlighted the emergence of a new diplomatic culture by which the Japanese authorities tried to understand the mechanisms that governed an outside world dominated by Westerner powers.

With regard to the re-opening of Japan, I will focus my attention on two particular historical moments when contact with the Westerners constituted a very threat to the dispatch of the embassies. The first of these is represented by an unprecedented confrontation between Shuri and the Western powers which had as its main stage the Ryukyuan Islands. This episode—known as *Gaikantorai jiken* 外艦渡来事件—took place in 1844-46 when French and English missionaries started to reside in the vicinity of Naha. Since these missionaries could move freely through the streets of Shuri and Naha, the royal government made every effort to have all their movements tracked in order to hide secret information about the realm from their “inquisitive” eyes. The

³¹ John King Fairbank, “The Early Treaty System in the Chinese World Order,” J. K. Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order; Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1968).

³² Michael Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 2.

second episode concerns the signing of the so-called Ansei Treaties, the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Japan and the United States, Holland, Russia, Great Britain and France in 1858, as well as the stipulation of the Amity pacts between the Ryukyus and the United States, France and the Netherlands, in 1854, 1855, and 1859 respectively. The stipulations inserted in the treaties signed by the bakufu authorities sanctioned the permanent allocation of foreign legations in Edo, while those included in the pacts concluded with Shuri strictly decreed an end to the practice of shadowing foreigners on the islands. Within this new frame, thus, both in Edo and in Shuri, the dispatch of the Ryukyuan missions risked to become known by the Westerners. In particular, I will examine the different phases that brought about the opening of Ryukyu to the West, and I will try to shed light on the fact that the royal government—aiming at defending the symbolic/ideological, political, and sovereign spheres of its realm—came to violate those clauses inserted in the treaties, which were considered perilous for the safety of the kingdom, such as the prohibition of the practice of the shadowing, while officially proclaiming its commitment to honor the treaties. One of the effects of the defense of the Ryukyuan political status through the control of the foreigners' movements on the islands was indeed the necessity to conceal from the eyes of the Westerners the dispatch of the Ryukyuan missions to Edo. In this respect, I will also try to demonstrate that the ritual of the Ryukyuan embassies was one of those diplomatic protocols which—though with certain adequate and necessary devices thought up by Edo, Kagoshima, and Shuri—initially overcame the opening of Japan and of the Ryukyu kingdom to the Western powers, even though, at a later stage, the missions became overwhelmed by all the internal and external dynamics triggered by Japan's entrance in those global processes that penetrated East Asia. So, as it happened in the China depicted by

Fairbank, Japan too, after the signing of the treaties, showed its wiliness to keep its own traditional institutions.

The second part of this research is dedicated to an intensive micro-level analysis of the relations between the shogunate and Satsuma, as well as of those between Kagoshima and Shuri.

From a micro point of view, it is possible to better understand both the internal dynamics and all those complex and peculiar elements that distinguished the political strategies of the bakufu, Satsuma, and Shuri with regard to the dispatch of the embassies in the final years of rule by the Tokugawa shoguns. The last Ryukyuan embassy to reach Edo was the mission of gratitude dispatched by king Shō Tai to the twelfth Tokugawa shogun, Ieyoshi, in 1850. Although subsequent embassies of congratulation were planned on the occasion of appointment to the shogunate of Tokugawa Iesada (thirteenth shogun) and Iemochi (fourteenth shogun), the bakufu postponed the dispatch of such mission three times: in 1855, 1858, and 1860.

The investigation of these suspensions leads to a series of interpretative problems about keywords such as *kokujitatan* 国事多端, here translated as “multiple and complex state affairs.” This expression delineated a situation of national emergency purposely ambiguous and behind which several contingencies that concurred to aggravate the political crisis were concealed. Language is certainly an instrument of power;³³ and in the Edo period, the legitimate political language was that of the authority, namely that of the Tokugawa bakufu. The shogunate had its own political interests and reasons to maintain a discrepancy between what was considered *honne* 本音, i.e. the honest feeling, or the *ura* 裏 (undersurface), from *tatema* 建て前, i.e. the

³³ See for example Bordieu’s observations on language in Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, p. 46.

surface pretense or the face of a subject, or the *ōyake* 公 (public/official). Referring to Roberts' recent work mentioned above, we might say that in the *omote* sphere the bakufu—in its hierarchically superior status vis-a-vis the daimyo—also had the right to give orders without necessarily needing to explain the underlying reasons.³⁴ *Kokujitatan* is one of those expressions of political print through which the shogunate veiled the factual truth in order to defend its own ideological/symbolic sphere.

Since the bakufu ordered the postponement of the embassies scheduled for both 1858 and 1862 because of “multiple and complex state affairs,” it becomes quite difficult to comprehend the real motives behind the suspension of the plans. It is, nonetheless, a stimulating topic which could serve to provide a new interpretation of these matters.

Earlier studies have centered their attention on the possible connection between the shogunate's decision to suddenly postpone the 1858 mission on August of the same year and the military project of Shimazu Nariakira, daimyo of Satsuma, who intended to force political reforms on the bakufu.³⁵ Here, I will explore this suspension from another angle and focus my attention on the communications transmitted by Niiro Hisanori, the chief retainer of Satsuma, in the public sphere as well as on those recorded in his personal notes and based on the secret information received by Edo-based Satsuma officials. I will provide a close examination of his dairy and will try to

³⁴ Throughout most of the Edo period the bakufu was usually referred to as *gokōgi* 御公儀. *Go-* is an honorific and *gi* refers to “affairs” or “matters.” *Kō-* is the Sino-Japanese reading for the character 公, which is read “*ōyake*” in Japanese reading. “*Ōyake*” (lit. “large house”, “great house”) alludes to something external or open that encompasses something internal or private, in other words a large body or unit that is in contrast with but at the same time includes a small entity (*watakushi* 私). In the shogunate/daimyo relations, the bakufu represents the larger entity “*ōyake*” while the daimyo houses were considered “*watakushi*.” At the same time, a daimyo house was considered *ōyake* with respect to its vassal retainers, who were thus seen as *watakushi*. At the apex of these intertwined *ōyake/watakushi* relationships stood the shogun. Watanabe Hiroshi, *A History of Japanese Political Thought*, pp. 51-52.

³⁵ Kamiya, “Ryūkyū shisetsu no saigo ni kansuru kōsatsu,” in *Ryūkyū shihai*.

demonstrate that the demise of both Tokugawa Iesada in Edo (14 August) and Shimazu Nariakira in Kagoshima (24 August) was the reason behind the bakufu's postponement of the Ryukyuan embassy.

Kamiya Nobuyuki's research set the termination of the missions to Edo in 1860, when the authorities of Satsuma, after the assassination of Ii Naosuke, Grand Councilor of the bakufu (an episode known as *Sakuradamon gai no hen* 桜田門外の変), began to fear that the realization of the missions could offer the most extremist fringes of their domain an appealing occasion to infiltrate covertly into the parade of the Ryukyuan envoys and to reach crucial areas of the country in order to carry out terrorist actions under the aegis of the *sonnō-jōi* 尊王攘夷 movement.

Earlier studies have, thus, explored the termination of the Ryukyuan embassies to Japan mainly from the viewpoint of Satsuma; however, the perspectives of the other actors involved in the dispatch of the missions should also be considered to better illuminate the last phase of both the Tokugawa regime and the sino-centric world order in East Asia. Such a wide-ranging point of view can take into account all the movements, strategies, and negotiations that took place between Edo and Kagoshima, as well as between Satsuma and Shuri. It is also helpful to clarify exhaustively the reasons contributing to the definitive suspension of the Ryukyuan embassies in Japan.

With this aim in mind, the above-mentioned *Sakuradamon gai no hen* can be interpreted from a wider perspective, focusing attention on the course of the *sankin kōtai* 参勤交代 (alternate attendance) to Edo by the Satsuma daimyo during the final phase of the Tokugawa period. Such historical reconstruction can offer the possibility of analyzing the end of the embassies within a wider context, i.e. long after 1860, from which may emerge the real reasons behind the termination of the *Edo dachi* from the

viewpoint of the three actors involved.

Through the analysis of the possible causes of the Ryukyuan embassies' suspension I intend to shed light on the following broader issues. A micro-level analysis of the relationship between the shogunate and the Satsuma domain immediately after the *Sakuradamon gai no hen* can clarify that Edo and Kagoshima held opposing views on the Satsuma daimyo's visit to Edo. In this context, I will try to demonstrate that the bakufu intended to use a Ryukyuan embassy to motivate the lord of Kagoshima to travel to Edo. In addition, focusing attention on the close relationship between the missions from Shuri and the alternate attendance of the Satsuma daimyo in Edo can provide us with an invaluable instrument to investigate how political power gradually passed from the shogunate to the imperial court and the powerful daimyo during the *bakumatsu* period. This is why the Kyoto court became a key supporter of Kagoshima when the latter tried to have its lord's *sankin kōtai* duty to the shogunal capital postponed on several occasions.

From a broader angle, it is important to elucidate how the intrusion of Western powers in Japan affected the dispatch of Ryukyuan missions. An analysis of the effects of this intrusion may, in fact, help to shed light on the fact that during the final years of its existence the bakufu no longer considered the missions to Edo merely a means to enhance the prestige of the shogun, but also came to perceive them as an important tool through which it could demonstrate that the Ryukyu kingdom was also under Japanese control. From this perspective, it is possible to surmise that when the bakufu in 1862 for the first time asserted to the representatives of the British government that Ryukyu was a kingdom under the dual subordination of China and Japan, it intended to support a broader political design in which Edo, on the one hand, aiming to prove its control over

Ryukyu, was now inclined to reveal to the Westerners the real nature of the relations between Japan and the Ryukyu archipelago. On the other hand, however, wishing to continue the practice of the delegations, Edo was considering the possibility of changing the nature of the embassies from domestic diplomatic missions to tributary embassies known also on a global stage. This new approach to the study of the *bakumatsu* period helps us to read the incorporation of Ryukyu into the Japanese realm by the Meiji government as the epilogue of a process which had begun several years before, namely at the beginning of the 1840s when Western ships identified the small kingdom as a base from which to attempt to open Japan's doors. In other words, the bakufu seriously examined the question of the Ryukyu kingdom's political status and tried to deal with it according to its own vision of the external world. Related to this, the same *Ryūkyū shobun* 琉球処分 (disposition of Ryukyu) can be re-interpreted through the lens of the Ryukyuan missions to Japan.

The Ryukyuan mission of 1872, which the Shuri government sent to the Meiji emperor in Tokyo, also deserves further investigation. A few scholars have considered this to be the last Ryukyuan embassy to Japan, even though they did not provide convincing reasons for claiming a connection with the missions sent during the Edo period.³⁶ Yet most of these scholars are inclined to explore the *Ryūkyū shobun* with this embassy as its starting point, getting rid too quickly of what happened before.³⁷

³⁶ Yokoyama Manabu, *Ryūkyū koku shisetsu torai no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1987); Tamai Tatsuya, "Ryūkyū shisetsu haken junbi to kaitai katei: saigo no Ryūkyū shisetsu wo tsūjite," *Kōtsūshi kenkyū* 67, (Tokyo: Kōtsūshi Kenkyūkai, 2008).

³⁷ Umeki Tetsuto, *Shin Ryūkyū koku no rekishi* (Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku Shuppan Kyoku, 2013); Uemura Hideki, "The Colonial Annexation of Okinawa and the Logic of International Law: The Formation of an 'Indigenous People' in East Asia," *Japanese Studies* 23 (Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, Carfax Pub) 2003; Mizuno Norihito, "Early Meiji Policies Towards the Ryukyus and the Taiwanese Aboriginal Territories," *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no 3 (London: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 683-639. Gregory Smits, "The Ryūkyū Shobun in East Asian and World History," Josef Kreiner, ed., *Ryukyu in World History*, (Bonn: Bier'sche Verlagsanstalt, 2001), p. 281. Rosa

However, a careful re-reading of a number of primary sources can elucidate why, from a political perspective, we should correlate this mission to earlier *Edo dachi*. As we shall see, in fact, the Meiji government officials who dealt with the preparations of this embassy were still strongly affected by traditional East Asian tributary relations as well as by the relations between Japan and Ryukyu in the Edo period. In this way, I suggest to look at the transition from the Tokugawa era to early Meiji period not only as a moment of rupture but also as a period of transition in which we can observe significant elements of continuity as well. The political acts and maneuvers taken by the Meiji government with regard to Ryukyu may be seen as the culmination of a course of action which had its origin in the *bakumatsu* period and which still needs to be fully explored. Thus, the changing nature of Japanese diplomacy in this crucial phase of the East Asian world order can be explored at a deeper level. In other words, Japanese modernization, rather than being conceived of in terms of “stages of development” influenced by Western linear history,³⁸ should not only be explored in terms of complex transactions, for example those between Edo-Kagoshima-Shuri, but also in relation to its origins from within the Chinese tributary system as an effort by Japan to remove China and place itself at the center of that order.³⁹

Then, from an even wider perspective, the *Ryūkyū shobun* can also be understood as a reflection of another, larger process which culminated in the dismantling of the

Caroli, *Il Mito dell'Omogeneità Giapponese: Storia di Okinawa* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1999); Gabe Masao, *Meiji kokka to Okinawa* (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1979).

³⁸ An illuminating critic of the Western concept of evolutionary progressive history is Duara Prasenjit. For details, see his *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

³⁹ For this kind of approach with regard to Japanese modernization see Hamashita Takeshi, “The Tribute Trade System and Modern Asia,” (translation by Neil Burton and Christian Daniels), *China, East Asia and the Global Economy: Regional and Historical Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 23. And Key-Hiuk Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order: Korea, Japan, and the Chinese Empire, 1860-1882* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1980), p. xxi.

Chinese tributary system.⁴⁰ At the same time, the dismantling of the Chinese world order was the reflection of an even more global process which extended from Europe to North America and took the form of a world system, in which center and periphery became connected by interdependent but unequal relations. In these relations, however, history from below played a prominent role.⁴¹

Concerning the predisposition of the royal government in relation to the dispatch of the missions in the last phase of the *bakumatsu*, I have already mentioned Nishizato's argument that from 1859 the Shuri government desired that the missions to Edo would be brought to an end, since by then the delegations could have been seen by the Westerners and this could have compromised the tributary relations with the Qing dynasty. Based on this hypothesis, I will attempt to demonstrate that for the Ryukyuan Kingdom the embassies could have still been planned at least until 1862, as some Ryukyuan documents attest. This may be another example of Roberts' nuanced analysis of *omote/uchi* relations. In fact, I will argue that Shuri, even though in its *uchi* sphere it wished to terminate the dispatch of those practices, was well aware of the fact that if the bakufu were to order the sending of a new mission to Edo also after 1859, she would have to comply with that order. That is why, as we shall see, in 1862 she still engaged in activities related to the dispatch of delegations to the shogunal capital. However, the scenario changed completely after the restoration of the emperor to power in 1868 and the establishment of a system of prefectures in Japan in 1871. Even though the royal government since 1859 wished to avoid dispatching its envoys to Edo because of the presence of the foreign legations, I will try to elucidate that after the restoration it

⁴⁰ In this regard, Rosa Caroli explored the *Ryūkyū shobun* contributing to the creation of a new order in East Asia. See, for example, chapter three of her *Storia di Okinawa*.

⁴¹ Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, p. 5.

thought that the best policy to adopt in the new Japanese landscape was that of maintaining the status quo and continuing to send missions to the new Japanese capital. If from the Meiji government's viewpoint the 1872 mission to Tokyo was the result of a combination of tradition and modernization, from the perspective of the Shuri government the 1872 embassy to Tokyo was definitely a diplomatic ceremonial in the same fashion as the earlier *Edo dachi*.

Ultimately, an analysis of the so-called *Edo dachi* or *Edo nobori* provide us with the opportunity to investigate the *bakumatsu* era from a new perspective, which may shed new light on different aspects of both Japanese domestic and international policy still undervalued.

Chapter 1

The Ryukyuan embassies to Edo: history of a three partners' power relation in the context of the *taikun* diplomacy

As we have mentioned before, the Ryukyuan embassies, *Edo dachi*, were dispatched throughout most of the Edo period, on the occasion of the appointment of a new shogun (congratulatory missions), and after the enthronement of a new Ryukyuan king (missions of gratitude). The gratitude embassies started in 1634, while the congratulatory delegations were first dispatched in 1644. During the course of the Tokugawa period, eighteen embassies were dispatched to Edo, the last arriving in 1850. The study of the Ryukyuan missions started in the early 1980s. The historiographical works of the recent years have shed light upon aspects until then ignored, reversing the earlier vision of the historical evolution of the Ryukyuan kingdom as a mere outgrowth of developments in China or Japan, and re-evaluating the actual role the Ryukyu kingdom played for centuries in the East Asian context; in particular with reference to the attempt of Tokugawa Japan to re-interpret the external world in a Japan-centered perspective.⁴²

Miyagi Eishō was one of the first scholars to investigate the Ryukyuan missions. Miyagi's works contributed to the clarification of the aims and composition of the missions, the route from Naha to Edo, the most important ceremonies held in Edo castle,

⁴² Two instrumental works on the historiography of the Ryukyuan studies are Rosa Caroli, "Recent Trends of Historiography on Modern Okinawa," Hans Dieter Ölschleger, ed., *Theories and Methods in Japanese Studies: Current State & Future Developments*, (Papers in Honor of Josef Kreiner). (Göttingen: Bonn University Press via V&R Unipress, 2007) pp. 229-247. And Gregory Smits, "Recent Trends in Scholarship on the History of Ryukyu's Relations with China and Japan," Hans Dieter Ölschleger, ed., *Theories and Methods in Japanese Studies: Current State and Future Developments* (Papers in Honor of Josef Kreiner). (Göttingen: Bonn University Press via V&R Unipress, 2007) pp. 215-228.

in the Satsuma residences in Kagoshima and in Edo, as well as other important aspects of the missions.⁴³

Yokoyama Manabu examined the embassies dispatched in the Hōei (1710), Shōtoku (1714) and Tenpō (1832) eras. Moreover, through an accurate investigation of Japanese publications concerning Ryukyu issued on the occasion of the dispatch of the delegations, Yokoyama elucidated the perception of the Ryukyuan by the Japanese during the Edo period.⁴⁴

Whereas Miyagi and Yokoyama discussed the dispatch of the embassies from a cultural-historical viewpoint, Kamiya Nobuyuki explored these rituals from the perspective of political history and diplomacy. Kamiya shed light on the fact that the embassies were the result of a tripartite power relation, with the bakufu Tokugawa, the Satsuma domain and the royal government of Shuri making every effort to obtain maximum benefit.⁴⁵

Tomiyama Kazuyuki⁴⁶ and Umeki Tetsuto⁴⁷ examined the topic of the official letters exchanged between the Ryukyuan king and the senior Councilors on the occasion of the dispatch of the delegations, while Maehira Fusaaki shed light on the significance of the pilgrimages by the Ryukyuan envoys first to the Nikkō Tōshōgū, and after to the Ueno Tōshōgū.⁴⁸

The ceremonial employed for the Ryukyuan embassies constitutes one of

⁴³ Miyagi Eishō, *Ryūkyū shisha no Edo nobori* (Tokyo: Daiichi Shobō, 1982).

⁴⁴ Yokoyama, *Ryūkyū koku shisetsu*, 1987.

⁴⁵ Kamiya, *Ryūkyū shihai*.

⁴⁶ Tomiyama Kazuyuki was the first to clarify that the title of *Nihon koku taikun*, created by the bakufu in 1635, was used—not just in dealings with Korea—but also in the relations between Edo and Shuri since 1645, on the occasion of the dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassies. “Edo bakufu gaikō to Ryūkyū,” *Okinawa bunka* 65 (Tokyo: Okinawa Bunka Kyōkai, 1985).

⁴⁷ Umeki Tetsuto, “Ryūkyū kokuō shokan no kentō,” *Chihōshi kenkyū* 197 (Tokyo: Chihōshi Kenkyū Kyōgikai, 1985).

⁴⁸ Maehira Fusaaki, “Bakuhansei kokka no gaikō girei to Ryūkyū,” *Rekishigaku kenkyū* 620 (Tokyo: Rekishigaku Kenkyūkai, 1991).

numerous protocols elaborated by societies in East Asia during the period characterized by tributary diplomacy. It also represents a diplomatic rite of high symbolic value which had as main actors the bakufu, Satsuma, and the Shuri government. One very important peculiarity of these embassies was that they were not dispatched with the same purpose during the course of the Edo period. The intentions and targets the three participants aspired to achieve through the realization of the missions changed due to internal and external conditions. In this chapter, I will provide a close examination of these changes.

In view of the fact that prior studies examined this phenomenon primarily from the point of view of Satsuma and the shogunate, this study intends to explore the topic placing greater emphasis on Shuri's point of view. The Ryukyus were lacking natural resources and given that from a geopolitical perspective they were situated between China (the Ming and later the Qing) and Japan (the Satsuma domain as well as the bakufu), they had no other effective means but to refine their diplomatic skills in order to maintain the autonomy of their kingdom caught between those formidable neighbors. Behind the dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassies we can trace those manifestations of Ryukyuan subjectivity which symbolize the ability of the kingdom to adapt itself to and to obtain maximum benefit from less advantageous circumstances. The missions constituted a diplomatic ritual that was essential with regard to both the preservation of the Ryukyuan autonomy and the support of the bureaucratic system upon which was based the administrative machine of Shuri.

Concerning the naming of the Ryukyuan missions, Maehira has recently pointed out that during the early-modern period the expression *Edo nobori*,⁴⁹ a term which

⁴⁹ We may note that Miyagi's "arbitrary" use of the expression *Edo nobori* in his instrumental work *Ryūkyū Shisha no Edo Nobori*, has impressed a (quasi) indelible mark on the label of these embassies.

implies a subordinate relationship between a superior (Japan) and an inferior (Ryukyu), was not used. Instead, the term *Edo dachi*, which implies a more egalitarian relationship, was used extensively.⁵⁰ Moreover, Tomiyama has clarified that in Ryukyuan documents of the same period the expression *Edo nobori* cannot be found and he suggested that the rectification of the designation of the missions with the term *Edo dachi* might consent us to rethink with much more flexibility both the embassies and the diplomacy of Shuri towards the bakufu.⁵¹

Following the interpretative traces of this latest historiographical tendency, in this research I will use the terms *Edo dachi*, Edo-bound Ryukyuan embassies, missions, delegations, and envoys to designate the embassies dispatched from Shuri to Edo.

1.1. Foundation of the *taikun* diplomacy and the beginning of the Ryukyuan embassies

Taking the first phase in which the embassies were sent as reference, I will try to shed light on the political and diplomatic significance of the missions from the perspectives of the bakufu, the Satsuma domain and the royal government.

Taikun diplomacy⁵²

It is well known that in 1615 all attempts of the Tokugawa bakufu to restore official

⁵⁰ Maehira Fusaaki, “Min-Shin kōtai to tai baku gaikō,” Andō Susumu, ed., *Okinawaken no rekishi*, (Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2004).

⁵¹ Tomiyama, “‘Edo nobori’ kara ‘Edo dachi’ he,” p. 58.

⁵² The expression *taikun gaikō* (*taikun* diplomacy) is a recently coined term. The expression covers all the measures adopted by the bakufu in the 1630s and 1640s, when it imposed severe restrictions on contacts between Japan and the outside world and created the new title of *Nihon koku taikun*, which the shogun would have employed exclusively in external relations, with the purpose of re-interpreting the outside world in a Japan-centered vision. In this study, the expression *taikun* diplomacy is utilized with a retroactive value.

relations between Japan and China, after their interruption caused by the campaigns of Hideyoshi in Korea at the end of the sixteenth century, had ended in failure. Later, in 1621, the bakufu decided to abandon its intentions of normalizing relations with the Ming court in order to preserve the interests of its own legitimation.⁵³ Thus Japan rejected the conceptions of sino-centrism and of a civilized China and began to rethink subjectively the hierarchical Confucian world.

Concomitant with these events and directing its attention to foreign policy, the bakufu in 1631 ordered the Japanese ships to stop carrying the so-called *shuinjō* 朱印状, certificates given to a limited number of merchant families and daimyo and upon which was appended a red seal (called *shuin*) granted by the shogun; instead, ships were ordered to carry documents issued by the senior Councilors, and known as *hōsho* 奉書. This constituted the transition from a system of *shuin* ships to one of *hōsho* ships, which represented a counter-measure intended to preserve the prestige of the shogun in case the *shuin* ships were involved in some international controversy.⁵⁴ In 1633, all the Japanese ships that were not part of the *hōsho* system were prohibited from going overseas; and two years later, in 1635 Edo proscribed travel abroad for all Japanese vessels and restricted trade by Chinese merchants to the port of Nagasaki.

In the same year, the bakufu, as a consequence of a dispute between the Sō and the Yanagawa families of the Tsushima domain, discovered that on three occasions in the past—the Korean embassies dispatched in Japan in 1607, 1617 and 1624—the

⁵³ Toby, *Diplomacy*, p. 64. Kamiya adds that in 1629, the bakufu made one last attempt to reestablish relationships with the Ming through the mediation of Korea. In deference of orders received from Edo, the fief of Tsushima sent a delegation to Korea with the purpose of opening a dialogue aimed at restoring trade with the Chinese regulated by the adoption of official licenses (*kangō*). However, Korea did not pay due attention to the Japanese requests and nothing was achieved. Kamiya Nobuyuki, *Taikun gaikō to higashi Ajia* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1997), p. 135.

⁵⁴ Kamiya, *Taikun gaikō*, p. 135.

official letters of State of the Tokugawa shogun and of the Korean king were forged at the hands of the more influential members of those two families. In these forged missives the Tokugawa shogun was designated as “king of Japan.” The Edo authorities condemned into exile Shigeoki, the head of the Yanawaga family, and Kihaku Genpō, the abbot of the Iteian temple, both having been accused of being the forgers, while reconfirming the members of the Sō family in their role of daimyo of the Tsushima domain as well as granting them the exclusive right of mediation in relations with Korea. This episode is known as the *Yanagawa ikken* 柳川一件.

As a direct result of this incident, the bakufu created the new title of *Nihon koku taikun*, which the shogun used from then on in the foreign relations. First of all, since the title of shogun in the Chinese political sphere was equivalent to an official of middle-level rank it represented a designation that was not appropriate in external relations. Furthermore, in view of the fact that the title of king in Chinese cosmology was used to designate the sovereigns of tributary states, it was also considered unsuitable for the leader of the shogunate, since the Tokugawa bakufu had refused to pay tribute to the Ming court. Instead, the title of *taikun* was considered by the Edo leaders as a designation implying a rank similar to that of a monarch and it suited the needs of the shogunate to designate the Tokugawa shogun in foreign relations. The creation of this new title constituted a very important transition in the bakufu’s policy, marking the beginning of a progressive separation from the Chinese world order and the creation of a new interstate Japan-centered order.⁵⁵

Within the context of this attempt by Edo to reinterpret the external world from a Japan-centered perspective, the bakufu made a great effort to establish relations—which

⁵⁵ Regarding the creation of the title of *Nihon koku taikun* see Toby, *Diplomacy*. On *taikun* diplomacy see Kamiya, *Taikun gaikō*.

we can described as diplomatic (in Jap. *tsūshin* 通信)—with Korea and the Ryukyus, and relationships—which we can designate as exclusively commercial (*tsūshō* 通商)—with China and Holland.⁵⁶ The bakufu used the mediation of the outside lords (J. *tozama daimyō*) of Satsuma, the head of the Shimazu family, and of Tsushima, that of the Sō family, for the purpose of establishing official relations with the Ryukyu kingdom and the Korean court respectively. Therefore, on one hand, the failure of the negotiations between the Tokugawa bakufu and the Ming enhanced the importance of the Ryukyus and Korea for Edo's policy because the bakufu had no alternative—except for the commercial activity allowed at Nagasaki—but, to trade with the Ming indirectly through the bilateral relations between the Ryukyu kingdom and Satsuma, and those between Korea and Tsushima.⁵⁷ On the other hand, the two countries were important because to claim a place at the center of the world, it was necessary indeed for Japan, as it had been for centuries in China, to receive tribute from barbarian states on its periphery, a crucial role that the bakufu assigned to the Ryukyus and Korea. In the north, the shogunate granted the Matsumae domain the monopoly over trade relations with the Ainu; from 1633 on occasion of the appointment of a new Tokugawa shogun officers called *junkenshi*—a kind of *missi dominici*⁵⁸ serving a function of official

⁵⁶ It is well known that this political design was manifested explicitly only in 1805, when the Tokugawa bakufu outlined the contours of its traditional foreign policy to the Russian ambassador Rezanov, asserting that since the 1630s Japanese external relations were based on the diplomatic relations with Korea and the Ryukyus (designated *tsūshin no kuni* 通信の国) and on the commercial contacts with China and Holland (labeled as *tsūshō no kuni* 通商の国). *Tsūkō ichiran* (hereafter *TI*), vol. 7, Hayashi Fukusai, ed., (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai Sōsho, 1913), p. 193.

⁵⁷ For Edo, in fact, securing the continued importation of Chinese goods which had previously been carried out on Portuguese ships became a major issue. The shogunal authorities relied on the mediation of the fiefs of Satsuma and Tsushima, to which they gave the order to purchase Chinese articles from the Ryukyus and Korea respectively, in order to compensate the void left by the Portuguese. For these reasons, the Nagasaki magistrates Ōkouchi Masakatsu and Baba Toshishige instructed Shimazu Mitsuhisa to buy raw silk, clothes and medicines through the Ryukyu kingdom. Kamiya Nobuyuki, *Ryūkyū to Nihon-Chūgoku*, Riburette (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2003), pp. 49-50.

⁵⁸ The *missi dominici* (sovereign's envoys) were inspectors dispatched by Charles the Great at the

inspectors—were dispatched from Edo to Matsumae, where subordination ceremonies known as *uimamu*, “audience” in Ainu, took place between the Japanese and the Ainu.⁵⁹

This new interstate order modeled after the Chinese tributary system, was intended to support the ideology of a civilized Japan surrounded by a series of barbarian states. Within this picture, Korea was the only kingdom to maintain equal relations with Japan. The Ryukyuan missions, as well as the Korean embassies, started within the context of this new international order centered on the *Nihon koku taikun*, with which they were in a close relation. The bakufu used these diplomatic delegations to legitimize the Tokugawa government, known as the *baku-han* system, in the international arena and to enhance the prestige of the shogun inside and outside the boundaries of Japan.

The dispatch of the Korean missions started on account of the political design of Tokugawa Ieyasu who wished to restore official relations with the Korean court after the cruel campaigns of Hideyoshi in Korea. The first three embassies, dispatched in 1607, 1617 and 1624, are known under the epithet *kaitōkensakkanshi* 回答兼刷還使 since they had as their main purposes the repatriation of Korean prisoners captured by the *Kampaku*'s armed forces and the presentation of a reply to the State letters signed by the Tokugawa shogun. These delegations were therefore sent with the principal object to normalize relations between Japan and Korea after the expansionistic ambitions of Hideyoshi had caused the isolation of Japan from the East Asian countries. As we have seen earlier, the forging of the Tokugawa shogun's State letters by the most influential

beginning of the ninth century to scrutinize the peripheric feudal institutions governed by counts and marquises. Silvia Gasparini, *Appunti Minimi di Storia del Diritto. 2. Età Moderna e Contemporanea* (Padova: Imprimeria, 2002), p. 72. The *junkenshi* were sent from Edo to the various domains and constituted an effective means through which the bakufu monitored the conduct of the daimyo.

⁵⁹ Kamiya, *Taikun gaikō*, p. 136.

individuals of Tsushima, took place against the background of these first missions.

From 1636, the Korean embassies were called *Chōsen tsūshinshi* (Communication envoys), and became diplomatic rituals of high symbolic value as well as the immediately more tangible manifestation of peaceful relations between the bakufu and the Korean court. These missions were dispatched on the occasion of the appointment of a new Tokugawa shogun. The ceremonial dictated that the shoguns (the *Nihon koku taikun*) exchanged official letters of State with the Korean kings, and judging from the content of these missives, the two highest authorities maintained a kind of relation that we can define as equal. Since the missions' inception the bakufu considered the Korean envoys as State guests in every way, therefore, it always reserved a warm welcome to them.

As is known, in 1372 the Ryukyu kingdom became a tributary state of the Ming dynasty, and after the invasion of the kingdom by Satsuma in 1609 the small realm was also subjected to indirect control by the Shimazu. The embassies from Shuri to Edo were divided in missions of gratitude and congratulation; they started in 1634, and until the last delegation of 1850 eighteen such missions were dispatched. Without any doubt, the Ryukyuan missions started due to the resolute determination of the Shimazu of Satsuma. Nonetheless, as Toby has observed, the first delegation of gratitude, sent in 1634 and limited to Kyoto, was intended to manifest inside and outside that after the death of his father Hidetada, the third shogun Iemitsu was the only supreme overlord of all Japan.⁶⁰

On the occasion of the dispatch of the embassies, the ceremonial protocol between the bakufu and the Ryukyu kingdom prescribed that the Ryukyuan king, known

⁶⁰ Toby, *Diplomacy*, p. 64.

as the king of Chūzan (*Chūzan ō* 中山王), would keep an official correspondence relation with the senior Councilors. The two parties exchanged official letters which, however, were not considered State letters. The bakufu, thus, considered the Ryukyuan king as having the same rank as the *rōjū*. Nonetheless, taking into account the fact that in these written communications the Ryukyus were also granted the use of the title of *Nihon koku taikun* for the Tokugawa shogun, we can assume that though different ranks were accorded to the Korean and the Ryukyuan kings, the bakufu conferred the same treatment to both Korea and Ryukyu in terms of title usage.⁶¹

The bakufu exerted its influence so that the Korean envoys made a pilgrimage to the Nikkō Tōshōgū, the mausoleum erected in the honour of Ieyasu, respectively in 1636, 1643 and 1655. Moreover, it also ordered the Ryukyuan ambassadors to visit this magnificent mausoleum in 1644, 1649 and 1653. The pilgrimage to the Nikkō Tōshōgū by both the Korean and the Ryukyuan envoys was without any doubt a diplomatic achievement obtained by Edo leaders, who took advantage of this long parade of high symbolic value all the way to Nikkō to insinuate that the prestige of the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate had by then already reached all other East Asian countries. Besides, it was also an effective means to bolster the authority of the Tokugawa family within the boundaries of Japan.⁶²

Nevertheless, given that the long pilgrimage to Nikkō required great efforts both in terms of time and cost, the bakufu thought it necessary to replace it with a shorter one to the Ueno mausoleum, located inside the perimeters of Edo. However, since Japan maintained a relationships of equality with the Korean court, from 1671 on it requested

⁶¹ In the correspondence between the bakufu and the Ryukyus, we can trace the first use of the title *Nihon koku taikun* to a letter from the senior Councilors addressed to the Ryukyuan King in 1645. Tomiyama Kazuyuki, “Edo bakufu gaikō to Ryūkyū.”

⁶² Toby, *Diplomacy*, p. 204.

only the Ryukyuan envoys to visit the Ueno shrine.⁶³

The bakuku, on one side, legitimated its authority in the international arena by means of the reception of Korean and Ryukyuan embassies, and on the other, continued with its policy of rigorous control over entries into and exits from Japan. In 1639, it was forbidden for Portuguese ships to appear along the Japanese coasts, and in 1641 the landing of Dutch vessels was limited to the small fan-shaped artificial island of Dejima, built in the bay of Nagasaki. The reason behind the bakufu's adoption of this series of measures with regards to the regulation of entrance into and exit from the country, that later became known as *sakokurei* 鎖国令, was to put a halt to the spread of Christianity and to keep under direct control all foreign trade with Chinese and Dutch merchants in Nagasaki.⁶⁴

The scenario that we have sketched thus far represents the context of Tokugawa Japan when the dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassies began. Concomitant with the creation of a brand-new Japan-centered interstate order, the Edo leaders in 1630s and 1640s saw the Korean and Ryukyuan missions as a successful means to legitimize inside and outside the country the power and prestige of the Tokugawa shogun. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the Ryukyuan delegations were not initiated due to the firm will of the bakufu, as was the case of the Korean embassies. Therefore, in this first phase we cannot contend that the missions from Shuri were crucial rituals from Edo's perspective. In this regard, as Toby has said, the difference in treatment that the bakufu accorded the two missions was noticeable in all the aspects of the embassies.⁶⁵

In order to comprehend why the Ryukyuan embassies began, we must turn our

⁶³ Kamiya, *Taikun gaikō*, p. 137.

⁶⁴ “*Sakoku*” (lit., “closed country”) is a nineteenth century word, coined by Japanese astronomer Shizuki Tadao translating Engelbert Kaempfer's *History of Japan*.

⁶⁵ Toby, *Diplomacy*, p. 186.

gaze toward the south. These missions, in fact, started because of the prompt initiative of the Shimazu of Satsuma.

Satsuma's foresight

It is well known that after the invasion by Satsuma in 1609, king Shō Nei and the highest officials of the Kingdom were captured and deported to Kagoshima. In 1611, before the daimyo of Satsuma granted their return to the kingdom, Kagoshima forced the king and his officials to sign an oath which asserted that the Ryukyus had been a subordinate kingdom (*fuyōkoku* 附庸国)⁶⁶ of Satsuma since ancient times. On that occasion, Satsuma authorities also drew up a series of fifteen articles which laid the foundations for Satsuma control over the Ryukyuan-Chinese trade and which all the members of the royal government were forced to sign.

In this first phase Satsuma adopted a policy which aimed to integrate the southern archipelago in the system of the Tokugawa government. In July 1613, the royal government was ordered to change the appearance of Ryukyu so that it would look different from the past, and in a memorandum written in October of the same year, it was decreed that the various Ryukyuan ceremonies should not be different from that of Japan.⁶⁷ In other words, Satsuma intended to achieve the political and cultural assimilation of the Ryukyus to Japan.

Nonetheless, in 1615, when it had become evident that the bakufu's attempts to

⁶⁶ In 1604, The Shimazu of Satsuma for the first time advanced the so-called *fuyō setsu* 附庸説, the "theory of submission," with regard to the Ryukyuan Kingdom, by which they declared that the Ryukyus were part of Kagoshima since ancient times. Kamiya Nobuyuki, "Ryūkyū no Chūgoku he no shinkō to tai Nichi kankei no inpei," *Ajia Chiiki Bunka Gaku no Hatten: 21seiki COE Puroguramu Kenkyū Shūsei*, Waseda Daigaku Ajia Chiiki Bunka Enhanshingukenkyū Sentaa, ed., (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 2006), p. 169.

⁶⁷ Kagoshimaken Ishin Shiryō Hensanjo, ed., *Kyūki zatsuroku. Kōhen* (hereafter *Kyūki zatsuroku. Kōhen*), vol. 4, n. 1016, n. 1046 (Kagoshima: Kagoshimaken, 1984).

restore official relations with the Ming court would end in failure, Satsuma reversed its strategy for the archipelago completely and hammered out a new policy centered on the dissimilation of the islands from Japanese culture. In 1617, Satsuma proscribed the Ryukyu kingdom to adopt Japanese customs and granted the king maximum political authority over internal affairs of the Kingdom. In 1624, Kagoshima gave an order recognizing the Ryukyuan king the right to assign stipends—in proportion to their offices—to the Council of Three (*sanshikan* 三司官) and to the members of the entire bureaucratic apparatus of the realm, as well as the jurisdiction over capital punishments and other sentences, the right to celebrate the divine office with regard to the *Orime* and other Ryukyuan feasts, except for the island of Tokunoshima (during the early modern period, Ryukyuan and Satsuma officials used the term “Tokunoshima” to refer to the Amami-Ōshima Islands), which had been incorporated under the control of Kagoshima as a consequence of the invasion of 1609.⁶⁸

From the viewpoint of Satsuma it was of great importance that the Ryukyus appeared independent to Chinese eyes so that the Ming court would grant the same privileges conferred to Shuri before the invasion of Kagoshima troops in 1609. After rumors regarding the invasion of Satsuma reached Chinese ears, the Ming court decided to allow the Ryukyu kingdom to send only one tributary mission every ten years, whereas previously they had accorded the dispatch of one every two years. Satsuma needed to purchase Chinese goods, such as the precious raw silk, through the Ryukyu kingdom, and that was possible only if Ryukyu appeared to function autonomously from Japan, since official relations between the Ming and the Tokugawa regime were not restored. The interest Satsuma had for Ryukyu was exclusively commercial. In

⁶⁸ Kamiya, *Rekishī no hazama*, p. 52.

particular, the authorities of Kagoshima found in the tributary trade between China and Shuri an effective means to clear their debts and fill the impoverished domain's coffers. For this reason, the Shimazu planned to acquire the monopoly over Chinese-Ryukyuan trade.⁶⁹ Satsuma's commercial purposes, therefore, contributed to create an image of Ryukyu as a kingdom apparently separated from Japan, but which was *de facto* under the control of Kagoshima.

With the aim of putting on a firm footing their authority over Ryukyu, that is, in order to achieve formally the incorporation of the southern archipelago's revenues inside its own cadastral register, the Shimazu formulated toward the bakufu the so-called *Kakitsu fuyō* 嘉吉附庸 theory on 30 May 1634.⁷⁰ This assertion conceived by Kagoshima leaders, assumes that in 1441, the first year of the Kakitsu era, the daimyo of Satsuma, Shimazu Tadakuni, had the honour of receiving an official document from the sixth Ashikaga shogun, Yoshinori, in which it was asserted that the Ryukyu Islands were bestowed to the Shimazu family.⁷¹ Nevertheless, other than Kagoshima's seventeenth century letter delivered to the bakufu, there is no documentary evidence supporting this thesis.

Shimazu Iehisa (Tadatsune, daimyo of Satsuma) and Mitsuhsa (the heir apparent) availed themselves of the fact that in March of the same year (1634), the Ryukyuan royal prince Sashiki Chōeki had reached Kagoshima in order to transmit officially that the king of Chūzan, Shō Hō, had received his investiture by the Chinese emperor the previous year. It was the first investiture accorded by the Chinese emperor to a Ryukyuan king after the invasion of Satsuma of 1609. Iehisa and Mitsuhsa did not

⁶⁹ Yokoyama, *Ryūkyū koku shisetsu*, pp. 48-49.

⁷⁰ Kan'ei 11/5/4.

⁷¹ Kamiya, *Rekishī no hazama*, p.5.

hesitate to obtain maximum benefit and accompanied prince Sashiki Chōeki with prince Kin Chōtei (the New Year's envoy, *nentōshi* 年頭使)⁷² to Kyoto, where the third Tokugawa shogun, Iemitsu, paid an official visit. On 1 September,⁷³ the two Ryukyuan envoys escorted by Iehisa and Mitsuhisa had the privilege to be received in audience by Iemitsu in Nijōjō castle in Kyoto. This audience is considered to be the first Ryukyuan mission to Japan. As a result Edo acceded to Satsuma's request.

Now let us turn our attention to the limited documentary sources regarding the dispatch of this first embassy that have survived in order to try to reconstruct its basic elements. From a missive by Iehisa to one of his family members and dated 27 March (1634),⁷⁴ it is possible to deduce that the Satsuma daimyo was aware of the fact that Iemitsu would reach Kyoto for an official visit shortly; though he did not know precisely when.⁷⁵ Another document, sent by the chief retainer of the Sagara family, Yorimori, to the Shimazu and dated 28 July,⁷⁶ reported that the shogun had left Edo around 15 July.⁷⁷

In view of these records, we can surmise that the decision of the Shimazu to

⁷² The New Year's envoys were Ryukyuan officials whom the royal government dispatched to Satsuma periodically with the purpose of expressing the formal greetings for the New Year to the daimyo of Satsuma as well as of carrying out a mediatory function between Kagoshima and Shuri. This practice began in 1613; but in view of the fact that in 1642 the member of the Council of Three (*sanshikan*), Ginowan Uekata 宜野湾親方正成, reached Kagoshima to carry out this functions, a system of dispatching one of the members of the *sanshikan* for a period of three years was started. Nevertheless, this practice came to an end in 1646 when the member of the Council of Three Kunigami Uekata 国頭親方朝季 carried out his mission in Kagoshima. From then the so-called *nentōshi* practice began. From 1667 officials of the high rank of Uekata 親方 were dispatched as New Year's envoys and the system of the Uekata's residence (*zaiban ueekata*) was established. These officials stayed on duty in Kagoshima for a period of eighteen months, at the conclusion of which they were replaced by a new New Year's envoy. Kamiya Nobuyuki, *Satsuma to Ryūkyū*, (Kawagoe: Kamiya Nobuyuki, 2002), p. 33.

⁷³ Kan'ei 11/7intercalary/9.

⁷⁴ Kan'ei 11/2/28. The Letter was addressed to Shimazu Hisayoshi.

⁷⁵ *Kyūki zatsuroku. Kōhen*, vol. 5, n. 696, 1985, p. 413.

⁷⁶ Kan'ei 11/7/4.

⁷⁷ Kan'ei 11/6/20. *Kyūki zatsuroku. Kōhen*, vol. 5, n. 728, p. 433.

accompany the Ryukyuan envoys to the imperial capital was made around March 1634, when the Ryukyuan ambassadors and the news about the impending visit of Iemitsu to Kyoto had reached Kagoshima almost simultaneously.

The following document, drawn up by senior Councilors Sakai Tadakatsu and Doi Toshikatsu, can clarify the terms in which Iehisa had asked authorization from the bakufu to grant the Ryukyuan envoys an audience with Iemitsu in Kyoto:

On the 2nd day of the intercalary 7th Month of the 11th Year of the Kan'ei era,⁷⁸ [the senior Councilors] Sakai Tadakatsu and Doi Toshikatsu transmitted [the following] to Iehisa.

[Previously we have heard from you that] you [Iehisa] took on consignment the message [of the Ryukyuan king who] wishes to express his respects to the shogun [to give thanks] for his enthronement to the Ryukyuan throne. Though [the duty of this office] was up to the Ryukyuan king, since he is greatly indisposed both physically and mentally, his son, the prince Sashiki, and his younger brother, Kin Aji, and Tamagusuku have reached [Kagoshima] and [now] they are close. The shogun has learnt [what you transmitted] and he gave the order by which it is granted to [the Ryukyuan envoys] to express their respects in Kyoto. Accordingly, we [Tadakatsu and Toshikatsu] give the shogun's order so that the 9th day of this Month⁷⁹ the Ryukyuan envoys have an audience [with Iemitsu].⁸⁰

Based on this document, we may surmise that the Shimazu had communicated to the

⁷⁸ This corresponds to 25 August 1634 in the Gregorian calendar. The original date of the document also mention the term *kinoeinu* 甲戌. This term refers to the Chinese sexagenary cycle (known also as Stems-and-Branches) which was used for recording days or years. *Kinoeinu* is the eleventh term of the sexagenary cycle and combines the Dog element of the zodiacal cycle (one of the twelve Earthly Branches) with the Yang part of the Wood element (one of the ten Heavenly Stems).

⁷⁹ 1 September 1634.

⁸⁰ *Kyūki zatsuroku. Kōhen*, vol. 5, n. 748, p. 441.

bakufu that it was the Ryukyuan king's duty to pay homage to the shogun, but in view of the fact that the king was unwell, he delegated his son and brother to carry out this important office. The expression "though [the duty of this office] was up to the Ryukyuan king" clarifies that in the past it was decided that the Ryukyuan king would have had the duty to express his respects to the Tokugawa shogun on the occasion of his enthronement to the Ryukyuan throne. Nevertheless, there is not any record which confirms the existence of this kind of diplomatic relations between Shuri and Edo. The mission projected by Satsuma in the spring of 1634 followed an entirely new protocol; it was an instantaneous formalization of a ritual which had no precedents, but which implicitly indicated repetition in the future. At the same time, the recourse to the theory of the *Kakitsu fuyō* was an attempt to turn to history to legitimate what the reality *de facto* denied. Eric Hobsbawm states that "inventing traditions, [...], is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition." In addition, with regard to the three overlapping types to which the invented traditions seem to belong there are "those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority."⁸¹ On the occasion of the dispatch of the first Ryukyuan embassy to Japan, the fief of Satsuma retrojected into the past its control over the kingdom since 1441, and invented for the king of Ryukyu and the Tokugawa shogun a relation of power in which the former had the duty to pay his respects to the latter on predetermined occasions, all this through the unfailing mediation of the Shimazu.

We may assume that the poor state of health of king Shō Hō was a valuable pretext to boost the symbolic importance of granting an audience to the diplomatic

⁸¹ Eric J. Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, ed., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1-14.

envoys of Ryukyu, who were the direct delegates of the Ryukyuan king, as well as an excuse to relieve the king of Chūzan from a humiliating office such as that of paying homage to the Tokugawa shogun on Japanese soil.

After the meeting between Iemitsu and the Ryukyuan envoys, on 8 September⁸² the requests of Satsuma were fulfilled and the revenue of Ryukyu was included in the cadastral register of the domain. On 25 September, Tokugawa Iemitsu conferred to Iehisa the *Ryōchi hanmono* 領地判物, a kind of official certificate of property in which the possession by the daimyo of his domain's provinces was confirmed, and it was decreed that upon the whole 605,000 *koku* obtained calculating the amount of the Satsuma, Ōsumi and Hyūga's lands' revenues, “*sono hoka* 其外” (in addition) it was ordered to add the entire revenue of the Ryukyu kingdom estimated to be 127,100 *koku*.⁸³

The kingdom's revenue was thus included into the cadastral register of the Shimazu. However the expression *sono hoka*, which we may translate with the term “in addition,” means that Ryukyu was a political entity which was “at the outside of,” that is to say, it was not a part of Japan. The Ryukyu Islands were hence incorporated into the Tokugawa *bakuhān* system as a foreign country.⁸⁴ That is why the bakufu also approved the continuation of the tributary relations between the royal government and the Ming.

As we have seen, in 1634 the envoys of the Ryukyuan king were already received in audience by Iemitsu in Kyoto. However, we can speak of *Edo dachi* only from the

⁸² Kan'ei 11/intercalary7/16.

⁸³ Kan'ei 19/8/29. *Kyūki zatsuroku. Kōhen*, vol. 5, n. 756. *Koku* (47,5 U.S. gallons, approximately 6 bushels or 180 liters. The *koku* was used to measure especially rice, other grains and the tonnage of ships.

⁸⁴ Kamiya, *Rekishī no hazama*, p.51.

second mission, dispatched in 1644, since it is only then that the Ryukyuan ambassadors, escorted by the daimyo of Satsuma, reached the shogunal capital for the first time. On that occasion, Shimazu Mitsuhsa, who succeeded Iehisa, ordered the royal government to dispatch a congratulatory mission in honor of the birth of Tokugawa Ietsuna (the heir of Iemitsu), in conjunction with a gratitude embassy to celebrate the enthronement of Shō Ken to the Ryukyuan throne.⁸⁵ With regard to the equipment of the envoys the Kagoshima authorities suggested the following on 23 Septemeber 1642:

[...] The visit of [the ambassador] prince Kin [to Japan] represents the most important event.

Regarding the equipement [of the envoys], [since we wonder if it would be more appropriate] to prepare it in Chinese style or in Ryukyuan style, [we order the Ryukyuan mission] to bring both and [Satsuma officials] to initiate a [formal] consultation procedure in Kagoshima.⁸⁶

From this passage we can surmise that during the course of the second Ryukyuan embassy the officials of Satsuma had not yet set a protocol regarding the equipment of the mission. In the same document it was decreed that the embassy should be composed of 60 or 70 members, plus a group of young musicians assigned with performing orchestral music.⁸⁷ Concerning the gifts to the bakufu, it was ordered to bring 30 or 50 silver sheets⁸⁸ for Iemitsu and Ietsuna, as well as Ryukyuan products as *bajōfu* and

⁸⁵ Shō Ken had succeeded Shō Hō in 1641. Later, no more delegations were dispatched on the occasion of the birth of the heir of a shogun. In those cases, Shuri dispatched a small-scale congratulatory mission with gifts to Satsuma; then the Shimazu took charge of delivering the gifts to Edo.

⁸⁶ Kan'ei 19/8/29. *Kyūki zatsuroku. Kōhen*, vol. 5, n. 278. The document mentions “the Chinese crown,” a references to the headress of the ambassador Kin. However, based on the context I preferred to interpret this in a broader sense, namely the exterior aspect of the most important envoys, so I translated it as “Regarding of the equipment [of the envoys].”

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ In the document the gifts to Iemitsu and Ietsuna are called *oumadai* 御馬代, literally “gifts in

shōchū (*awamori*) and other items. Based on these instructions we can infer that at that time the ceremonial protocol of the missions was still in the process of being developed. While they were preparing the delegation, Satsuma leaders gave the following orders on 19 December 1643 to the retainers appointed to escort the long parade of envoys:

With regard to the envoys dispatched by the king of Ryukyu to the shogun, [the prince of Satsuma] considers them as a [service of] hospitality of foreigners [that he offers to the shogun]. Moreover, in view of the fact that [the daimyo] was ordered [by the bakufu] to come to Edo for the *sankin kōtai* [alternate attendance] system the next year, the prince of Satsuma will accompany [the mission]; [we think that it is] appropriate that the [Satsuma] retainers, without any distinction between superiors and subordinates, to whom it is ordered to escort the envoys, so certainly along the maritime way by ships, but also in this territory [by land], they express their respects to the [Ryukyuan] envoys when [the latter] arrive or leave [some locations] and when they encounter them they greet them with a bow; in the same way as they pay their respect toward the lord [of Satsuma]. If they do not act according to the above [instructions], and [receive the envoys] lightly, this would be at variance with the reverence toward [the shogun]; in other words, since it would not be considered [any longer] a service of hospitality [in honor of] the shogun, it is ordered that from the moment that they leave Satsuma they are aware [of these directives].⁸⁹

According to this document, when the Ryukyuan embassies began, they were conceived by the authorities of Satsuma as a service offered in the honor of the shogun, and in

place of horses.” During the Edo period, in fact, it was a custom among the various military clans to exchange presents of silk and other goods considered to be of the same value as horses.

⁸⁹ Kan'ei 20/11/9. *Kyūki zatsuroku. Kōhen*, vol. 6, n. 353, 1986.

order to not compromise the reverence toward the head of the shogunate, it was indeed necessary that the retainers assigned as escorts of the mission expressed their respect with a bow toward the Ryukyuan envoys. In addition, as we can glean from this record, since 1644, the Ryukyuan embassies were dispatched on the occasion of the *sankin kōtai* of the Satsuma daimyo. Consequently, throughout the Edo period, the dispatch of the Ryukyuan missions was planned while firmly keeping the agenda fixed by the bakufu for visits to Edo by the daimyo of Satsuma in mind.

Another remarkable aspect connected to this phase is that regarding the model of diplomatic mission that, in the imaginary of the authorities of Satsuma, it should have followed to shape the Ryukyuan embassies. Regarding this matter, Tomiyama points out that the domain of Satsuma made every effort to model the Ryukyuan missions after the Korean embassies.⁹⁰ In the same entry drafted by the authorities of Satsuma and referring to the preparations of the Ryukyuan embassy, we also read “concerning the number of Ryukyuan [envoys], we heard [that we are expected] to accompany around 120 people [to Edo]. Despite the fact that this order has been transmitted to Kagoshima some days ago, [we think that] there is [a substantial] difference from [the number of] Korean [envoys].”⁹¹

During the process of formalization of the missions from Shuri, thus, the officials of Satsuma always bore in mind the ceremonial protocol set for the reception of Korean embassies, and they were concerned about the fact that the Ryukyuan delegations could have appeared as of an inferior status with respect to the Korean ones, considering the fact that the latter were composed of around 400 members. Seen in this light, we can also assume that when Iehisa and Mitsuhsa seized the opportunity to accompany the

⁹⁰ Tomiyama, *Ryūkyū ōkoku no gaikō to ōken*, pp. 124-125.

⁹¹ Kan'ei 20/11/9. *Kyūki zatsuroku. Kōhen*, vol. 6, n. 353.

Ryukyuan princes Sashiki and Kin to Kyoto in 1634, they, in fact, were keeping in mind the great benefits achieved by the Sō family of Tsushima on the occasion of their escort of the Korean envoys to Edo. They, thus, took advantage of this fortuitous situation to launch a process of formalization and ritualization of a similar protocol aimed at pursuing their own interests.

Furthermore, in the above-mentioned document, with regard to the gifts to be offered to the influential members of the bakufu, Satsuma officials ordered that the Ryukyuan envoys would bring the same number of gifts the Korean envoys would present to the bakufu during their next mission.⁹² This is another example of the numerous arrangements designed for keeping some degree of equality between the symbolic values of the two diplomatic embassies.

The start of the Ryukyuan missions was thus affected by the determination of the Shimazu, who—during the years in which the bakufu was re-interpreting the external world from a Japan-centered perspective—with a long-term plan and without any hesitation seized the opportunity offered by the arrival of the Ryukyuan princes in Kagoshima to launch a diplomatic ritual of high symbolic value which eventually would last more than 200 years. They thus obtained an effective means by which to show off their prestige—for example escorting the envoys to Edo or introducing them to the shogunal court—to the bakufu and the other daimyo, being the only family that could bolster the subordination of a foreign kingdom. For the Shimazu, therefore, Ryukyu was not just important from an exclusively commercial viewpoint, the institution of the Ryukyuan embassies, in fact, offered them a political instrument of high symbolic significance through which they could construct their identity in the arena of the

⁹² Ibid.

Japanese military clans as that of feudal lords nearly unique and incomparable. As we have seen, Kagoshima valued these missions as a form of service offered by the daimyo of Satsuma in honor of the shogun and made every effort to ensure that the symbolic value of the Ryukyuan delegations was not inferior to that of the Korean embassies. Moreover, we shall see that from the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Satsuma daimyo would make use of the embassies from Shuri to obtain advancement in rank from the authorities in Edo.

The beginning of the Ryukyuan missions from the perspective of Shuri

First and foremost, it is necessary to underline what was, after the invasion by Satsuma in 1609 and the subsequent establishment of indirect control over the kingdom by Kagoshima, the office of supreme importance that the royal government had to comply with its maximum diligence in order that the desires of the Satsuma daimyo would be satisfied. In 1635, the officials of Satsuma communicated the following message to the Council of Three:

[...] with regard to the services (*hōkō* 奉公) that the Ryukyuan officials [are expected to satisfy on the orders of the Satsuma daimyo], since besides commerce with China there is nothing of particular significance, you [are requested] more and more to devote all your energy [to it].⁹³

As it is well known, the oaths signed by king Shō Nei and the most influential officials of the royal government in 1611 did not prefigure the establishment of diplomatic or any other sort of relations between Shuri and Edo. So what did the Ryukyuan missions

⁹³ *Kyūki zatsuroku. Kōhen*, vol. 5, n. 852.

mean to Shuri?

As we have seen, on the occasion of the first Ryukyuan embassy, against the background of the exchange of letters between the senior Councilors Sakai Tadakatsu and Doi Toshikatsu and Iehisa, there was the rhetoric of the Shimazu who desired to obtain from Edo the authorization to escort the Ryukyuan envoys to Kyoto. Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of Shuri, if we consider the fact that the Ryukyuan king, Shō Hō, dispatched the prince Sashiki and his entourage with the purpose of communicating to Japan that he had received the investiture from the Chinese emperor, we can surmise that the real message he wanted to convey publicly in Japan was that Ryukyu—despite the invasion by Satsuma and its indirect subordination to Kagoshima—was as in the past, indeed, a tributary state of the Ming court.

Tomiyama has shed light on the fact that from the reign of Shō Hō, Ryukyu changed to a more appeasing policy toward Satsuma and created a dual tributary system toward China and Japan that permitted the kingdom to maintain its autonomous status and enjoy a fair degree of independence throughout the Tokugawa period.⁹⁴ Smits points out that the relations with China were a political necessity for the Kingdom's existence on Japan's periphery as a quasi-independent country.⁹⁵ And Robert I. Hellyer states that the Ryukyus “always conscious of their place between Japan and China, used a mix of refusal, compromise, flattery, and compliance” to defend their own interests vis-à-vis Satsuma and Edo.⁹⁶

Let us now turn our attention to how the Ryukyuan king Shō Ken presented

⁹⁴ Tomiyama, *Ryūkyū ōkoku no gaikō to ōken*, pp. 143-50.

⁹⁵ Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, p. 33.

⁹⁶ Robert I. Hellyer, *Defining Engagement: Japan and Global Contexts, 1640-1868* (Cambridge, Mass: Published by Harvard University Asia Center, Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 38.

himself towards the Tokugawa shogunate in a missive dated 6 June 1643, at the time of the preparations of the dispatch of the 1644 mission. With regard to the congratulatory mission in honor of Tokugawa Ietsuna's birth (1641), he writes "first of all, the birth of the heir apparent is an immense joy. The peace [which reigns] in Your Country is a propitious sign: is there something more fortunate [than this]? Our small country has heard about this, and since there is safety⁹⁷ [thanks to Japan, this embassy] is a ceremonial of ten thousand years of joy."⁹⁸ In the same missive, the following is written with regard to the thanks to celebrate the succession by Shō Ken to the Ryukyuan throne:

Firstly, [with regard to my own] succession to the Ryukyuan throne, last winter [1642] I received a credential legitimation from the prince of Satsuma, Mitsuhsa, [in which my appointment is recognized]. There are really no limits to my happiness and gratitude. For this reason, with the purpose of expressing my thanks to the shogun, I offer just a few [humble] gifts. These are my real feelings.⁹⁹

It is well known that the Satsuma officials always kept careful watch over the contents of the letters the Ryukyuan king sent to the senior Councilors. From the missive of Shō Ken we can verify that the king of Ryukyu employed numerous expressions imbued with deep pathos and great respect, typical of the traditional ceremonial of the East Asia.¹⁰⁰ We can assume that this terminology, shared by both Ryukyu and Japan, and

⁹⁷ In the document this word is expressed with *anraku* 安楽 meaning "at ease." However, considering the rhetoric used by Shuri with regard to Japan (Satsuma/Edo) I prefer to express it with "safety."

⁹⁸ Kan'ei 20/4/20. *Ryūkyū ōrai*, (Kokuritsu Kōbunshokan Naikaku Bunkogura).

⁹⁹ Kan'ei 20/4/20. Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ For example, the expression "the peace [which reigns] in Your Country is a propitious sign," is a

pervaded with deep devotion and Confucian principles, was, on one side, the result of the supervision by Satsuma over the style and the content of the missives drafted by the Ryukyuan king, and, on the other, a diplomatic lexicon creating a pure façade, behind which were concealed the most authentic feelings of the royal government with regard to the dispatch of the embassies to Edo. In other words, it was a terminology of compliance essential to pursue exclusive Ryukyuan interests. As we know, from 1609 on, the Ryukyus could not afford to forget that their kingdom was placed under the control of Satsuma; nevertheless, this indirect subordination left the Ryukyuan room for manoeuvring and freedom to adapt to Japanese control under always differing forms.

As we have seen, the chief envoys of the mission of 1634 were the royal princes Sashiki Chōeki and Kin Chōtei, accompanied by the administrator of Tamagusuku, Kin Chōshū,¹⁰¹ who in reality was the son of Chōtei. Nonetheless, if we examine in detail the genealogical records (in Jap. *kafu* 家譜) of the Ryukyu elite we discover that Noguni Peechin (1599-1675),¹⁰² Goeku Ueekata (1621-1695),¹⁰³ Yonaha Peechin (1614-1695)¹⁰⁴ and Gusukuma Ueekata (1599-1675)¹⁰⁵ also took part in the mission.

terminology borrowed from Chinese rhetoric, a phrase which contains the concepts of social harmony and respect toward the hereditary character of the Tokugawa shogunate which had reached its third generation of shoguns without any bloodshed. There is no doubt that this type of expression represented what the bakufu longed to hear most from the monarch of a foreign country.

¹⁰¹ *Naha-shi shi, shiryō hen*, daiichi kan go, Kafu shiryō 1, pp.146-147. In 1634 he reached Japan with the purpose of attending his father. Afterwards, he was nominated administrator of Chatan, and in 1638 he was nominated prince on the occasion of the congratulatory mission in honor of the appointment of Shimazu Mitsuhide as daimyo of Satsuma. In 1652, he took part in the embassy of congratulation for the appointment of Tokugawa Ietsuna as shogun.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 144. Peechin 親雲上 indicates a middle-range rank in Ryukyuan officialdom. In 1634 he went to Japan as an assistant of prince Sashiki. Later, he took part in the Ryukyuan mission which reached Japan in 1644 as envoy in charge of the horses to be offered to the shogun. After that, he received numerous awards and promotions by the royal government.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.153. Ueekata 親方 was the highest rank a non-relative of the royal family could attain. In 1634, he accompanied prince Sashiki to Japan. He reached Japan again as envoy of the Ryukyuan missions of 1644 and 1653, and later obtained several other offices from the royal government.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.160. In 1634, he reached Japan as an assistant of prince Sashiki. Afterwards, he received

Therefore, we can contend that the first mission was composed of—at least—seven important envoys. However, it is believed these envoys were escorted by numerous retainers who, due to their low status did not find any place in the official records. Based on the records relating to these principal envoys, it is possible to determine that the mission left Naha in March 1634, reached Kyoto in August and came back to Ryukyu in February 1635.¹⁰⁶ Another important aspect that we can infer from the genealogical records related to Yonaha Peechin is that the official order from the shogun in which the envoys were instructed to go to Kyoto reached Kagoshima when the Ryukyuan mission was already there in the spring of 1634. This seems to confirm the extemporaneous character of this embassy. In fact, against the background of this first delegation, we can glean Shō Hō's intention of announcing to Japan his success in being granted investiture by the Chinese emperor through the dispatch of a delegation to Kagoshima, the commercial interests of Satsuma over the Ryukyuan Chinese trade and the visit to Kyoto of Iemitsu.

Furthermore, it is possible to ascertain from the genealogical records what was the fundamental criterium around which revolved the composition of the Ryukyuan envoys. The structure of the mission was a complex organization based on a hierarchical lord-assistant(s) (*shujū* 主従) relationship in which high ranked envoys were accompanied by one or more assistant-escorts, who assisted them and were directly responsible to their master.¹⁰⁷ The *jū* 従 position of the assistants could misguide us to

numerous other assignments from the government.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p.137. In 1634, he went to Japan as an assistant of prince Kin. Later, he obtained several bureaucratic assignments and in 1637 was also nominated administrator of Gusukuma.

¹⁰⁶ According to the lunar calendar, the envoys from Shuri left in the Second Month of 1634, in the intercalary Seventh Month were granted an audience by Iemitsu, and in the Twelfth Month returned to Naha.

¹⁰⁷ On this matter see Sugimura Yukinori, "Ryūkyū shisetsu no hensei to un'ei: jūsha no kōsei to tabi yakusho," Tamai Tatsuya, ed., *Kinsei Nihon ni okeru gaikoku shisetsu to shakai hen'yō*

see them as simple porters. Certainly within the embassy there were lower officials or even peasants charged with hardworking, however, all who were assigned the task of assisting the most important envoys in direct and daily relations, were officials of high rank (Uekata 親方 or Peechin 親雲上), who held considerable offices inside the mission. The two princes—who only from the beginning of the eighteenth century would be titled in Chinese fashion as *seishi* 正使, or ambassador, and *fukushi* 副使, or vice ambassador—being the most influential personages had the greater number of subordinates to their assistance, by which they formed two actual separate units inside the mission. Here, we could verify that Noguni Peechin, Goeku Uekata and Yonaha Peechin were the assistants of Sashiki Chōeki, while Kin Chōshū and Gusukuma Uekata were the aides-de-camp of Kin Chōtei. Therefore, we can trace back to the first mission this mechanism of the structure of the embassies centered on a hierarchical lord-assistants relation.

At this point, I will focus my attention on the career of the envoys examined so far. In 1634, they were all very young and later they worked their way up as government officials. Thus, we can assume that fulfilling the assignment of conveying the investiture of Shō Hō to Iemitsu during his official visit to Kyoto was highly valued and acted as a catalyst for achieving success in the bureaucratic sphere. With regard to the significance the missions to Edo had for Shuri, Maehira Fusaaki's research on the early-modern Ryukyuan system of land assignation proves to be an instrumental study.¹⁰⁸

The Shō, the Ryukyuan royal family, legitimated its authority within and without

1: "*Giesisei nikki*" wo yomu, (Tokyo: Kamiya Nobuyuki Kenkyūshitsu, 2006), pp. 117-118.

¹⁰⁸ Maehira Fusaaki, "Ryūkyū ni okeru kashindan hensei to bōeki kōzō-tabiyaku-chigyōsei no bunseki," Fujino Tamotsu, ed., *Kyūshū to Hansei (II)*, (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1984).

by means of the investiture received from the Chinese emperor, and maintained the monopoly over trade with China and over all external relations of the kingdom. The bureaucratic organization of Ryukyu placed the king at the apex of a hierarchical pyramid, under whom was the Hyōjōsho 評定所, the highest law-making institution, composed of the *sessei* (the Regent)¹⁰⁹ and the Council of Three (*sanshikan*).¹¹⁰ Below this came the government retainers (*kashindan* 家臣団), a complex web of officials of different ranks. The core of this web was represented by the *jitō* 地頭, those officials who had received from the royal government the administration of a district. The *sōjitō* administered more than one district, while the *wakijitō* governed only one locality. Even before the beginning of the modern period, it seems that within the Ryukyu kingdom a close relation between the participation in trade and the possession of districts was established. The Ryukyu Islands had a very low agricultural production capacity to which the limited availability of cultivable land needs to be added; thus it is not difficult to understand that the profits achievable by the Ryukyans through commerce were equal, or in some cases even greater, than the revenues they could obtain from the cultivation of land. Trade was, therefore, an important source of income and represented a large share of the economic base through which the government officials sustained themselves. Considering the insular characteristic of Ryukyu, for the Ryukyans commercial activity was unavoidably tied to sea travels. Moreover, in view of the richness and variety of the Chinese goods, which, as we have seen, Ryukyu in principle could purchase only by means of tributary trade, during the early modern period, commercial occupation for Shuri meant exclusively the one conducted with China. In

¹⁰⁹ The *sessei* was a royal relative and the highest government official who held a position that can be roughly equated to that of a prime minister.

¹¹⁰ It was the Ryukyu's highest governing council.

this respect, we have already mentioned that after the invasion of Satsuma and the institution of indirect control by Kagoshima on the kingdom, the Shimazu in 1635 stated that the most important task Shuri had to comply with was the China trade. Unlike the situation in Japan, where the daimyo had to provide part of their armies to the shogun under such circumstances as the outbreak of war, the Ryukyuan government had to exert itself in commerce with China in compliance with Satsuma's will. It was a commercial activity, however, that was carried out solely by the men of Shuri. It seems opportune, now, to recall that within the East Asian context trade was not separated from diplomacy, it constituted a parallel activity and of secondary importance with respect to the high symbolic value represented by the observance of diplomatic protocols. Diplomacy and trade constituted, thus, two sides of the same coin and the tributary missions represented the most tangible expression of this implicit complementarity.

The official post which in the early-modern period in Ryukyu designated the official in charge of a formal diplomatic mission was known as *tabiyaku* 旅役. We may distinguish between three types of *tabiyaku*. The *jige tabi* 地下旅 indicated a duty in one of the islands of the kingdom of Ryukyu. The *Yamato tabi* 大和旅 designated a mission to Kagoshima or Edo. And the *Tō tabi* 唐旅 specified an official assignment in China. These offices represented a very important task, but they were not all considered to be of the same significance, to the extent that the *jige tabi* only held minor prestige, while the *Tō tabi* symbolized the supreme service an official of the royal government could carry out in honor of his king. In other words, the *tabiyaku* was considered an office to be accomplished out of the devotion to the Ryukyuan monarch. The royal government assigned with priority the administration of districts to those officials who in

the course of a specific period of time carefully carried out several appointments as *tabiyaku*. This represents one of the most interesting peculiarities of the Ryukyuan bureaucratic system. Considering the fact that the royal government always came to grips with a complex land redistribution system to the extent that districts were not conferred in perpetuity to the officials and their heirs, but were continually confiscated and reassigned, it was essential for the officials to obtain new missions as *tabiyaku* and other important duties and carry out them with the greatest diligence, since failure to do so would risk the dispossession of lands previously received. Maehira affirms that the bureaucratic arrangement of the kingdom was not a static and immobile system; on the contrary, it was a circular and dynamic structure wherein it was always very important to obtain new posts of high prestige such as that of the travel officer, which was at the same time a service of high symbolic value accomplished in honor of the king, as well as a kind of guarantee that the reconfirmation or the new possession of districts along with the bestowing of awards would be achieved.

At this point, it appears necessary to correlate the dispatch of the Ryukyuan missions to Edo with the institution of the *tabiyaku*. From the study of Maehira we can infer that the missions to Japan represented a significant boost to the career of the officials, even though they were considered of minor prestige with respect to the embassies to Beijing. Kamiya, taking on greater importance Maehira's research, has stressed the fact that for Shuri it was crucial to dispatch missions to Edo insofar as it was an effective means by which to sustain the Ryukyuan administrative system based, precisely, on the distribution of land that depended on the accomplishments of the *tabiyaku*.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Kamiya, *Rekishi no hazama*, pp. 75-76.

The *tabiyaku* system is, thus, considered to be connected to the dispatch of embassies to Edo. This connection was slowly established during the course of the seventeenth century, and thereafter came to constitute a crucial post, along with the missions to Beijing, by which officials could aspire to achieve possession of districts as well as other promotions. This study intends to follow the interpretative lines traced by Maehira and Kamiya on the relation *tabiyaku*/missions to Edo. However, in the genealogical documents connected to the mission of 1634 we could ascertain that already since the dispatch of the first embassy to Japan, even though it was an extemporary and quite different event when compared to the other delegations, it is possible to identify the seeds of a correlation between the appointment of Ryukyuan officials as *tabiyaku* to Japan and their consequent advancement within the royal government.

In conclusion, the Ryukyuan embassies without any doubt were a successful diplomatic ritual to enhance the prestige of the Tokugawa shogun and of the Satsuma daimyo, and were begun as a result of the determination of the Shimazu. Nevertheless, if we reflect on the bureaucratic structure of the kingdom, these missions were also very significant to determine the possession or the maintaining of lands as well as to shape the career of the Ryukyuan government officials. However, from the available documents we cannot deduce with absolute certainty that Shuri had some influence in the institution of these ceremonials. Nevertheless, even if their establishment was effected unilaterally by Satsuma, we cannot deny the fact that their dispatch harmonized perfectly with the practice of *tabiyaku*. Therefore, we can assume that the *Edo dachi* were re-conceived by the royal government as an invaluable occasion to heighten the significance diplomacy held for the small kingdom even more.

1.2. The Ryukyuan embassies of the Hōei and Shōtoku eras

Among all the eighteen Ryukyuan missions, the delegations dispatched in 1710 (Hōei 7) and 1714 (Shōtoku 4) symbolize diplomatic rituals that were very important for several reasons. The number of envoys dispatched in 1710 and 1714 was greater (168 and 170, respectively), than any other embassy. Moreover, there were very significant changes in the ceremonials of these missions. Therefore, the 1710 and 1714 delegations represent a sort of watershed compared to those dispatched previously.

Ryukyu's political status after the epochal changes in China in 1644

In 1644, the Qing took advantage of the decline and political instability of the Ming dynasty to conquer the capital Beijing. After consolidating their power over the rest of China, the Qing began to expand their sphere of influence along the borders of the Chinese empire, and in 1649 formally exhorted Ryukyu to establish with them the same tributary relations that the kingdom had maintained previously with the Ming court. In 1654, the relations between the Qing and Shuri were officially cemented, and the following year the bakufu approved these changes. The bakufu was afraid that if it opposed in any way the establishment of a tributary relationship between Ryukyu and the Qing court, it would have provided the latter with an effective pretext to attack Japan, thus, it decided to authorize such connection.

Let us now analyze how Satsuma and Edo considered the status of Ryukyu after the epoch-making changes that occurred in the international arena. In 1649, with regard to the matter of whether or not to go along with the Qing's request, Satsuma stated to

the royal government that “it is convenient that [this issue] will be settled on the basis of consultations between the *kokushi* (the Ryukyuan king) and the Council of Three. The resident magistrate (*zaiban bugyō* 在番奉行) sent by Satsuma [to Naha] certainly [is not authorized] to obstruct these consultations in any way.”¹¹² Satsuma adduced that “the Ryukyu kingdom since ages has been subordinate to China and Japan; though at the time this family [the Shimazu] was granted [its control], it is not a part of Japan. [Considering these circumstances, it follows that] it is quite difficult for us [Satsuma] to give instructions on this matter. [...] Nevertheless, [we think it is opportune that Ryukyu] establishes relations [with the Qing] so that in the future there will be advantages for the Ryukyu kingdom.”¹¹³ As Tomiyama has pointed out, Satsuma left the final decision regarding the establishment of the tributary relations with the Qing in the hands of the Ryukyuan government.¹¹⁴

On 13 August 1655, with regard to the dispatch by the Qing emperor of a number of officials to Ryukyu with the purpose of establishing tributary relations with the kingdom, the bakufu affirmed that “despite the fact that Ryukyu is a foreign country, since it is put under the command of the lord of Ōsumi [Satsuma], [the bakufu] considers that [this subordination] also goes for Japan. For this reason, if an undesirable fact happened to Ryukyu, it would constitute an injury (*kizu* 瑕) to Japan.”¹¹⁵ In other words, the bakufu leaders were aware of the fact that if the Qing caused problems in the kingdom, this would shortly become a problem for Japan. Then, on 5 October of the same year, the bakufu stated that “if the Ryukyu kingdom interrupted relations with

¹¹² Kagoshimaken Ishin Shiryō Hensanjo, ed., *Kyūki zatsuroku.Tsuiroku* (hereafter *Kyūki zatsuroku.Tsuiroku*), vol. 1, n. 285 (Kagoshima: Kagoshimaken, 1971).

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Tomiyama, *Ryūkyū ōkoku no gaikō to ōken*, p. 73.

¹¹⁵ Meireki 1/7/12. Hanpō kenkyūkai, ed., *Hanpōshū*, vol.8, n. 1228 (Tokyo, Sōbunsha, 1958-1975).

China [the Qing], [for the kingdom] everything would become [very] complicated [in relation to its autonomy].”¹¹⁶ The bakufu, therefore, underlined the fact that the continuation of tributary relations with China was an essential condition to maintain the independence of Ryukyu. The leaders of Edo, consequently, authorized the establishment of tributary relations between the Qing and Ryukyu, and through the mediation of Satsuma ordered Shuri to adopt Manchurian customs, such as the queue or Manchurian clothes, if the new rulers of China expressly requested their use.

Afterwards, in 1676, during the so-called Revolt of the Three Feudatories, a request was sent from Fujian province to Ryukyu for the provision of sulphur “for military reasons.”¹¹⁷ The bakufu instructed Shuri to give into the demands of the Chinese loyalists, showing in this way a stance of indirect support for the three feudatories. Nonetheless, in November 1681, after the armies of the Kangxi emperor had subjugated the rebel forces, the Qing consolidated their authority over the Middle Empire.¹¹⁸

Against the background of these changes within China, on 10 July 1681 Shimazu Mitsuhide, in an oath drawn up in honor of the new shogun, Tokugawa Tsunayoshi, added an appendix which was unprecedented in the protocol of such documents.

In relation to the succession [of the shogunate], the shogun will be honored more and more. And regarding the govern¹¹⁹ [of the fief of Satsuma] I promise not to care about it roughly.

¹¹⁶ Meireki 1/9/6. *Re'chō seido*, n. 1231, (Kagoshima: Kagoshimaken Shiryō Kankōkai, 1967).

¹¹⁷ The Revolt of the Three Feudatories (August 1673-November 1681) was a rebellion led by the three lords of Yunnan, Guandong and Fujian provinces against the Qing dynasty during the reign of the Kangxi emperor.

¹¹⁸ Kamiya, *Taikun gaikō*, p. 187.

¹¹⁹ In the document this word is expressed with shioki 仕置. In the Edo period, the term *shioki* meant governance, control and punishment. Watanabe Hiroshi, *A History of Japanese Political Thought*, p. 47.

Appendix: with respect to the Ryukyu kingdom, even though it disobeyed our command, [I officially promise] to not take part in the plot of such intrigues.¹²⁰

As Kamiya has pointed out, the expression “with respect to the Ryukyu kingdom” in Mitsuhsa’s oath does not refer merely to Ryukyu, but is a phrase that projects onto the Ryukyu Islands the image of a powerful Qing empire, which could have used Ryukyu to plot against Japan.¹²¹ The bakufu, thus, in the course of the epoch-making changes caused by the alternation in court at Beijing, began to wonder how the relations between Ryukyu and Satsuma/Japan would change within this new international scenario, and projecting its own gaze even more toward south started to portray the kingdom with the shadow of the Qing empire on the horizon.

It is opportune now to formulate some considerations from the perspective of Shuri regarding the transition from the Ming to the Qing dynasty. According to studies by Yamada Tetsushi, after 1609, every Ryukyuan king upon his succession to the throne, was required to subscribe to an oath of allegiance to the Satsuma daimyo. In the oaths drawn up by the Ryukyuan kings from Shō Tei (1670) on, it is possible to ascertain a transition from a logic of the “subordination (*fuyōkoku ron* 「附庸国」論),” of Ryukyu to Satsuma, to a logic which puts more emphasis on the “safety of Ryukyu (*Ryūkyū antai ron* 「琉球安泰」論)” owing to Kagoshima support.¹²² Even since the oath of Shō Tei,

¹²⁰ Tenna 1/5/25. *Kyūki zatsuroku.Tsuiroku*, vol. 1, n. 1806.

¹²¹ Kamiya, *Taikun gaikō*, pp. 187-188.

¹²² In the oaths signed by Shō Nei (1611) and Shō Hō (1639) was celebrated the “legitimation of the invasion of Satsuma.” Afterwards, on the occasion of the oaths written by Shō Ken (1647) and Shō Shitsu (1649), was developed the so-called logic of “the succession (of the Ryukyuan king) and of the safety of Ryukyu,” while in the oath drawn by Shō Tei (1670), was glorified the logic of the loyalty of the Ryukyuan king towards the daimyo of Satsuma emphasizing the connection “*kokushi* (namely the king of Ryukyu) and the safety of Ryukyu.” Afterwards, on 4 June 1715, on the occasion of Shō Kei’s oath, there was, eventually, the change of the title of the Ryukyuan king from “*kokushi*” (provincial governor) to that of “*kokuō*” (king). The Ryukyuan king, thus, was allowed by

the subordination of the kingdom to Satsuma was no longer extolled, but instead the Ryukyuan king had received the honorific title of *kokushi* from the Satsuma daimyo and, consequently, realized the stability for its own kingdom.

Furthermore, in the oath of Shō Tei, regarding a possible insubordination of Ryukyu against Satsuma, the political status of dependence of the kingdom was not emphasized, but from then on the Ryukyuan king vowed to respect the instructions received from the lord of Kagoshima meticulously. In other words, within the oaths of the kings, the Ryukyu Islands were not identified as a kingdom directly subordinate to Satsuma, but as a small realm put under the supervision (*kantoku*) of Kagoshima.

Kamiya has stressed the fact that these changes were a consequence of the transition from the Ming to the Qing dynasty in China.¹²³ There is no doubt about the fact that the oaths drawn up by the Ryukyuan monarchs were explicitly conditioned by the authorities of Satsuma. Nevertheless, after the establishment of the Qing court, as we have seen, Kagoshima left the decision whether or not to establish tributary relations with the Qing to the Ryukyus, and the bakufu identified the kingdom as a political entity which could not maintain its autonomy without a relationship with China. Seen in this light, we can assume that the royal government, to which Edo in 1655 had authorized the institution of tributary relations with the Qing, had exerted its influence on Satsuma and thus the passages to the so-called logic of the “safety of the Ryukyu” as well as to the identification of Ryukyu as a kingdom under the supervision of Satsuma, in the oaths from Shō Tei on, constituted a political conquest of great significance for Shuri.

Satsuma to again designate himself as the Ryukyuan monarch. Yamada Tetsushi, “Ryūkyū kokuō no Satsuma hanshu ni tai suru chūsei no ronri ni kansuru kenkyū nooto: ōi keishō katei to kishōmon zensho no kōan,” *Shiryō henshūshitsu kiyō* 24, Okinawa Kenritsu Toshokan Shiryō Henshūshitsu, ed., (Naha: Okinawa Kenritsu Toshokan, 1999), p. 88.

¹²³ Kamiya, “Nichi kankei no inpei,” p. 170.

In fact, as testified by the works of Sai On, one of the most influential political and intellectual figures in the history of the Ryukyu kingdom who lived in the eighteenth century, during the course of the early-modern period Ryukyu came to identify itself as a kingdom not subordinate to, but under the supervision (*kantoku*) of Satsuma.¹²⁴ The oaths of the Ryukyuan monarchs represent therefore a testimony of how the Ryukyu kingdom was constructing its identity in the early-modern period.

In conclusion, it is important to mention the studies of Kamiya concerning the policy of concealment of the real relations between Ryukyu and Japan from the Qing court.¹²⁵ Despite the fact that so far Japanese historiography considered the concealment of Satsuma control over Ryukyu as a political strategy designed and forced upon Shuri by Satsuma, Kamiya has recently proposed a new and very interesting theory.

According to his thesis, in 1683, on the occasion of the arrival of the Chinese mission to Shuri with the purpose of granting the investiture of Shō Tei as the new Ryukyuan king, the royal government's policy of masking the merchants of Satsuma under the veil of "*Tokarajin*," namely people of the Tokara Islands, an archipelago positioned in the south of Kagoshima, began. Until the invasion by Satsuma in 1609, the government of Shuri had asserted its possession of these islands, and Shuri was well aware of the fact that the inhabitants of those isles as well as other Satsuma merchants had direct contact with the Chinese investiture envoys while they were staying in the kingdom, and always supervised such encounters with great interest. The masking of the Kagoshima traders under the veil of the inhabitants of Tokara Islands was conceived by

¹²⁴ Regarding the life, political and social reforms, philosophy and works of Sai On, see Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*.

¹²⁵ Kamiya, "Nichi kankei no inpei."

Shuri in order to attract the greatest number of Satsuma merchant ships when the Chinese envoys had reached the kingdom, without arousing any suspicion from the latter. Within Ryukyu the commerce carried out parallel to the diplomatic investiture ceremonies was called *hanga* 評価. However, in 1719 when the mission of investiture for Shō Kei arrived in the kingdom, the royal government could not accumulate the resources needed to purchase all the commercial goods brought by the Chinese since Kagoshima previously had forbidden the continuation of encounters between the Chinese envoys and the Japanese traders (i.e. “*Tokarajin*”) citing as reason the fact that the Tokara Islands were part of Japan and not of Ryukyu. In 1725, Sai On, who stood out as the most influential political figure of the royal government, wrapped all the relations the kingdom maintained with Japan under the veil of “relations with Tokara,” intending in this way to conceal from the Chinese the real nature of the connection between Ryukyu and Japan. For that reason, Kamiya tends to think that the policy known as *inpei seisaku* 隱蔽政策, namely, the strategy designed to conceal from the Qing court the real relationship between Shuri and Kagoshima/Edo, was a countermeasure conceived by the Ryukyuan government and successively also followed by Kagoshima and Edo.¹²⁶

In the course of the epoch-making changes caused by the dynastic change, Satsuma and the bakufu, though recognizing their control over the kingdom, considered it as a foreign political entity within the *bakuhan* system in view of the fact that they did not have the power to interfere in the relationship between Ryukyu and Qing. Moreover

¹²⁶ It is worthy to note that while Shuri made an effort to fully conceal from the Chinese and in the nineteenth century from the Western powers, too, the true relationship with Kagoshima/Edo, the shogunate since 1792, during the negotiations with Westerners, concealed the subordination of the Ryukyus to Japan but admitted that it maintained diplomatic relations with the kingdom. Therefore, only with regard to the Shuri government we can speak of a fully concealment of its relationship with Japan.

they recognized that the continuation of tributary relations with China was essential for the autonomy of Shuri. From this time on, Kagoshima and Edo's gaze towards south was no longer limited to the Ryukyuan archipelago, but radiated well beyond the horizon as far as to alight on China. The royal government, after Edo had legitimated the establishment of relations with the Qing court, understood the importance of masking the real political status of Ryukyu to the Chinese, and thus, made every effort that all relations between Shuri and the territories situated further north would be labeled under the expression "relations with Tokara." From the beginning of the eighteenth century, Shuri wore the mask of an independent realm with the purpose of continuing tributary relations with the Qing. This strategy was a means of defense in order to preserve its autonomy and, as we will see, it worked until the Westerners intruded in East Asia.

Dialectic between Satsuma and the bakufu against the background of the 1710 mission
On 19 February 1709, the fifth shogun, Tokugawa Tsunayoshi passed away.¹²⁷ In March, the Satsuma daimyo, Shimazu Yoshitaka, according to protocol, officially asked the shogunate authorization for the dispatch of a congratulatory mission from Shuri in honor of Ienobu's succession as the new shogun. Nonetheless, Edo denied the embassy adducing the futility of the missions. This was not the first time the bakufu leaders rejected a request by Satsuma concerning the dispatch of a Ryukyuan embassy. In 1704, on the occasion of the designation of Tokugawa Tsunatoyo (Ienobu) as the heir apparent, Yoshitaka had asked permission to dispatch a mission from Shuri, but the bakufu had

¹²⁷ Hōei 6/1/10.

refused the project for the same reasons.¹²⁸ On March 28, Yoshitaka sent a missive to Ienobu's adviser, Manabe Akifusa, in which he explained the reasons why he deemed it necessary the dispatch of Ryukyuan missions. The memorandum states the following:

The Ryukyu kingdom was put under the subordination [of Kagoshima] ever since the ancestors of the daimyo of Satsuma. Though it is a small country, [the rank order] within the tributary states of the Great China grades Korea [first] and Ryukyu [second] in view of the fact that it has been dispatching a tributary mission to China every two years, and even now it continues to send envoys to Beijing. When there is a succession of the king of Chūzan, [literary officials known as] *kanrin gakushi* 翰林学士, are dispatched in the character of “celestial envoys (*fūōshi* 封王使)” by the Chinese emperor, and numerous military officers also accompany [the mission]. [On that occasion, the Chinese] offer the crown and the official clothes as well as other [gifts to the royal government]. The rituals are certainly officiated [according to Chinese traditional protocol]. The celestial envoys also visit the mausoleum of the former Ryukyuan kings [where] the ceremonials are celebrated. [The Ryukyuan officials] affirm that the [rituals] are performed in the most appropriate form.¹²⁹

The emphasis placed on the right conduct of the rituals aimed at showing the great importance granted to Ryukyu by China. In the same memorandum, Yoshitaka also pointed out his urgent need to be accorded an advancement in rank adducing the fact that the daimyo of Satsuma needed a high status to deal properly with the king of Ryukyu. In fact, while in the past the rank of Iehisa was raised, the rank of Iehisa's successor, Mitsuhsa, was reduced. Since the Ryukyu government regarded the Shimazu

¹²⁸ Kamiya, *Taikun gaikō*, p. 137.

¹²⁹ Hōei 6/2/x. *Kyūki zatsuroku. Tsuiroku*, vol. 2, n. 2756, 1972.

in a diminished light, he solicited a rank advancement.¹³⁰ Regarding the relationship between Shuri and Edo, the Shimazu made their case as follows:

The foreign countries which [dispatch their envoys] to celebrate the [Tokugawa shogun] are Korea and Ryukyu. Korea expresses its respect in the character of a friendly neighboring country. In view of the fact that Ryukyu was put under our control by means of the use of force by our ancestors, [its envoys] have been coming [to Edo] to pay homage. Moreover, from the viewpoint of the shogun, since he counts the king of a foreign country [among his] subjects, it is rational to make [the latter] express his respect [to his lord].¹³¹

With the purpose of obtaining authorization from the bakufu to continue to dispatch Ryukyuan embassies, Satsuma, on one side, emphasized the political status of Ryukyu within the context of East Asia, and, on the other, underlined the subordinate status of the Ryukyuan king to the Tokugawa shogun. For Satsuma, thus, it was very important that Ryukyu maintained its position of a foreign country within the *baku-han* system, and in this scenario the Ryukyuan missions would have enhanced the authority of the Tokugawa bakufu within and without the borders of Japan.

Though it is impossible to ascertain with certainty the reasons why the bakufu did not consider the Ryukyuan embassies to be a diplomatic ritual that it could not renounce,¹³² to receive the Ryukyuan envoys, both the gratitude and congratulatory

¹³⁰ Hōei 6/2/x. Ibid., n. 2756.

¹³¹ Ibid., n. 2764.

¹³² According to Yokoyama Manabu, one of the reasons why, until that time, the Edo leaders had not received the Ryukyuan embassies with all the due formalities, was due to the fact that the bakufu considered these rituals under its own authority like the commerce carried out at Nagasaki and Dejima by the Chinese and Dutch merchants respectively. Yokoyama, *Ryūkyū koku shisetsu*, p. 62. Furthermore, we can assume that the shogunate considered these missions on a par with the system

missions, was an occasion—along with the reception of the *Chōsen tsūshinshi*—which was unequalled to enhance the prestige and majesty of the Tokugawa shogunate in the domestic and external arena. Kamiya has argued that it was the second rank held by Ryukyu within the Chinese world order and claimed by Satsuma that made the bakufu change its position with respect to the dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassies. For this reason, from that moment on, the shogunate could have never ignored the status of tributary relationships between Ryukyu and China, since it was precisely that relation which helped maintain Tokugawa prestige.¹³³

Concerning the bakufu's change of heart, on 3 April 1709 Manabe Akifusa expressed himself in the following terms towards Satsuma.

[Regarding the dispatch of diplomatic missions] Ryukyu has special [and different] reasons than Korea, since the most significant [function of the Ryukyuan embassies] is that of enhancing the prestige of Japan, they have to be realized in accordance with precedents.¹³⁴

From then on, the Ryukyuan missions would represent a very important political instrument to translate the ideology that depicted a civilized Japan surrounded by barbarian countries into diplomatic rituals of high symbolic value visible by a wider public. It seems opportune to interpret the above-mentioned expression “Ryukyu has special [and different] reasons than Korea” as a phrase with political imprint through which Manabe—along the lines suggested in the Satsuma memorandum—made use define the status of Ryukyu in relation to the Tokugawa bakufu, namely that unlike

of alternate attendance accomplished by every daimyo, and thus, they were not considered essential for the *taikun* diplomacy.

¹³³ Kamiya, “Nichi kankei no inpei.”

¹³⁴ Hōei 6/2/24. *Kyūki zatsuroku*. *Tsuiroku*, vol. 2, n. 2764.

Korea it was, actually, subordinate to Japan.

As a consequence, on 11 January 1711, on the occasion of the last visit to Edo castle by the Ryukyuan envoys (a ceremonial protocol known as *oitoma no gi* 御暇之儀), the missive signed by the senior Councilors and addressed to the king of Chūzan which was handed to the ambassadors mentioned that with the purpose of “communicating the succession to the throne of your respectable *han* (藩), especially you have dispatched the prince Tomigusuku and offered gifts to the shogunate, showing in this way what your true feelings are.”¹³⁵ The bakufu, hence, defined Ryukyu as a respectable *han* (domain), that is, a kingdom subordinate to Japan.

On April 3, Manabe Akifusa approved Satsuma’s request, and on July 3, the bakufu, in accordance with the traditional protocol, ordered Kagoshima to dispatch a Ryukyuan mission.¹³⁶ On November 16, Satsuma issued the following order to the royal government:

The congratulatory mission is the main one, to which has to be joined the mission of gratitude [Shō Tei had passed away on 18 August 1709; the following year Shō Eki succeeded to the throne], thus, it is ordered to dispatch only one large-scale embassy. It is opportune to reduce the members of the two missions by half. The musicians will be the same for both delegations.

Concerning the aspect of the embassy:

The curtains [to be used in front of the] lodging houses [where the Ryukyuan envoys are hosted] along the way must not be of Japanese style, we ask you to replace them by [curtains] of

¹³⁵ Hōei 7/11/23. *TI*, vol. 1, p. 95.

¹³⁶ Hōei 6/6/7.

the kingdom which should be set in typical local designs. Wouldn't it be opportune to employ *shuchin* [satin on which a multi-colored design is quilted] and tabby [a kind of waved silk]?

The decoration of the long swords has to be of brocade. [With regard to this issue we order you] to investigate [this matter] closely.

Also, the decoration of the lances has to be the same as that of the Qing's pikes. Fabricate it after you have consulted with Ryukyuan who have come back from China.

Besides that, all the kit [you are going to use] during the trip by sea and land must be similar to that of a foreign style. Produce [all the equipment] so that it will not be confused with that of Japanese style.

For the rain gear make reference to the above-mentioned instructions.¹³⁷

From these directives we can infer that Satsuma ordered Shuri to emphasize the foreignness of its missions in their complex appearance. As an extension of this policy, in 1710 Satsuma brought about changes to the titles of the envoys so that their designations would appear closer to Chinese posts. From this time on, the ambassador was called *seishi* and the vice ambassador *fukushi*. This practice of sinization of the principal ambassadors was completed by the time of the next mission dispatched in 1714.¹³⁸

On 6 January 1711,¹³⁹ Misato Chōtei, the royal prince designated to pay respect for the appointment of Tokugawa Ienobu to shogun, and, Tomigusuku Chōkyō, the prince in charge of paying homage to the shogunate for the enthronement of Shō Eki as the new Ryukyuan king, went to Edo castle for the first visit to the shogun. On that

¹³⁷ Hōei 6/9/26. *Kyūki zatsuroku. Tsuiroku*, vol. 2, n. 2861.

¹³⁸ Yokoyama, *Ryūkyū koku shisetsu*, p. 61.

¹³⁹ Hōei 7/11/18.

occasion, for the first time in the history of the Ryukyuan embassies, the bakufu reserved a warm welcome to the Ryukyuan envoys. The following document could be considered to clarify the rethoric employed by Satsuma with the purpose of persuading the bakufu.

[...] The king of Chūzan since generations has been receiving [the investiture of] the title of king from the Great China. Though he is [considered in Japan] a provincial governor (*kokushi* 国司) of a foreign country since [Ryukyu] obeys to the military power of this clan [the Shimazu], if the fact that the envoys who come from such a far away [kingdom] are received lightly was heard from foreign countries, in view of the fact that [this would constitute the object] of critics which would throw us in an uneasy [disposition], [we have asked that] several aspects [of the missions] will be changed.¹⁴⁰

According to Satsuma's rhetoric, if foreign countries heard that the bakufu accorded an inappropriate reception to the Ryukyuan envoys who came from afar, disregarding in this way the traditional Confucian protocol which set that the civilized countries must receive the missions of the barbarian states warmly, this would give rise to various criticisms which could put Edo in a bad light. For this reason, it was necessary to improve the formalities concerning the protocol of the embassies and grant an appropriate reception to the Ryukyuan envoys.

On the occasion of the mission of 1710, the bakufu, moreover, promoted Yoshitaka, who had accompanied the Ryukyuan embassy to Edo, from the rank of Junior Fourth to that of Senior Fourth. The political success of Satsuma was complete.

¹⁴⁰ *Re'chō seido*, n. 789.

The Shimazu succeeded in making the embassies continue and, from that moment on, on the occasion of every Ryukyuan mission, the bakufu promoted the rank of the Satsuma daimyo, who had carefully escorted the ambassadors of Ryukyu, a kingdom extremely important within the Chinese world order to Edo.

Changes in the mission of 1714

The embassy of 1714, like that of 1710, was both a congratulatory mission (in honor of Tokugawa Ietsugu who had succeeded in 1713) and a delegation of gratitude (for the enthronement of Shō Kei in 1713) and thus a large-scale mission was dispatched and was received warmly by the bakufu. Nonetheless, we can point out a number of remarkable differences with respect to the 1710 embassy. The political design of Arai Hakuseki can be seen behind these changes.

Certainly the most significant difference in the delegation of 1714 was the change in the title of the shogun. From 1649 to 1710 *Nihon koku taikun* (the *taikun* of Japan) was used in the missives sent by the king of Chūzan to the senior Councilors, in 1714, on the other hand, *Nihon koku ō* 日本国王 (the king of Japan) appears.¹⁴¹ In 1711, Arai Hakuseki exercised his influence in order to bring about substantial amendments to the protocol related to the reception of the Korean embassies. Among the various modifications, the most relevant reform was a change in the shogun's title employed in correspondence between the Korean king and the Tokugawa shogun: *Nihon koku taikun*,

¹⁴¹ On 20 April 1643, the Ryukyuan king, Shō Ken, sent a letter to the senior Councilors in which the Tokugawa shogun was addressed as *kubōsama* 公方様. On 18 February 1645, after the first Ryukyuan embassy had returned safely, Shō Ken forwarded a missive to the senior Councilors in which he expressed his happiness for the successful realization of the mission. In the subsequent reply sent by the senior Councilors, they referred to the shogun as *taikun*. From then on, the title employed to designate the shogun in correspondence between Ryukyu and the bakufu was that of *taikun*. For further details regarding this matter, see Tomiyama, "Edo bakufu;" Kamiya, *Taikun gaikō*, p. 44.

used since 1636, was replaced by *Nihon koku ō*. With this maneuver Hakuseki aimed at turning the Tokugawa shogun in a proper royal monarch. The Code for the Imperial Court and Court Nobility (*Kinchū narabi ni kuge shohatto* 禁中并公家諸法度) drawn up in 1615 by Edo authorities stipulated, in fact, that the *tennō* (the Japanese emperor) and the shogun were the two sovereigns of Japan. Therefore, the political plan of Hakuseki aspired to enhance the shogun's position by making him the only king of Japan, who had received imperial endorsement to govern. In addition, according to Hakuseki, the title of *taikun* was equated in China to the Son of Heaven and in view of the fact that in Japan the position equal to the Chinese emperor was that of *tennō*, the title of *taikun* was not appropriate for the head of the shogunate. The change from the title of *taikun* to that of *Nihon koku ō* that we see in the letter of the king of Chūzan to the senior Councilors in 1714, was hence a direct projection of the “return”¹⁴² from the title of *taikun* to that of *Nihon koku ō* in the letter of State of the Korean king to the bakufu in 1711 by the *Chōsen tsūshinshi*.

However, with regard to the bakufu's relation with Ryukyu, there was another significant “return” of a title used in the past. In 1634, on the occasion of the first Ryukyuan embassy, when the bakufu had evaluated Ryukyu as a foreign kingdom within the *baku-han* system, Edo recognized the authority of Satsuma over the small archipelago and the revenue of Ryukyu was inserted in the Shimazu's cadastral registers. As a consequence, the following year Satsuma begun styling the king of Chūzan “Ryukyu provincial governor (*Ryūkyū kokushi*)” and, since then, the Ryukyuan king had always been referred to as *kokushi* in the correspondence between Kagoshima and Shuri.

¹⁴² In view of the fact that in the correspondence between the Korean king and the Tokugawa shogun on the occasion of the Korean missions of 1607, 1617 and 1624, the title of *Nihon koku ō* was used to designate the shogun, it is more appropriate to consider this change as a “return” than merely a “change.”

Nonetheless, in July 1712, Shimazu Yoshitaka ordered the Shō royal family to refer to the king of Ryukyu with the title of *Chūzan ō* in the correspondence between Satsuma and the kingdom, thus marking the return of the designation employed until 1634.

According to Kamiya, it seems opportune to consider this maneuver as an example of the political design of Hakuseki to heighten the military head as the only king of Japan. The change from the title of *taikun* to that of *Nihon koku ō*, and of the title of *kokushi* to that of king of Chūzan, therefore, must be reconstructed jointly.¹⁴³ In other words, from Hakuseki's point of view, it was more appropriate that the *Nihon koku ō* received envoys of the king of Chūzan, instead of from a *kokushi*.

However, in 1717, when the reign of the eighth Tokugawa shogun, Yoshimune, began, the bakufu determined that with regard to relations with Korea, it was necessary to return to the title *taikun* for designating the shogun in the letter of State exchanged by the Korean king and the head of the shogunate. In relations with Ryukyu, on the contrary, the title of *taikun* was not re-established. Moreover, the designation of *kokushi* for the Ryukyuan king was also not reverted to.

Another very important reform was a change in style of the letters sent by the Ryukyuan king to the senior Councilors. In this case, too, the artificer of the transformation was Arai Hakuseki. After the invasion by Satsuma in 1609, a change in style from *kanbun* (classical Chinese) to *wabun* (Japanese style) can be observed in the missives forwarded by the Ryukyuan king to the *rōjū*. Moreover, although until that time the king of Chūzan had used the era names of the Chinese calendar to indicate dates in his letters, from 1609, dates were not referred to the Chinese era any longer, and the seal of Shuri (*Shuri no in* 首里之印) was replaced by the typical Japanese seal

¹⁴³ Kamiya, *Taikun gaikō*, pp. 141-143.

called *kaō* 花押. Nevertheless, since in 1645 the title of *taikun* was used for the first time to designate the shogun in the missive sent by the senior Councilors to the Ryukyuan king, writing style reverted once more to *kanbun* from 1649 in correspondence between the king of Chūzan to the *rōjū*, a situation which lasted until the missives sent by the kings Shō Eki and Shō Kei, on the occasion of the embassies of 1710 and 1714 respectively.¹⁴⁴ Opposing this practice, Hakuseki ordered that the letters from the Ryukyuan king would once again be written in *wabun*.

The bakufu, through the mediation of Satsuma, thus, prohibited Shuri to express in Chinese ideograms the list of gifts and the dictions on the boxes containing the presents for the shogun's mother (*ichiisama*) and wife (*midai dokoro*). Instead of Chinese ideograms the Japanese *hiragana* alphabet had to be used. Furthermore, in the missives addressed to the senior Councilors it was ordained that such terms as *kikoku* 貴国, *taikun* 大君 and *taichō* 台聽 should no longer be used.¹⁴⁵

From this, we may conclude that the bakufu had ordered the king of Chūzan to draw up the missives to Edo leaders in Japanese style in order to clarify and stress the real nature of the relationship between Ryukyu and Japan to the royal government, despite the fact that Edo had accorded the Ryukyuan envoys a more appropriate ceremonial. In other words, because the Ryukyu kingdom was subordinate to Japan, the correspondence with Edo should be drawn up in *wabun* style. Considering the fact that, unlike Korea, Ryukyu was no longer granted permission to use the title of *taikun* when referring to the shogun, we can infer that, with regard to official correspondence, the bakufu by and large ceased to consider the Ryukyu kingdom as a foreign country from 1714.

¹⁴⁴ Tomiyama, "Edo bakufu."

¹⁴⁵ *Kyūki zatsuroku. Tsūiroku*, vol. 3, n. 434, n. 469.

In light of the reforms and changes occurring on the occasion of the embassies of 1710 and 1714, I will try to illustrate how the way in which the Ryukyuan missions were conceived by Satsuma and the bakufu changed.

In 1634, the lords of Satsuma, the Shimazu, were able to obtain from Edo the inclusion of the Ryukyu revenue into their cadastral registers by means of the invention of a new diplomatic ritual. Moreover, owing to the dispatch of the embassies—which, as we have seen, were conceived of on the model of the Korean missions—the Shimazu came to possess an effective means to bolster their prestige towards the bakufu and the other fiefs, i.e. by being the only daimyo who could boast the subordination of a foreign country. Satsuma, therefore, used the missions from Shuri to show to the rest of Japan its prestige. The Shimazu shaped their identity as lords of the powerful external fief of Satsuma and as rulers over a foreign country. Nevertheless, when in 1704 and 1709 the bakufu refused the request to dispatch an embassy adducing the futility of the embassies, it became vital for the Shimazu to conceive a new function for the Ryukyuan missions. It was in a scenario like this that Satsuma asserted that Ryukyu was a small kingdom, but that within the sino-centric sphere it bolstered a very high rank second only to Korea. Yet, from the perspective of the shogun, the king of Chūzan was one of his vassals. Kagoshima leaders were able to tip over the passive stance the bakufu held toward the Ryukyuan embassies by emphasizing the high status Ryukyu had within the Chinese system of investiture and tribute. From 1710, Kagoshima ordered the Ryukyuan missions stress their foreignness, and, as a consequence, Satsuma created a *mise-en-scene* by which the embassies appeared as diplomatic delegations coming from Ryukyu, a tributary state of the Qing court.¹⁴⁶ Satsuma, thus, found a way to continue the dispatch

¹⁴⁶ Kamiya, *Taikun gaikō*, p. 139.

of the Ryukyuan embassies and beginning with the mission of 1710, the bakufu advanced the rank of the Satsuma daimyo on the occasion of every *Edo dachi*. These promotions are considered as the social advancement of the Shimazu through the missions from Shuri.

As we have seen, until 1709, the bakufu not only had not considered it appropriate to receive the Ryukyuan missions with due formalities, but it also had not appraised the delegations from Shuri as rituals essential for the *taikun* diplomacy.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, after Satsuma intercession, Edo leaders realized how useful it was to consider the Ryukyuan embassies from a broader perspective. Edo reevaluated the thesis advanced by Satsuma from its own point of view and asserted that from then on the most significant role of the Ryukyuan missions should be that of enhancing the prestige of the Tokugawa shogun. The bakufu, hence, used the delegations from Shuri to translate the ideology in which Japan was conceived as the core of its own interstate order into diplomatic rituals of high symbolic value. Since the prestige of the shogun derived from the fact that he received missions from Ryukyu, which in turn was a very important tributary state of the Qing court, the bakufu could no longer ignore the tributary relations between Shuri and Beijing.

In 1695, the Genroku (1688-1704) silver coin, named after the era in which it was minted by Edo authorities, suffered a consistent deflation to the extent that it decreased from a value of eighty per cent to sixty-four per cent with respect to coins minted during the Keichō era (1596-1615). Afterwards, silver coins minted by the bakufu were repeatedly devalued and, in 1712, when the fourth coinage of the Hōei era was minted, the silver inserted in the new coin amounted to a mere twenty per cent of the Keichō

¹⁴⁷ Kamiya, *Rekishi no hazama*, p. 71.

coin. This depreciation also caused difficulties to the tributary relations between the Qing and Ryukyu. In the same year, the government of Shuri, through the mediation of Satsuma, pleaded with the bakufu that the silver coins to be carried to China for trade, (coins known as *totōgin* 渡唐銀) would be re-minted prior to departure in order to obtain the same quality as the Genroku coins. In 1713, the bakufu agreed to Ryukyu's suggestion adducing the necessity to maintain relations of investiture and tribute between Qing and Ryukyu.¹⁴⁸ On one side, Edo began to consider the Ryukyuan missions as a valuable instrument to heighten its authority and for the first time received the envoys with due respect. In this new picture, however, the bakufu could not disregard the tributary relations between Qing and Ryukyu, and in the name of this relationship the bakufu even came to satisfy the request for the appreciation of the silver coin presented by Shuri. On the other hand, as we have seen, in 1710 Edo leaders defined Ryukyu as a respectable *han*, and in 1714 ordered the king of Chūzan to draw his letters addressed to the senior Councilors in Japanese style. We may consider that through these maneuvers the bakufu aimed at making clear to the royal government that—despite of the respect reserved to the embassies—the relationship between Japan and Ryukyu was that of ruler and subject.

The reforms of 1710-1714 seen from the perspective of Shuri

The royal government of Shuri was ordered by Satsuma to dispatch congratulatory and gratitude embassies to Edo. Furthermore, in 1709 Satsuma gave instructions aimed at emphasizing “the foreignness” of the missions. With regard to these directives issued by Kagoshima in 1709, we have already mentioned that previous studies have highlighted a

¹⁴⁸ Kamiya, “Nichi kankei no inpei,” p. 165.

general tendency to interpret them as Satsuma's intent to impose onto the Ryukyuan envoys to adopt Chinese clothes, to prevent them to speak in Japanese, and to force them to appear foreigners even in their behavior.¹⁴⁹

Concerning the orders transmitted by Satsuma to Shuri on 28 October 1709,¹⁵⁰ Tomiyama Kazuyuki argues that Kagoshima did not “impose” the adoption of clothes in a foreign style onto the Ryukyuan envoys, but ordered them to “emphasize” the foreignness of the equipment of the mission in their complex appearance. In particular, Tomiyama states that in the directives issued by Satsuma there are no instructions related to the clothes of the envoys. Moreover, we must not forget the fact that for ages the official robes of the king and the most influential posts of the royal government were Chinese, received as gifts from the Chinese court in the course of tributary relations. Besides, still according to Tomiyama, it appears necessary to correlate the orders of Satsuma of 1709 with a memorandum drawn up by Kagoshima leaders in 1681 (Enpō 9).¹⁵¹ This document is a record with reference to the preparations of the congratulatory mission in honor of Tsunayoshi which had been planned for 1682. It was the last embassy before the reforms of the 1710 and 1714 delegations took place. According to this entry, Satsuma leaders ordered to improve the quality of the gifts to present in Edo, those addressed to the secondary members of the bakufu in particular. Besides, since during the previous missions the clothes of the minor envoys and the equipment of the horses were considered inappropriate, Kagoshima ordered their improvement. Recently, in fact, Edo had profoundly changed compared with the past. It had become a splendid and refined city that had risen as the center of social and political

¹⁴⁹ *Naha-shi shi, shiryō hen*, daiichi kan ni.

¹⁵⁰ Hōei 6/9/26.

¹⁵¹ Tomiyama, “‘Edo nobori’ kara ‘Edo dachi’ he,” p. 61.

relations in Japan. Therefore, it was necessary that the aspect of the Ryukyuan missions would conform to the splendor of the shogunal capital.¹⁵² As we can grasp from this interesting record, on the occasion of the final mission of the seventeenth century, Satsuma leaders were concerned about the poor quality of the secondary envoys' clothing. However, this matter was related to the necessity to adjust the appearance of the missions to the magnificence of the city of Edo, thus it was not a political question of imposing Chinese or Ryukyuan clothes.

According to Tomiyama, the current theory of Kagoshima coercion for the foreign (Chinese) style of the Ryukyuan envoys is without foundation, and the instructions issued in 1709 by Satsuma concerning the foreignness of the embassies (in their complex appearance), should be interpreted as an extension of the above-mentioned entry drawn up in 1681.¹⁵³ The thesis argued by Tomiyama is new and it seems reasonable that the directives related to the appearance of the embassies issued in 1681 found a consistent continuation on the instructions enacted in the course of the mission of 1710.¹⁵⁴

Among the special effects deployed by Satsuma there is no trace of the imposition of Chinese clothes. However, it is well known that Ryukyuan envoys wore clothes which the kingdom had received from the Chinese court and we cannot negate the fact that it was Satsuma who ordered the Ryukyuan envoys to make themselves appear exotic and foreign when in Japan. Moreover, it is important to add that during the reforms of 1710

¹⁵² *Kyūki zatsuroku. Tsūiroku*, vol. 1, n. 1800.

¹⁵³ Tomiyama, “‘Edo nobori’ kara ‘Edo dachi’ he,” p. 62.

¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, from a political viewpoint, it also appears necessary to keep in mind the perspective of Kamiya, who has pointed out that from 1709 Satsuma succeeded in creating a *mise-en-scene* by which the Ryukyuan missions came to appear as diplomatic embassies coming from Ryukyu, a tributary state of the Qing emperors. In view of the fact that from the eighteenth century the most important aim became the enhancement of the shogun's prestige, it seems reasonable that Satsuma had thought to turn the scenic effect of the embassies into a greater show.

and 1714 the bakufu issued many orders concerning the appearance of Japanese officials' clothes as well as of the audience on the occasion of the visits to Edo castle of the envoys, as a procedure to accord a more respectable reception to the Ryukyuan embassy.¹⁵⁵ In other words, the changes in appearance of the Ryukyuan embassies taking place since 1709 were the result of an overall refinement of the "situational communication" which interested not merely the Ryukyuan side, but embraced the bakufu and Satsuma as well.¹⁵⁶

However, precisely in virtue of the fact that Kagoshima had ordered Ryukyu to emphasize the exoticism of the missions, the Ryukyuan envoys appeared on the Japanese stage as foreign ambassadors coming from a Chinese tributary country. The clothes displayed by the most prestigious Ryukyuan ambassadors in Japan, as we have already said, were Chinese dresses received as gifts from China, while the minor envoys wore traditional Ryukyuan clothing. From Shuri's perspective, an essential aspect of the missions was to make Ryukyu appear to the eyes of all Japanese as a foreign country with the purpose of enjoying more freedom from its subordination to Satsuma and Edo. This viewpoint, which certainly contributed to maintain the autonomy and shape the identity of the Ryukyu kingdom with respect to Japan, represents one of the multiple projections originating from the dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo, as well as one of the ultimate expressions of Ryukyuan subjectivity to the extent that the government of Shuri displayed its capacity of adaptation and made the most of

¹⁵⁵ For changes in the clothing of the shogun and other bakufu officials, see the section related to the ceremonies taking place in Edo in Miyagi Eisho, *Ryūkyū shisha*.

¹⁵⁶ According to William Roosen a "situational communication" is a communication which occurs as a result of the circumstances of that occasion, such as the physical layout of the surroundings or the deployment of a great variety of elements as music, rich clothing, high personages, rare and expensive gifts, all put together to show the importance of the event. William Roosen, "Early Modern Diplomatic Ceremonial: A System Approach," *The Journal of Modern History* 52, n. 3 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Sept. 1980), pp. 467-468.

Satsuma's impositions.

Kamiya argues that the Ryukyu government dispatched missions to Edo against the background of its tributary relationship with the Qing. In addition, Shuri made most of Satsuma's orders relating to the appearance of the missions and, through the embassies of congratulation and gratitude, succeeded in preserving its identity as a "foreign country" within the *baku-han* system.¹⁵⁷

Without any doubt it was imperative for Ryukyu to maintain tributary relations with the Qing and to remain ranked second, after Korea, among the Chinese tributary countries. And it was against this background that Shuri sent missions to Edo. Kamiya's interpretation certainly makes sense intuitively, but there is no proof in the documentary sources of the Ryukyuan government's attempt to preserve its own identity through the dispatch of embassies to Edo. Let us therefore focus on more concrete evidence.

As we have seen, the dispatch of the Ryukyuan delegations harmonized perfectly with the practice of *tabi yaku*, which was considered the highest service an official could accomplish in honor of his king. For Shuri, hence, the missions to Edo likewise represented diplomatic rituals that were essential to support the political-bureaucratic structure of the kingdom other than the career of its officials.

In 1667, Regent (in Japanese *sessei* 摂政, in Okinawan *shisshii*) Haneji Chōshū (Shō Shōken) issued a corpus of new regulations with regard to the formation of Ryukyuan government officials.¹⁵⁸ These instructions are very closely linked to the post of *tabi yaku*:

¹⁵⁷ Kamiya, *Rekishi no hazama*, p. 77.

¹⁵⁸ For a detailed examination of the political design along with the reforms carried out by Shō Shōken, see Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*.

Memorandum

Study, arithmetic, the art of writing, the art of recitation [of native music], the art of medicine, culinary art, the protocols, horse riding, Chinese music, the art of calligraphy, the tea ceremony, the art of flower arrangement.

Young [Ryukyuan] must always be acquainted with the above arts. Service [carried out] in honor of the *kokushi* [the Ryukyuan king] is the most important [office]. If someone was not acquainted with even just one of those arts, even if he belongs to [a clan of high] lineage, since for unavoidable [reasons] he would not be appointed [to work for influential authorities], we pass on [these instructions] in advance so that you can be [well] aware of it.

23rd day of the 3rd Month

Haneji, Mafuni, Inoha.¹⁵⁹

As we can deduce from this document, all these arts constituted essential eruditions and skills for the young of Shuri who wished to gain access to the royal government, especially those who aspired to carry out diplomatic duties as *tabi yaku*. As Kamiya has observed, Haneji Chōshū ordered to refine the above-mentioned arts keeping well in mind what the diplomatic protocol between Ryukyu and Satsuma/the bakufu was.¹⁶⁰ From this angle, we can also infer that for the Ryukyuan envoys to Edo it had become essential to acquire a high degree of refinement in Chinese and Japanese studies.

We have already sketched the composition of the envoys as a complex system comprising various units, inside of which there were hierarchic relations that can be defined as lord-assistants. In connection to this subject, Sugimura Yukinori has demonstrated that the greater unit which headed the whole mission was termed *tabi*

¹⁵⁹ The date in the Gregorian calendar is 14 June 1667. Okinawaken Okinawa Shiryō Henshūshitsu, ed., *Shūri ōfu shioki*, zenkindai 1, (Naha: Okinawaken Kyōiku Iinkai, 1981), p. 24.

¹⁶⁰ Kamiya, *Rekishi no hazama*, p. 76.

yakusho 旅役所, which was lead by the *fukushi*, the vice ambassador. Rather than the *seishi*, the ambassador, who reached Japan as representative of the king and carried out an essentially symbolic function, the embassies were lead by the *tabi yakusho*, which, under the command of the *fukushi*, was responsible of managing all the aspects of the delegation, including negotiations and consultations with Satsuma, financial matters and other important issues.¹⁶¹

The process which brought about the establishment of the *tabi yakusho* began on the occasion of the dispatch of the first embassies in the seventeenth century and gradually had reached its final form at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Considering the fact that the majority of those who travelled to Edo as vice ambassador, were later nominated to the Council of Three, there can be no doubt about the fact that for the Shuri government the missions to Edo were extremely important diplomatic rituals.¹⁶²

Because from Shuri's perspective the embassies were important with regard to the practice of *tabi yaku*, it seems reasonable to think that, when the bakufu twice refused Satsuma's request for sending missions at the beginning of the eighteenth century, this did not only cause concern for Kagoshima, but caused apprehension to the royal government leaders as well.¹⁶³

As mentioned before, in August 1712, the royal government through the mediation of Satsuma requested approval from Edo to remint the silver coins bound for

¹⁶¹ Sugimura Yukinori, "Ryūkyū shisetsu," pp. 117-118.

¹⁶² In addition, as we can deduce from the *Shōke monjo*, for Ryukyuan commoners it was extremely important to prove that in the past they had taken part in missions to Satsuma or Edo as *tabi yaku* when requesting the Shuri government for permission to keep their own genealogical records. Duties accomplished in Japan were highly valued and could serve as a means through which Ryukyuan people could advance to the status of samurai. See Naha-shi Rekishi Hakubutsukan, ed., *Shōke monjo* 453.

¹⁶³ Kamiya, *Rekishi no hazama*, p. 76.

China for trade. The following year the bakufu gave into Shuri's request adducing the necessity of preserving tributary relations between Qing and Ryukyu. From 1710 on, therefore, the bakufu could not ignore the relationship between China and the Ryukyu kingdom, since it was precisely the existence of that connection that contributed to enhancing the prestige of the Tokugawa shogun by receiving the Ryukyuan embassies in Edo. We can assume, on the other hand, that Shuri had re-interpreted subjectively the new vision that the Edo leaders had shaped of the relations between China and Ryukyu, and used this vision in such a way that the bakufu would continue to legitimate the significance of those relations. In other words, for Shuri to send tribute regularly to the Chinese emperor was essential for the autonomy of the kingdom.¹⁶⁴ And in this context, the dispatch of Ryukyuan missions to Edo in a "foreign" or "Qing" fashion became a means through which the royal government could preserve its independence from Japan.

1.3. Ryukyuan embassies in the nineteenth century

Since the main part of this project will be dedicated to the study of the postponement and the subsequent conclusion of the Ryukyuan missions after 1850, it here seems

¹⁶⁴ This policy was seriously threatened by the Qing emperors's suggestion to exempt the Ryukyuan king from sending tribute on several occasions during the course of the eighteenth century. In 1726 the Qing emperor exempted Ryukyu of its duty to present tribute that year as a sign of gratitude for the sincerity and loyalty manifested by the kingdom during the previous missions. In November 1730, king Shō Kei, adducing the vital necessity of maintaining a high rank within the Chinese world order, i.e. second only to Korea, officially asked the Chinese court to cancel the exemption granted. In 1734, the request of the royal government was met and the exemption was removed. Nonetheless, in 1740-44 and 1756-58, the Qing emperor again bestowed a tribute exemption. Finally, in 1788, the royal government was faced once again with possible exemption of the tribute. However, through its own diplomatic and rethoric ability the kingdom succeeded in removing once and for all this manifestation of Chinese benevolence and in continuing to regularly send tribute missions to the Qing court. This was an essential condition for the preservation of the autonomy of the Ryukyu kingdom. For a detailed treatment of this matter, see Tomiyama, *Ryūkyū ōkoku no gaikō to ōken*; Kamiya, "Nichi kankei no inpei," p. 165. And Kamiya, *Rekishhi no hazama*, p. 77.

necessary to investigate how the Ryukyuan delegations were perceived by the bakufu, Satsuma and Shuri during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Considerations of Edo

The Korean missions reached Edo for the last time in 1764 (Hōreki 14) while the last Korean mission to visit Japan was the *Tsushima ekichi heirei* 対馬易地聘礼, dispatched in 1811 (Bunka 8) and limited to the fief of Tsushima. After 1811, the Ryukyuan missions, therefore, became *de facto* the only diplomatic embassies visiting Japan. As we have seen, the missions from Shuri were an effective means to heighten the prestige of the shogun, and in view of the fact that only these missions could satisfy this function, it is not difficult to assume that they were assigned more importance by the bakufu. In fact, Edo leaders, when the dispatch of the Korean missions came to an end, in 1832 (Tenpō 3) for the first time imposed a tax known as *kuniyakukin* 国役金 (provincial taxes) to the eight provinces—both *goryō* 御料 (i.e. belonging to the shogunate) and *shiryō* 私領 (i.e. belonging to daimyo)—of Musashi, Sagami, Izu, Suruga, Tōtōmi, Mikawa, Mino and Ōmi, all located along the Tōkaidō, adducing the dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassy planned for that same year.¹⁶⁵

Previously, the shogunate had ordered all fifteen Tōkaidō provinces (i.e. Ōmi, Mino, Mikawa, Tōtōmi, Suruga, Izu, Sagami, Musashi, Yamashiro, Yamato, Izumi, Kawachi, Settsu, Tanba and Harima) to pay the *kuniyakukin* tax on the occasion of the visit of the Korean missions.¹⁶⁶ Kamiya argues that the warm reception granted by Edo to the Ryukyuan embassies reveals that, *de facto*, the missions from Shuri had replaced

¹⁶⁵ Actually, according to *Tsūkō ichiran*, the *kuniyakukin* tax for a Ryukyuan mission was first imposed in 1806. *TI*, vol. 1, p. 237.

¹⁶⁶ Kamiya, *Satsuma to Ryūkyū*, p. 50.

the symbolic and political functions of those from Korea.

In addition, from 1796 the bakufu started to bestow loans to Satsuma—in response to pressure from the latter—on the occasion of every Ryukyuan embassy. In fact, from the end of the eighteenth century, a silver route starting in Edo and passing via Kagoshima before ending in Shuri was set up on the occasion of the Ryukyuan missions.¹⁶⁷

The imposition of taxes for the country in the name of the *Edo dachi*, as well as the bestowal of loans to the Shimazu so they could facilitate the dispatch of the Ryukyuan missions, at a time in which first the Korean missions to Edo (1764) came to an end and next those to Japan (1811), can be taken as significant indicators proving that the Ryukyuan missions had become diplomatic rituals very important for Edo. With regard to this matter, Suzuki Takayuki has stated that, since the end of eighteenth century, the reception in Edo granted to Korean envoys and to Dutch missions lead by their Capitan¹⁶⁸ had become less elaborate than before. On the other hand, the reception reserved to the Ryukyuan embassies during that same period had become more important.¹⁶⁹

However, if we consider the dispatch of the Ryukyuan missions in the nineteenth century from the perspective of the ceremonials and the rituals officiated inside Edo castle, it is possible to conclude that they did not undergo great changes with regard to the past. The document below is related to the first visit to Edo castle (*omemie* 御目見え) by the envoys of the mission of gratitude of 1832. Let us focus our attention in

¹⁶⁷ Yokoyama, *Ryūkyū koku shisetsu*, p. 145.

¹⁶⁸ In 1790, the bakufu ordered the Dutch send missions to Edo every four years changing the previous custom of sending missions annually.

¹⁶⁹ Suzuki Takayuki, “Tenpō san nen Ryūkyū shisetsu no haken enki no haikai,” Tamai Tatsuya, ed., *Kinsei Nihon ni okeru gaikoku shisetsu to shakai hen'yō 1: “Giesisei nikki” wo yomu*, (Tokyo: Kamiya Nobuyuki Kenkyūshitsu, 2006), p. 86.

particular on how entry of shogun Ienari is depicted, even though, following traditional protocol, the shogun always remained behind a screen and could not be seen by the audience.

During the time in which prince Tomigusuku expressed his respect [in the Ōhiroma], Ōsumi-no-kami (Shimazu Narioki) and Bungo-no-kami (Nariakira) waited behind the *fusuma* paper.

The various gifts from the king of Chūzan [Shō Iku] and from the previous king of Chūzan [Shō Kō]¹⁷⁰ were lined up and displayed in the southern part of the veranda (*itaen*), from the east in the direction of the internal corridor, before the shogun appeared.

The sword and the list of gifts [in honor of the shogun] were brought in by the *sōshaban*¹⁷¹ who placed them on the second mat of the lower stage of the central part [of the Ōhiroma].

[After the same official] introduced the king of Chūzan, Tomigusuku [the ambassador and representative of the king] appeared, and from the fourth mat of the lower stage [of the Ōhiroma] addressed [to the shogun] nine kowtows [according to traditional protocol] and then he withdrew.

Next, the *sōshaban* brought the sword and the list of gifts [presented to the shogun by] the previous king of Chūzan, and placed them on the second mat of the lower stage of the central part [of the Ōhiroma]. After [the *sōshaban* introduced] the previous king of Chūzan, Takushi [the vice ambassador] appeared and from the fourth mat of the lower stage [of the Ōhiroma] addressed nine kowtows [to the shogun] and withdrew. [Following this] the *sōshaban* withdrew the sword and the list of gifts.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Shō Kō was forced to abdicate in 1828 in favor of his son, Shō Iku. Therefore, he was still alive when the latter sent a mission of gratitude to Edo for celebrating his enthronement.

¹⁷¹ The *sōshaban* or “master of ceremonies” was an official of the Tokugawa bakufu.

¹⁷² *Tsūkō ichiran zokushū*, vol. 1, Hayashi Fukusai, Yanai Kenji, ed., (Osaka: Seibundō Shuppan, 1968), pp. 6-8.

From this document we may deduce that the gifts brought by the prince and the vice ambassador were lined up together and that the two envoys paid their respect from the fourth mat of the lower stage of the Ōhiroma. In contrast to this, the traditional protocol for the Korean envoys required the three main envoys of the *Chōsen tsūshinshi*, the ambassador, the vice ambassador and the *jūjikan* 従事官, to move forward until the lower stage of the central part of the Ōhiroma upon their entry, they would have addressed the homage in the name of the Korean king from the second mat, and would then retreat a few steps to express their own respect.¹⁷³ Although it appears that the great privilege of closely approaching the shogun's seat granted to the Korean envoys had actually undergone some change so that the ambassadors distanced themselves more and more from the shogun, it seems reasonable to think that there was, however, a pronounced difference in how the two foreign missions were received in Edo, even after the visits of the *Chōsen tsūshinshi* had come to an end. We should, thus, mention that during the course of the nineteenth century there were no great changes in the ceremonial rituals for the Ryukyuan mission officiated inside Edo castle.

Signs of change in Satsuma's vision of the *Edo dachi*

It appears important at this point to try to explain briefly how Satsuma's perception of the missions from Shuri changed during the nineteenth century. As mentioned before, in 1709 when the bakufu refused the dispatch of the embassies with the pretext of the futility of those rituals, Satsuma succeeded in creating a new function for the delegations and in this way was able to convince the Edo leaders. From that moment on,

¹⁷³ Toby, *Diplomacy*, p. 185.

the rank of the Shimazu daimyo who had escorted the Ryukyuan parade to Edo and who introduced the foreign envoys to the bakufu court was increased by the shogunate at every mission.

There can be no doubt that the Ryukyuan missions were inalienable diplomatic rituals for the Satsuma fief. Nevertheless, from the Tenpō era (1830-1844), it is possible ascertain some changes, even if slight—but not necessarily less important—in the vision the southern domain had of the delegations from Shuri.

The mission of gratitude dispatched in 1832 in honor of the succession to the throne of king Shō Iku (1829) was originally planned for 1830. However, Kagoshima, adducing “the loss of tribute in the ocean” (J. 貢物漂没) obtained postponement of the embassy from the bakufu. “The loss of tribute in the ocean” referred to the loss in the sea of the gifts bound to the shogunal court as a result of the shipwreck suffered by a Ryukyuan tributary ship that was on its way back to the kingdom after having been in China. The traditional protocol, in fact, set that most of the presents that the embassies brought to Edo would be purchased in the Middle Kingdom.

Nevertheless, according to Suzuki Takayuki’s research, “the loss of tribute in the ocean” was nothing other but a front, a pretext created *ad hoc*, deployed by Satsuma to conceal the real reasons. In Chinese documents, in fact, there is no trace of this incident. Suzuki shed light on the possibility that the real motivation behind the postponement of the 1830 mission was the severe financial crisis afflicting Kagoshima at that time. In other words, since Satsuma was indigent and concerned about the huge capital a mission would entail, the Shimazu sought a reason to have the Ryukyuan mission postponed. They, thus, came up with this *ad hoc* motivation that would not arouse

suspicion and that would be accepted by the bakufu.¹⁷⁴

On 11 November 1855, Edo was devastated by a powerful earthquake, the Great Edo Ansei Earthquake. Due to the substantial damages caused to the Shimazu residence in Edo—the official residence of Shimazu Nariakira in Shiba—where the congratulatory mission from Shuri in honor of Tokugawa Iesada (who had become shogun in 1853) would have been hosted in 1856, the Shimazu pleaded with the bakufu for obtaining the postponement of the Ryukyuan embassy. This request was granted on December 10.¹⁷⁵ On that occasion, Kagoshima adduced “the impossibility to complete [all the] repairs by the following autumn.” Nevertheless, in a confidential entry addressed exclusively to the officials of Satsuma, the following is reported:

Nevertheless, since it is about next year, if we had sped up the time [of the repairs], we think that it would be possible [to complete the works in time for the arrival of the mission to Edo].

[Previously], in the 3rd Month of the Year of the Tiger,¹⁷⁶ a fire had already taken place [in the Edo residence], and because we were able to bring to an end [all the repairs] by the 10th Month [of that same year, in time for the arrival of the Ryukyuan embassy], we think that [also on this occasion] there is enough time to complete the works within the next year.¹⁷⁷

In light of these two episodes, it seems reasonable to assume that from the beginning of the 1830s, Satsuma’s approach to the Ryukyuan missions had changed, even if only slightly. The embassies undeniably continued to represent a very important diplomatic

¹⁷⁴ Suzuki, “Tenpō san nen Ryūkyū shisetsu,” pp. 80-88.

¹⁷⁵ Ansei 2/11/2. *Edo dachi ni tsuki oosewatasedome*, Tokyo Daigaku Shiryō Hensensho Shozō, n. 8.

¹⁷⁶ April 1842 (Tenpō 3/3/x).

¹⁷⁷ Kagoshimaken Ishin Shiryō Hensanjo, ed., *Nariakirakō shiryō* (hereafter *Nariakirakō shiryō*), vol. 1, (Kagoshima: Kagoshimaken, 1981), pp. 491-492.

ritual essential for the enhancement of the Shimazu's prestige, as they had been in the past; but depending on financial or other internal conditions that from time to time afflicted the fief, Satsuma leaders came to adopt a political strategy that aimed at postponing or delaying the embassies through pretexts—a pure front—that most likely would have met with the acceptance of the bakufu.

The Ryukyuan embassies of the nineteenth century seen from Shuri's perspective

As mentioned before, the Ryukyuan missions became the only diplomatic delegations to express their respect to the shogun inside Edo castle from 1811. Therefore, their reception by the shogunate became more significant. Let us now turn our attention to the Ryukyu kingdom.

In 1750, Sai On, described Ryukyu as a poor and small kingdom that lacked the resources needed to accomplish its duties towards China and Japan in his *Hitori monogatari* 独物語.¹⁷⁸ In addition, on the dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassies he argued that:

It is necessary to secure in advance [the funds for] the disbursements of the *Edo dachi*, as well as of the congratulatory and gratitude missions and the like to China.¹⁷⁹

In other words, Sai On placed the Ryukyuan embassies on par with the missions to China, being diplomatic rituals highly significant to the kingdom because it was necessary to collect in advance the huge resources needed to carry out these “state” events.

¹⁷⁸ *Sai On zenshū*, Sakihama Hideaki, ed., (Tokyo: Honpō Shoseki, 1984), p. 76.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

On the occasion of the mission of gratitude celebrating the enthronement of Shō Tai in 1850, the regent and the members of the Council of Three conveyed some instructions to royal prince (and ambassador) Tamagawa and to the other envoys:

Although our kingdom is [very] small, for ages it has maintained [diplomatic ties] with China and Yamato [Japan] without interruption. In particular, since at intervals [we have] also [paid our respect] to Edo [i.e., to the bakufu], our reputation [in Japan] is not slight. Furthermore, on the occasion of the dispatch of [our] envoys to Edo, which has been continuing since some years ago, given that we have [showed behavior that is] absolutely praiseworthy, we have heard that [our] reputation within the Yamato court is much appreciated: this is the height of happiness. We order you so that also on this occasion [1850] you are aware of this more and more and [all the envoys] until those of minor rank are accomplished [in all their duties].¹⁸⁰

According to Shuri leaders, in the course of the two centuries during which the kingdom had sent missions to Edo, such embassies had become traditional diplomatic rituals very useful to enhance the reputation of Ryukyu at the social and political center of Japan, the bakufu court. This is why it was necessary for the envoys to grasp the significance of the mission and accomplish their offices in the most appropriate manner.

Recently, Watanabe Miki has pointed out that for the royal government the Ryukyuan missions also represented a valuable occasion to enhance its self-awareness as a kingdom that could bolster diplomatic relations with both China and Japan;

¹⁸⁰ *Kamakura Yoshitarō, Nooto 44 go*, (Okinawa Kenritsu Geijutsu Daigaku fuzoku, geijutsu shiryō kanzō), shoshū (shōzen) “Edo dachi no toki oosewatase narabini otō no jōjō no utsushi.” This document belongs to the collection of notes handwritten by Kamakura Yoshitarō, one of the most authoritative twentieth-century scholars of Okinawan art, culture and history. This collection can only be consulted at the Okinawa Kenritsu Geijutsu Daigaku, in Shuri, and copies of the notes can only be made by hand.

therefore, the delegations were also useful to Ryukyu to define itself towards Japan as well as towards other Asian countries.¹⁸¹

In the same document, the Shuri leaders continue with prescriptions on the clothing of the envoys:

Because [among Ryukyuan clothing] tight clothes with short sleeves are considered unpleasant, you were given [instructions about this] some years ago. We strictly order [all] envoys [from the most senior] until the minor that they arrange [with an even greater care the appropriate clothing] following earlier directives.

In addition, concerning the design of the ordinary dresses, since the Yamato style is not [considered] appropriate, [you are requested] not to wear [that kind of clothes].¹⁸²

Furthermore, with regard to the music performance on the occasion of the mission the regent and the members of the Council of Three issued the following directive:

We have heard that the Japanese court has exceptional admiration for the music [performance]. [It symbolizes] the utmost [opportunity for the display] of clothing [and equipment] for the *Edo dachi*. It is ordered that [the musicians] become skilful by carefully mastering [the execution of] moderate sounds.¹⁸³

The royal government, therefore, reflected upon the external appearance of the missions

¹⁸¹ Watanabe Miki, “Kinsei Ryūkyū no jūshiki,” *Rekishi hyōron* 733, (Tokyo: May 2011), p. 83; see also her *Kinsei Ryūkyū to Chū-Nichi kankei*.

¹⁸² *Kamakura Yoshitarō, Noto 44 go*, (Okinawa Kenritsu Geijutsu Daigaku fuzoku, geijutsu shiryō kanzō), shoshū (shōzen) “Edo dachi no toki oosawatase narabini ōtō no jōjō no utsushi.”

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

and made every effort to refine it, not merely in terms of the clothing of the most important envoys, but also of that of the minor officials and retainers. It was Shuri—and not Kagoshima—who strictly prohibited the ambassadors to wear clothes that could bear a likeness to or get confused with the Japanese style. However, we cannot underestimate the fact that Shuri was mirroring Satsuma's orders with regard to the refinement of the attire of the minor envoys (issued in 1681) and to the complex foreign appearance of the mission (issued in 1709). In other words, the Shuri government could not ignore such orders and in 1850 it provided additional details. Shuri had understood the importance of the external appearance of the missions to Japanese (Satsuma/the bakufu) eyes and, for its own benefit, she readily followed suit. In the *omote* sphere, Ryukyu showed Satsuma/Edo what they wanted to see.

With regard to the music performance—which represented the climax of the embassies when the gaze of the entire shogunal court was focused on the dances and sounds of the Ryukyuan musicians—it is important to stress Shuri's explicit intention to meet Edo's taste for Ryukyuan music and artistic representation, and thus, to create an impressive scenic effect accompanied by a polyphony of Chinese and Ryukyuan sounds aimed at arousing the admiration of the Japanese. As we can deduce from the above-mentioned passage, for Shuri it was essential to churn out highly-talented young musicians. There can be no doubt, in fact, that the music performance was an invaluable means to display the refinement of Ryukyuan culture. Within the embassies there were two kinds of music performance, the *zagaku* 座楽 and the *rojigaku* 路次楽. The *zagaku* refers to the orchestral performance of Chinese and Ryukyuan songs inside Edo castle, staged in honor of the Japanese military and intellectual elites usually a few days after the first visit to the shogun. The Ryukyuan orchestra, composed of *gakudōshi* 楽

童子 (young musicians who were twelve or thirteen years old) and *gakushi* 楽師 (the masters of the *gakudōshi*), was directed by a *gakusei* 楽正. Generally, there were five *gakushi* and six *gakudōshi*. The *rojigaku* consisted of fifteen or twenty musicians and was directed by a *gieisei* 儀衛正. These music performances accompanied the parade of envoys along the streets of Edo with their Chinese and Ryukyuan songs, in addition to performing when the mission reached or left some important destination along the way to and from Edo. The music parade, visible to all levels of Japanese society, was for most Japanese the very essence of the *Edo dachi*, and contained the potential to reach deep inside the souls of the Japanese public.

I consider the following passage very significant in shedding light on the meaning assigned to the Ryukyuan missions by the royal government:

Also, the inhabitants of Kumemura, according to traditional protocol, go [to Edo as envoys of the missions]. When in the past Nago Uekata went [to Japan], he was [officially] commissioned to draft compositions, to write poems and the like at Edo, and since he succeeded in meeting [all these duties] on the spot, he was exceptionally admired. We have heard that he is considered to have a high reputation within the Yamato court. In view of the fact that on this occasion [1850], too, [the envoys] will be certainly [officially] commissioned [to accomplish] the same duties [as those of Nago Uekata], you are ordered to possess excellent knowledge [of such arts] and to accomplish intelligently [the official] tasks so that [your conduct] will not be a disgrace to [our] country.¹⁸⁴

Nago Uekata was Tei Junsoku, one of the most renowned Ryukyuan literates and

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

diplomats of the early-modern period.¹⁸⁵ Tei was dispatched as *shōkanshi* 掌翰使, the Chief of Correspondence,¹⁸⁶ of the mission of 1714 which had been dispatched in honor of Ietsugu's appointment as shogun, and of Shō Kei's enthronement in Shuri. It is necessary to emphasize that for the royal government it was very important that by 1714 Tei Junsoku had gained an outstanding reputation owing to his calligraphic and writing skills, especially in classical Chinese. It seems reasonable to consider the expression "you are ordered [...] so that [your conduct] will not be a disgrace to [our] country" not as merely a concern about the possible tarnishing of the kingdom's honor, but as a phrase that, in reality, contained the wish and aspiration to realize what had happened to Tei Junsoku. The envoys of future missions, after dedicating themselves to Chinese and Japanese studies, should manifest the refinement of Ryukyuan culture in Japan with the purpose of heightening the glory of the Ryukyu kingdom. Therefore, we can infer that Shuri came to consider the missions to Edo as very significant traditional diplomatic rituals through which it could show its high level of refinement in Chinese and Japanese teachings. Japan was, thus, the locus where Ryukyu could shape for itself an image of a highly developed culture within the East Asian framework. In connection with this, we can assume that the instructions concerning the required learning of all Ryukyuan officials issued by Haneji Chōshū in the seventeenth century were translated in the high erudition the Ryukyuan envoys could display in Edo during the following centuries.

At this point, let us focus our attention on a passage regarding a number of instructions addressed to the officials of Kumemura, especially to Kohagura Peechin

¹⁸⁵ For an exhaustive study of the life, works and philosophy of Tei Junsoku, see Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*.

¹⁸⁶ The Chief of Correspondence was commissioned with the prestigious task of presenting the official letter of the Ryukyuna king to the bakufu at Edo castle, in addition than writing and drafting on the spot documents and the like during the entire mission.

and Tōma Peechin. Although the document is undated, it is likely that these directives were issued when preparations were made for the gratitude embassy dispatched in 1806 (Bunka 3) in honor of the enthronement of Shō Kō, because it is possible to ascertain the presence of Kohagura Peechin as director of the musical parade (*gieisei*) and of Tōma Peechin as director of the orchestra (*gakusei*).¹⁸⁷

[...] Because both above-mentioned officials [Kohagura Peechin and Tōma Peechin], will get along with Confucian [scholars] in the Yamato court and will be asked several times to exchange compositions with illustrious Confucian [scholars] of numerous fiefs, [it is necessary that] they become skilfull through a challenging training so that there will not be any unforeseen difficulties on those [significant] occasions. During the previous *Edo dachi*, erudite literates went [to Edo] and among them there was also one who was a credit to the kingdom of Ryukyu. If not much time has passed since the two officials [became first acquainted with the literary arts], [the status] of decline of the talented persons of Kumemura will be known, and since this will not merely be a disgrace to Kumemura, but in the end will also be a disgrace to the kingdom, it is ordered to be well aware of this and to commit yourselves completely to training day and night.¹⁸⁸

This passage belongs to a series of precepts and instructions that were given to young Ryukyuan candidates who wished to take up a bureaucratic career. The young candidates were ordered to take down their educators' dictation of such teachings. Although it is not an official document, it represents a very important account of the way in which Shuri

¹⁸⁷ Watanabe Miki, "Kinsei Ryūkyū no jūshiki," p. 80.

¹⁸⁸ Okinawa Kenritsu Toshokan Shiryō Henshūshitsu, ed., *Shiryō henshūshitsu kiyō* 27, no 24 (Naha: Okinawa Kenritsu Toshokan, 2000).

infused in its adolescents a commitment for literary virtue that was related to the dispatch of embassies to Edo. Also, from the content of this extract it is possible to infer that the royal government had detected in the missions to Edo an opportunity to compare Ryukyuan literates to their Japanese counter-parts, in other words, it was an occasion to enhance the reputation of the Ryukyu kingdom. Furthermore, we should underline the fact that from Shuri's perspective, we also noticed in the preparations for the 1806 embassy, the Ryukyuan missions were not diplomatic rituals conceived within a limited temporal frame, but on the contrary, the expression "during the previous *Edo dachi*" seems to project a vision of the delegations against a boundless temporal horizon, in which from the past to the future, during the entire history of the kingdom, mission after mission, Ryukyuan culture displayed by the most illustrious envoys would heighten the glory and the prestige of Ryukyu more and more.

In conclusion, I want to turn my attention to a study I conducted with Professor Tokunō Toshimi in 2010 and by which we have shed light on a new aspect of the Ryukyuan missions.¹⁸⁹ As we have already pointed out in this chapter, earlier studies on the embassies to Edo have shown that behind the dispatch of the missions there was a tripartite power relation that had as main actors the Tokugawa bakufu, the Satsuma domain and the Shuri government. Without any doubt, these principal subjects each played an irreplaceable role with regard to the realization of the embassies. Nevertheless, it seems also opportune to shed light on the role played—behind the scenes—by a series of walk-on actors who also made a crucial contribution to the accomplishment of the

¹⁸⁹ This part is based mainly on my "Dōkō jūhachi inu doshi 'o tegata utsushi' kara Tenpō jūsan nen no Ryūkyū shisetsu no keigashi no junbi wo miru" (pp.174-191), included in Tokunō Toshimi and Tinello Marco, "Dōkō jūhachi nen 'o te gata utsushi' shoshū no Edo nobori kankei shiryō wo megutte," *Okinawa bunka kenkyū* 36 (Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku Okinawa Bunka Kenkyūjo, March 2010), pp. 171-222.

delegations.

There are several earlier studies that testify to the significant contribution provided by some domains or other Japanese private or public territories when the missions from Shuri arrived and passed through.¹⁹⁰ With regard to Ryukyu, however, the Shuri government had always been considered as the only responsible for the preparations of the missions, without attaching significance to the roles performed by the various islands that formed the Ryukyu kingdom.

Actually, this misconception in earlier studies is due to the fact that there seemed to be no sources that could shed light on this aspect. However, following a joint research project I carried out with Tokunō, we presented a previously unedited document called *Dōkō jūhachi inudoshi 'o tegata utsushi'* 道光十八戌年「御手形写」 (Hōsei Daigaku Okinawa Kenkyūjo, ed; hereafter '*o tegata utsushi*'), and focused our attention on a series of directives related to the preparations for the 1842 (Tenpō 13) Ryukyuan mission. These directives were issued by the Shuri government to royal officials based on Yaeyama Island. Through a study of these orders it is possible to cast new light on one aspect related to the preparation of the embassies. The Ryukyuan missions, on one

¹⁹⁰ Inuma Masayuki, "Chōsentsūshinshi/Ryūkyū shisetsu tsūkō ji tsunahiki sukegō/sekka ryōgoku wo chūshin ni," *Kōtsūshi kenkyū* 54, (Tokyo: Kōtsūshi kenkyūkai, 2004). Inuma Masayuki, "Bakufu kōikiyaku no jitsugen katei ni miru kobetsu ryōshu to chiiki: Ryūkyū shisetsu tsunahiki kumiai Ōtsukakumi no jirei," *Chihōshi kenkyū* 56, no 6 (Tokyo: Chihōshi kenkyū Kyōgikai, 2006). Inuma Masayuki, "Bakufu kōikiyaku no meirei to jōhō no dentatsu: Ryūkyū shisetsu tsūkōji no tsunahikiyaku no baai," *Hisutoria* 217, (Kyoto: Yanagihara Shoten, 2009). Kamiya Nobuyuki, "Okayama han to taigai kankei," *1994/1995 nendo kaken hōkusho Okayama han no shihai hōhō to shakai kōzō*, 1996. Tamai Tatsuya, "Ryūkyū shisetsu tsūkō ni taisuru 'oshikamae' taisei ni tsuite: Iyo no kuni Tsuwajijima wo jirei toshite," *Waseda Daigaku daigakuin bungaku kenkyūka kiyō* 51, n. 4, (Tokyo: Waseda Daigaku daigakuin bungaku kenkyūka, 2006). Tamai Tatsuya, "Ryūkyū shisetsu tsūkō ni kansuru jōhō shūshū ni tsuite," *Kinsei Nihon ni okeru gaikoku shisetsu to shakai henyō 1: "gieisei nikki" wo yomu* (Tokyo: Kamiya Nobuyuki Kenkyūshitsu, 2006). Tamai Tatsuya, "Chōsen tsūshinshi/Ryūkyū shisetsu tsūkō to jōhō/settai/taiou: Iyo no kuni Tsuwajijima wo jirei toshite," *Fūzoku shigaku* 36 (Tokyo: Nihon Fūzokushi Gakkai, 2007). Tamai Tatsuya, "Kinsei Ryūkyū shisetsu tsūkō to kaiiki wo meguru jōhō: Iyo no kuni Tsuwajijima wo jirei toshite," *Nihon rekishi* 727, (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2008), pp. 55-71. Miyake Hidetoshi, "Ryūkyū shisetsu to Kokura han," *Kita Kyūshū Daigaku bungakubu kiyō B keiretsu* 21 (Kita Kyūshū Daigaku Bungakubu, 1989), p. 1-14.

side, represented diplomatic ceremonials between two political entites (Tokugawa Japan and the Ryukyu kingdom) that maintained relations of *tsūshin* (i.e. exchange diplomatic documents on the occasion of the *Edo dachi*) through the mediation of Satsuma. Therefore, they were interstate diplomatic ceremonials. On the other, we could verify that at the same time they were very important domestic practices for the Ryukyu kingdom and imposed huge endeavors and burdens on the various islands that formed the Ryukyu realm. Through a philological and interpretative analysis of the '*o tegata utsushi*' document, I will focus my attention on the preparations for the 1842 embassy.

There were two different types of preparations connected to the planning of an embassy to Japan. One concerned the royal government of Shuri. These can thus be labeled official preparations. The other concerned the individual envoys, in other words, private arrangements.¹⁹¹ With regard to the latter, Miyagi argues that the royal government provided some funds to the envoys so they could purchase the personal clothing and objects needed for the long trip.¹⁹² Let us take a close look at the process by which these two types of preparations were realized at the time of the mission of 1842.

In May 1837, Ienari, the eleventh Tokugawa shogun, abdicated in favor of his second-born son Ieyoshi. Following traditional protocol, a congratulatory mission in honor of the new Tokugawa shogun was thus required. The document below is related to the preparations of this mission.

Regarding the textiles and goods necessary [as requested by the royal government] as well as the fabrics and various articles ordered with the silver [coins granted] to the envoys on the

¹⁹¹ Miyagi, *Ryūkyū shisha*, p. 56.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

occasion of the dispatch of the [Ryukyuan] mission to Edo [planned] for the following Year of the Rat [1840], we have ordered you last year to accomplish the arrangements respecting traditional protocol. On this occasion given that in the attached sheet we have transmitted you the orders [commissioned by the royal government] along with the orders [to be purchased with] the silver[coins granted] to the envoys, we instruct you to provide with extreme care goods of very good quality, and to send all the articles [to the royal government] by ships that from this summer to the next will sail [in the direction of Naha]. Until now, other than providing necessary goods of great opulence on the occasion of [the arrival] of the Chinese mission [of investiture], and despite the fact that the furnishing of goods necessary for the [realization] of the *Edo dachi* has caused you a great difficulty, [you have accomplished your duties with great care]. [Also on this occasion, since it concerns] goods necessary that we cannot do without them following traditional protocol, we give you detailed orders so that you certainly provide goods of high quality as we have ordered and so you perfectly understand what the needed articles are. [...]

Nevertheless, regarding the *kurayaku* 蔵役 and the *kakiyaku* 書役 [going to] Edo, because they will sail [from Naha] in the direction of Kagoshima next spring, the articles ordered [by these two officials] will not arrive in time [for the departure of the two envoys] if they are not loaded and sent by the ships which [travel from Yaeyama to Naha] this summer. So be well aware of these circumstances.

Dog Year, 11th day of the 2nd Month [solar 6 March 1838]¹⁹³

Shikina Peechin

Oroku Ueekata

[For the attention of the] officials based on Yaeyama.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Tenpō 9/2/11.

¹⁹⁴ ‘*o tegata utsushi*,’ p.3.

The above document is dated 6 March 1838 and was sent by the Shuri government to the government officials stationed on Yaeyama Island. The document tells us that on occasion of the congratulatory mission to Edo planned for the following Rat Year, that is 1840, Shuri had already placed an order in 1837 that was related to textiles and other goods necessary for preparing the mission.¹⁹⁵ The Chinese mission of investiture, referred to in the document, is most likely the mission, which reached Ryukyu in 1838 to celebrate the enthronement of king Shō Iku, and which—as it was the case for the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo—in terms of traditional protocol had required a big effort and large contributions from the island of Yaeyama—provisions and aid that had been considered very satisfying by the central government.¹⁹⁶

Based on the above, it is possible to deduce that the congratulatory mission dispatched to Edo in 1842, was, in reality, first planned for the year 1840. Given that the royal government had already given the first instructions related to the mission in 1837, we may assume that the Ryukyuan embassy was planned as soon as Tokugawa Ieyoshi was nominated shogun in May of that year and that the preparations for the delegation started soon after.

It is also clear that Shuri was not able to accomplish all the preparations related to an event as large in size as the dispatch of the missions to Edo with merely its own resources. Instead, the royal government had to resort to procuring contributions from

¹⁹⁵ These articles were required by the royal government and the envoys. In particular, we can infer that the Shuri government granted some silver to the ambassadors to enable them to purchase the articles needed. However, this does not imply the existence of a silver route from Shuri to Yaeyama. Most likely, the purchase was settled with rice or other goods instead of silver.

¹⁹⁶ However, because the departure for Kagoshima of the *kurayaku* and *kakiyaku* envoys was planned for the following spring, the royal government ordered that the goods commissioned for them be sent to Naha taking into account of their schedule. These two officials were required to report to the *Ryūkyūkan*, the official residence of Ryukyuan officials in Kagoshima. Both the *kurayaku* and the *kakiyaku* carried out their duties inside this residence. Furthermore, on the occasion of an *Edo dachi*, they were asked to accompany the mission to Edo.

Yaeyama Island. In addition, since there are references to traditional protocol in the document both with regard to the Chinese investiture mission and the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo, we may assume that the orders given by Shuri in 1837 and 1838 were not isolated episodes, but rather that they were part of a traditional political picture in which for centuries Shuri had been asking a huge contribution from Yaeyama in order to satisfy these ceremonials of high symbolic value that were considered essential for the independence of the kingdom. Next, let us take a look at the requests from the royal government.

Regarding the horses to bestow to Edo the following Year of the Rat [1840], when the special envoy Makiya Peechin went to inspect [the territories] of the main island of Okinawa, [...] he reported that he found only very few horses worthy to be brought as gift [to the shogun]. [Afterwards], Makiya was sent to Miyako Island to select [horses]; if [he found that] in that island [the horses] were not [up to standard] he was ordered to also visit [Yaeyama] Island. [...] Year of the Dog, 2nd Month [solar March].

Onaga Satonushi Peechin

Tanahara Peechin¹⁹⁷

This account was also written in March 1838 and was transmitted from the Shuri authorities to the officials based on Yaeyama. From this document, we can easily assume that, when preparing for an embassy to Edo, the Shuri government required islands such as Miyako and Yaeyama to contribute. We may assume that this also happened upon reception of Chinese missions. In 1838, in fact, the royal government

¹⁹⁷ Tenpō 9/2/x. ‘*o tegata utsushi*,’ p.7.

also ordered the officials residing on Yaeyama to purchase two kinds of liquor (白酎 *baichū*, 密林酎 *mitsurinchū*) which would be bestowed on the Chinese ambassadors as well as on other envoys when in that same year the investiture mission in honor of Shō Iku reached Ryukyu. According to the instructions transmitted, the royal government required them to send products of refined taste.¹⁹⁸

From what we have seen above, we can infer that Yaeyama, and likely also other islands under the jurisdiction of Shuri, played a significant role both when Chinese missions arrived and when embassies were sent to Edo.

Let us now turn our attention to a number of documents that testify to the fact that envoys to Edo each individually ordered the goods necessary for the long mission to the shogunal capital.

In one of these entries, the *shisan* 使贊, i.e. the envoy charged with assisting the Urasoe prince (the ambassador), Uchima Satonushi Peechin, in March 1838, required some high quality textile and precisely indicated both its length and width.¹⁹⁹ He also specified the particular design of the cloth that he wished. Because the textile was necessary for his duty in Japan,²⁰⁰ he requested to have his order forwarded to Yaeyama Island.²⁰¹

It is necessary to take into consideration the applicants of the order. The Urasoe prince was the ambassador who in 1842 went to Edo as representative of the Ryukyuan

¹⁹⁸ 'o *tegata utsushi*,' p.30.

¹⁹⁹ He required a piece of cloth weighing 18 *masu* (Okinawan, *yomi*; one *masu* equals 1,8 l) and measuring 8 *hiro* long (one *hiro* equals 1.8 m) by one *shaku* and three *sun* wide (one *shaku* equals 30,3 cm; one *sun* equals 3,03 cm).

²⁰⁰ In the document we come across the expression *jōkoku* 上国, which usually referred to a visit to Kagoshima. However, judging from the context it seems appropriate to interpret this expression as a reference to the mission to Edo planned for 1842 which had to pass through Satsuma along the way. Therefore, it is better to equate the term *jōkoku* with "Japan" or "Edo" instead of "Kagoshima" or "Satsuma."

²⁰¹ Tenpō 9/2/x. 'o *tegata utsushi*,' p. 86.

king. Therefore, we may assume that he was already appointed to this post in 1837, when the embassy was still planned to be held in 1840. The *shisan* was an important envoy who assisted the royal prince, and because Uchima Satonushi Peechin was nominated *shisan* for the mission of 1840, it is likely that he was re-nominated when the embassy was postponed to 1842. It is noteworthy that an envoy—in this case an official at the service of the ambassador—forwarded an individual commission for goods required for the mission. Furthermore, in this work, I have already underlined that the structure of the embassies to Edo was centered on the relation lord-vassal, thus, it seems that when the vassal-envoys placed an order, they had to indicate the lord with whom they were affiliated.

Another envoy of the Ryukyuan mission to Edo, the musician Makishi Satonushi Peechin who as *gakushi* 楽師 was nominated director of the *zagaku* also individually purchased some goods necessary for carrying out his task. Makishi, in February 1838, required two pieces of cloth of fine quality and of specific size and design.²⁰² In addition, he ordered fifteen sea cucumbers. Because these goods were necessary for Makishi's journey to Japan the following Rat Year, he requested them to be forwarded to Yaeyama.²⁰³

Also in February 1838, the director of the music parade, the *gieisei* 儀衛正, Ikei Peechin, placed his personal orders. He ordered two different kinds of fabric of high quality, specifying the sizes²⁰⁴ and the designs, as well as thirty sea cucumbers. He, too,

²⁰² He required two pieces of cloth weighing 20 *masu* (Okinawan, *yomi*; one *masu* equals 1,8 l) and measuring 8 *hiro* long (one *hiro* equals 1.8 m) by one *shaku* and three *sun* wide (one *shaku* equals 30,3 cm; one *sun* equals 3,03 cm) each.

²⁰³ Tenpō 9/1/x. 'o *tegata utsushi*,' p. 91.

²⁰⁴ He required two pieces of cloth. One weighing 20 *masu* (Okinawan, *yomi*; one *masu* equals 1,8 l) and measuring 8 *hiro* long (one *hiro* equals 1.8 m) by one *shaku*, three *sun*, five *bu* wide (one *shaku* equals 30,3 cm; one *sun* equals 3,03 cm; one *bu* is one tenth of one *sun*). The other weighing 18 *masu* and measuring 8 *hiro* long by one *shaku*, three *sun*, five *bu* wide.

requested the order to be delivered to Yaeyama because of his mission to Edo the following Rat Year.²⁰⁵

This document is very similar in content to those examined above. From all these accounts we can deduce that the envoys nominated for the mission to Edo forwarded their orders for the goods and articles required for the mission individually. Since all of them also asked to forward their order to Yaeyama, we may assume that they were requiring the specific and unique textiles of high quality which were produced by the Yaeyama weavers. Regarding the designs and decorations dyed on the various fabrics, given the frequent references to schemes or illustrations we may assume that the royal government had prepared some sort of catalogue of the available designs. Based on the dates reported in the entries, we can conclude that the various envoys placed their orders at different times; some were transmitted in February, others in March. As Tokunō pointed out,²⁰⁶ these envoys, in fact, did not send their requests directly to the official based at Yaeyama, but sent their list of requisitions to the Shuri government, which, after having collected all the other orders, transmitted them all at once to Yaeyama. In the light of the orders that we have seen above, we may assume that Shuri authorities copied the orders respecting their original form, i.e., as written by the individuals who had placed the order and forwarded them to Yaeyama.

From our analysis of the ‘*o te gata utsushi*,’ the dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo along with the reception of the Chinese missions of investiture did not only impose onerous burden on Shuri and the main island of Okinawa, but also on Yaeyama Island. Furthermore, as we have shown through the document related to the

²⁰⁵ ‘*o tegata utsushi*,’ p. 95.

²⁰⁶ Tokunō Toshimi and Tinello Marco, “Dōkō jūhachi nen ‘*o te gata utsushi*’ shoshū no Edo nobori kankei shiryō wo megutte,” *Okinawa bunka kenkyū* 36, (Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku Okinawa Bunka Kenkyūjo, March 2010), pp. 191-222.

search for horses to donate to the shogun, we may conclude that the burden was extended to all the islands constituting the Ryukyu kingdom.

Some recent studies have contributed to clarifying that the Ryukyuan missions to Edo represented very significant diplomatic ceremonials for the preservation of the identity and autonomy of the Ryukyu kingdom, as well as the ultimate opportunity to display the refinement reached by Ryukyuan culture.²⁰⁷ Nevertheless, these studies have not ascertained the actual role played by local entities, situated in the surroundings of Shuri, on the occasion of preparing of the embassies to Edo. This study, thus, sheds light on the contributions from these small and distant islands to two diplomatic rituals essential for the independence of the kingdom. In light of the study's results, we may conclude that the Ryukyuan missions were, therefore, also very significant internal/domestic practices for the Ryukyu kingdom that required a major effort of not merely Shuri but of all the Ryukyuan administrative entities in order to efficiently accomplish the preparations of the embassies.

In the end, however, we need to point out that not all envoys enjoyed the privilege to purchase the required goods with funds granted by the royal government. Only those of high rank, that is those who were in charge of assisting the ambassador or the vice ambassador, as well as the musicians, their directors and other prestigious members, were allowed to do so.

In conclusion, we need to mention some observations about contributions to the Ryukyuan embassies to Japan made by the islands of Yaeyama and Miyako. Because these territories were an integral part of the Ryukyu kingdom, it seems natural that they supplied goods in order to sustain their own sovereign, especially on an occasion as

²⁰⁷ Kamiya, *Ryūkyū shihai*; Watanabe Miki, "Kinsei Ryūkyū no jūshiki."

vital as the dispatch of *Edo dachi*. Nevertheless, as Tokunō has argued, in genealogical documents related to the elites of those islands there are no entries that testify to the distinctive services carried out in support of the embassies. There is also no mention of special rewards obtained from the royal government for having contributed to the accomplishment of such rituals. In other words, we may assume that the instructions forwarded from Shuri were official orders that only concerned the central government and its officials based on surrounding islands. Judging from the ‘*o tegata utsushi*,’ in fact, it appears that the royal government instructed its officials on a mission in those territories, who then passed on these instructions to the local population—although we cannot ascertain in which modality they did so—.

It is possible to ascertain, from, for example, the genealogical documents of the Yaeyama elites, a genuine sense of gratitude to the royal government through which moral and humanitarian behavior, proper manner to conduct rites, the practice of keeping genealogical registers by local elites and other innovations were imported to the island.²⁰⁸ The contribution of goods and articles to enable the accomplishment of the missions to Edo certainly represented an enormous burden on the local populations. However, we may assume that the request from Shuri for particular textiles, unique designs, and specific alcoholic beverages typical to the various islands, symbolized for those people evidence of the achievement of the ability to produce high-quality goods—a level of achievement so refined as to be able to meet the tastes of the Chinese and Japanese elites.

In this chapter I have reconstructed the history of the Ryukyuan embassies up to the

²⁰⁸ Ishigaki-shi Sōmubu-shi Shihenshūshitsu, ed., *Ishigaki shishi sōsho* 6, (Ishigaki: Ishigaki-shi, 1994), pp. 38-39.

middle of the nineteenth century from a diplomatic-political perspective, assigning greater importance to the viewpoint of Shuri.

The Ryukyuan missions began because of the determination of the Shimazu and were considered a service to the shogun by the Satsuma daimyo. At a later time, depending on the goals of Kagoshima, Edo and Shuri, it is possible to detect some changes in the rituals of the embassies. Satsuma lords made every effort to obtain advancement in rank through the dispatch of the missions from Shuri.

From 1710, the bakufu started to regard the delegations as a valuable means to enhance the prestige of the shogun within and without the boundaries of the country. Moreover, given that from 1811 the Korean missions to Japan had come to an end, the Ryukyuan envoys became the only diplomatic ambassadors who paid their respect to the Tokugawa shogun. These changes are reflected in the fact that Edo came to grant loans to Satsuma when preparations for these delegations started, and to impose provincial taxes on private and public territories located along the course of the Tōkaidō with the purpose of financing the embassies. Nonetheless, judging from the rituals officiated inside Edo castle, it seems that the bakufu continued to maintain some marked differences in the ceremonials accorded the Korean and Ryukyuan foreign missions, even after visits by the *Chōsen tsūshinshi* were halted.

The government of Shuri received the order to dispatch embassies to Edo from Kagoshima and from 1710 Satsuma gave instructions so that the complex foreign appearance of the missions would be emphasized. In this analysis, however, I could not find any document that testifies to the fact that Shuri used Satsuma's orders to preserve its identity as a foreign country within the Tokugawa government system, as it has been suggested by earlier studies. For Ryukyu nothing was more essential than maintaining

its spatial autonomy between China and Japan. The embassies to Japan, as well as the tributary missions to Beijing, were one of the crucial ceremonials that took place against the above-mentioned background. For Shuri those embassies were a service to accomplish in honor of the shogun and that served to maintain its independence vis-à-vis Japan. In this study I could ascertain that Shuri came to consider the Ryukyuan missions in the following terms.

The royal government showed its great diplomatic ability to adapt to the orders of Kagoshima, and re-thought the directives received in its own terms, considering the Ryukyuan missions as an opportunity to heighten the significance diplomacy held for the small kingdom even more. In fact, the official posts of those taking part in the missions integrated harmoniously with the pre-modern Ryukyuan practice of *tabi yaku*, considered to be the service *par excellence* an official could perform in honor of his own king. From nineteenth-century documents, it is possible to infer that Shuri understood the importance of meeting the expectations of Satsuma and the bakufu with regard to the external appearance of the embassies. It was precisely in this attitude, or in this “performance,” in the *omote* sphere that we can trace Ryukyuan subjectivity. Shuri prepared Ryukyuan and Chinese clothing and equipment for its envoys very conscious of what kind of foreign missions the Shimazu and the bakufu wanted to see. In addition, Shuri came to perceive the *Edo dachi* as an opportunity through which it could enhance its reputation as a culturally refined kingdom as well as compare the erudition of the Ryukyuan literates in Chinese and Japanese studies to their Japanese counter-parts.

Chapter 2

Changes in East Asia and Ryukyu in the first half of the nineteenth century: countermeasures of Shuri, Kagoshima and Edo to the pressures on Ryukyu by Western powers

The First Opium War between the Qing dynasty and Great Britain, fought from 1839 to 1842, represents the first moment of confrontation between the traditional Chinese hierarchical order and the international relations' system of Western matrix, based on the concept of the equality of nations. As a consequence of the defeat of the Qing, the European treaty system began to permeate the various East Asian states. As we know, in fact, the Treaty of Nanjing was the first in a series of so-called "Unequal Treaties," tying East Asian countries to Western powers during the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁰⁹ After opening China, Western powers did the same with other Asian states through the imposition of international treaties. The result of this imperialistic policy was a transition, albeit gradually, from the tributary system to a system governed by Western-dictated treaties with East Asian countries.²¹⁰

Despite its limited relevance in political and territorial terms, the kingdom of Ryukyu had a function anything but unimportant within this general context because it was the first state forced to separate from the Chinese tribute system as a result of the

²⁰⁹ The Treaty of Nanjing that put an end to the hostilities between the Qing empire and Great Britain in the heat of commercial controversies abolished the monopoly of the Thirteen Factories on foreign trade in Canton (Article V) and opened five ports for trade, namely Canton, Amoy, Fuzhou, Ningbo and Shanghai. Within these treaty ports free trade was granted to the British. Great Britain also obtained the right to install consuls in the treaty ports, to whom was given the right to communicate directly with the Chinese authorities (Article II). Furthermore, the Treaty stipulated that transactions within these ports should be subjected to fixed tariffs to be arranged between the British authorities and the Qing government (Article X). The British were granted extraterritorial rights, while the Qing government was forced to pay the total sum of 21 million (Mexican) dollars as war indemnity as well as to cede in perpetuity the island of Hong Kong to the British.

²¹⁰ Hamashita Takeshi, *Chōkō shisutemu to kindai Ajia* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1997), p. 142.

pressure exerted by the Meiji government. The dismantling of the traditional interstate order of East Asia was, thus, also one of the outcomes of the policy that Japan applied to the small southern archipelago and which had its epilogue in the annexation of 1879. Nevertheless, as we will see, already in the preceding years the kingdom was involved in the changes generated by the growing pressure exerted by Western powers in the region.

Following the Opium War, France, Great Britain and the United States began to nurture expansionistic ambitions towards Japan and recognized in the Ryukyu Islands a potential base for realizing their objectives. In this chapter I will discuss the so-called *Gaikantōrai jiken* (1844-46), a period during which France and Great Britain pressed the Ryukyuans to agree to a treaty designed to promote amity, trade, and evangelization. This episode can contribute to shed light on the fact that the royal government was not passively undergoing the will of the Westerners, but relied on its diplomatic skills to evade their requests. It is essential to elucidate the political strategy adopted by Shuri in order to counter the Westerner pressure. In fact, it was during the course of this initial contact with Western powers that Shuri laid the foundation of those practices which came to constitute the protocol by which the kingdom's officials would settle future relations with Westerners. As we will see, the Ryukyu kingdom resorted to the deployment of several masks to protect its own political and ideological spheres. Finally, in this chapter, I will also explore the manner in which Satsuma reacted to the Ryukyuan issue and the bakufu's perception of the Ryukyu Islands after the arrival of the Western powers in the region.

2.1. Western powers in Ryukyu after the Opium War and the Treaty of Nanjing

East Asian states in the first half of the nineteenth century

As was mentioned before, the tributary system which developed in Han dynasty China (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) and which reached its apex during the Qing dynasty was grounded in the idea of sino-centrism and in the assumption of the superiority of Chinese culture over the surrounding barbarian countries. The essential formalities required to maintain tributary relations with the Beijing court were the investiture of tributary monarchs and the dispatch of missions bringing the Chinese emperor gifts as tokens of submission. The relationship between China and the surrounding barbarian countries was explicitly one of superior and subordinate. The core structure of the Chinese world order and its notions on inequality was the tribute trade system. In the East Asian world, early modern interstate diplomatic relations were determined by relationships organized around this system, which was a mixture of ideological, political, commercial and diplomatic aspects. The Asian states that dispatched tribute missions and paid respect to the Qing court received official Chinese titles and the imperial seal, which legitimated and confirmed the position of the tributary state's ruler in the name of the Chinese emperor. The unifying principle of these hierarchical relations strongly affected by a shared Confucian worldview was the performance of rituals in front of the foreign monarchs or in official communications.²¹¹ The Chinese ideology, which believed in the primacy of its own civilization, also viewed the European states as barbarians. Earlier studies have pointed out that throughout its history China had not felt the need to turn its gaze to the West. In fact, the Chinese court had practically no interest in foreign

²¹¹ Kang, *East Asia Before the West*, pp. 1-16.

relations with Western countries. Therefore it did not establish a regular agency for gathering information about the Western world.²¹²

However, in 1689, the Qing court concluded a diplomatic treaty with the Russian empire known as the Treaty of Nerčinsk. Thus, it seems more reasonable to surmise that the Qing court was interested in those foreign affairs that benefited its own interests. This agreement aimed at putting an end to the age-old matter of Cossacks invading the Amur valley in search of grain, fur and other goods.²¹³

In any case, the Qing did not recognize that for Western powers a treaty represented the apex of international relations. From the Chinese point of view, the moral superiority of the emperor, the “Son of Heaven,” was a universal principle. Therefore the authority of the emperor was superior to that of any other monarch. As a consequence, the Qing believed that Western barbarians, too, should bring tribute to the Beijing court. From the sixteenth century Westerners (Portuguese and Spanish) were, in fact, incorporated into the tributary trade system. At a later stage, the Qing considered the traditional Asian tribute system compatible with the European treaty system. The Qing thus showed a great ability to adapt its own institutions to the new international scenario that arose as a consequence of Western pressure in the region.

During the Qing period, Beijing established relations of investiture and tribute with Korea (1637), Ryukyu (1654) and Vietnam (1666).²¹⁴ Moreover, the Qing institutional code also lists Laos, Siam, Burma, as well as Portugal and Holland as

²¹² The relations with Vietnam and the south were run by the Ministry of Rituals. Harry G. Gelber, *Opium, Soldiers and Evangelicals: Britain's 1840-42 War with China and its Aftermath*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 30.

²¹³ Hamashita, *Chōkō shisutemu*, 23.

²¹⁴ Hamashita, *Chōkō shisutemu*, pp. 60-61.

tributary states.²¹⁵ From the Chinese perspective, Korea was considered the most important state within the tributary system. From the Korean point of view, however, the Manchus were a barbarian people who had usurped the throne of the Ming emperors hence the only true depositaries of traditional Chinese moral superiority were the Korean sovereigns.²¹⁶ On the other hand, as was mentioned in chapter one, Korea continued to dispatch diplomatic missions known as *Chōsen tsūshinshi* to Japan on the occasion of the appointment of a new Tokugawa shogun until 1811. The *Chōsen tsūshinshi* were a more tangible symbol of the amicable relations that existed between the Korean court and the Tokugawa shogunate.

It is well known that since the beginning of the seventeenth century the Ryukyu Kingdom maintained an ambiguous political strategy of dual subordination to China and Japan, and that after the replacement of the Ming dynasty by that of the Qing in 1644, Shuri made every effort to hide the real nature of the Japan-Ryukyu relationship from the Chinese. Shuri feared that if the new rulers of China had known the true nature of the relationship between the islands and Kagoshima, they would have put to an end to the tributary relations with the kingdom. Therefore, the kingdom decided to mask the true nature of the relationship that tied the southern archipelago to Tokugawa Japan. In the domestic picture, Shuri assimilated the same Chinese *ka-i* vision of the world. The royal government, in fact, shaped its own small-scale adaptation of the Chinese system imposing the payment of tribute from the peripheral islands.²¹⁷

The Ashikaga shoguns had sent tribute to the court at Beijing and had been

²¹⁵ Hamashita Takeshi, "The Tribute Trade System and Modern Asia," (translation by Neil Burton and Christian Daniels), in *China, East Asia and the Global Economy: Regional and Historical Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 15.

²¹⁶ Hamashita, *Chōkō shisutemu*, p.71.

²¹⁷ Morris-Suzuki, "The Frontiers of Japanese Identity," p. 49.

designated “kings of Japan” by the Chinese emperor. Nevertheless, during the reign of the first three Tokugawa shoguns, Edo rejected the traditional concept of sino-centrism and made every effort to establish official diplomatic relations with Korea and the Ryukyus, as well as commercially exclusive relationships with Dutch and Chinese merchants. The bakufu re-interpreted the outside world from a Japan-centered perspective and used the Korean and Ryukyuan embassies to symbolically translate its ideology, in which Japan had been placed at the center of a number of barbarian states.

Vietnam, on the one hand, was one of China’s traditional tributary states. While on the other hand, it began to require payment of tribute from Laos through the dispatch of embassies. The Philippines had become a Spanish colony in 1521 and in 1899 were declared a territory under the domination of the United States. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, India had become a colony of Great Britain and in 1876 it was officially annexed as part of the territories of the British Crown.

The visions that Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Ryukyu and other Asian states molded for themselves taking China as model, testify to the fact that within the sino-centric interstate order protonationalisms transpired among several of the tributary countries in a diversity of shapes.²¹⁸ Hamashita Takeshi has argued that in the transition from Ming to Qing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the ideal of the sino-centric unity was extended and consolidated, strongly influencing Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Tributary trade increased with the participation of European countries and private commerce expanded in parallel with tributary trade, and institutions related to commerce—such as trade settlement and tax collection—achieved new levels of

²¹⁸ Hamashita, “The Tribute Trade System,” p. 19.

sophistication.²¹⁹

The Chinese tributary system, as well as the Japanese interstate order and all the other images that the several East Asian states created for themselves in the early modern period, can be defined as closed structures influenced by Confucian thought and that tried to replicate a cosmological order within the temporal world. Ritual symbolized the true relationships among Asian states and their populations were the only people who could decode and benefit from the symbolism enclosed within the various ceremonials. These “isolated” systems worked more or less perfectly until Westerner powers—with their univocal visions and their determination to impose their own codes and laws—arrived to unsettle from inside the equilibrium present among the multiple visions existent in East Asia.

What we have sketched above corresponds to the political context of the East Asian states at the time when Westerners made their appearance along the Ryukyuan and Japanese coasts in the nineteenth century.

Aims and ambitions of Westerners in Ryukyu

Michael Robert Auslin gave an inspiring definition to diplomacy: “*[it] has a complex nature, being at the same time hard-hearted and visionary, realistic and utopian. It is the tool by which a government seeks to achieve strategic goals, yet it also raises hopes for a more peaceful and prosperous future. Diplomacy not only reflects the cultures of its practitioners, it becomes a culture of its own with shared meanings and symbolism. For Europeans diplomats, [...] treaty signing was the apex of international relations and had been so for centuries. Treaties, as the stepchild of diplomacy, represented the*

²¹⁹ Ibid.

honor of a nation hazarded on fragile vellum.”²²⁰

In Western countries the international relations were based on the concept of the equality of nations.²²¹ At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Great Britain, France and the United States, considered Asian states as marketplaces where it was possible to sell all the surplus goods generated by the industrial revolution, and as areas from which they could gather supplies of precious luxury products, such as silk and tea, for the refined tastes of the new European bourgeoisie. Moreover, Asian states were seen as remote regions where Catholic and Protestant missionaries were called by their faith to spread Christianity.²²² Then, these great powers were also motivated by a desire for defining the correct placement of the West within a world system, and, thus, looked at East Asia as an excellent “other” to define themselves. Western powers were determined to establish relationships with Asian countries that would be based on the principles and norms of Western international law, and the final stage in this process was the conclusion of international treaties.

In order to reach their goal, however, Western powers had to face a number of problems. For example, when entering in contact with local parties they found it difficult to recognize who represented the legitimate authority or to ensure that the local population would respect the international treaties. In this context, Westerners could not ignore the tributary relationship that existed between Asian countries and they had no choice but to implicitly acknowledge the subordinate status of those states with respect

²²⁰ Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, p. 12

²²¹ Of course “equal” with respect to abstract sovereignty. Treaty-mediated relationships were not necessarily equal and treaties were often worthless without the economic or military power to enforce them.

²²² Hamashita Takeshi, *Kindai Chūgoku no kokusai kiki: chōkō bōeki shisutemu to kindai Ajia* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1990), pp. 243-244.

to the Qing.²²³

The expression *Gaikantorai jiken* is used by Japanese scholars when referring to the requests made by French and English vessels from 1844 to 1846 to open the Ryukyu kingdom and the subsequent countermeasures adopted by the governments of Shuri and Satsuma to counter the Westerners' demands. Until the Tenpō era (1830-1844), the most significant arrivals were those in 1816 of the English vessels *Alceste*, guided Sir Murray Maxwell, and *Lyra*, led by Captain Basil Hall. These ships—and other Western vessels which arrived afterwards—had as their main purpose the exploration and measuring of new lands, the investigation of new navigation routes, as well as the examination of the possibility of establishing commercial relations and spreading Christianity.²²⁴

However, after the Opium War, the situation changed radically and there was a rapid increase in the number of foreign vessels especially those from Great Britain that reached Ryukyu. In addition, after the Opium War, Westerners began to ask Ryukyu to establish amicable relations (*washin* 和親), i.e. diplomatic relations, and commercial relations (*tsūshō* 通商), as well as permission to spread Christianity (*fukyō* 布教). In this phase, Westerners started to conceive the kingdom as a sort of southern entrance from which they could try to open Japan. The Western powers that first aimed at opening the Ryukyus were France, Great Britain and the United States.

French requests

²²³ Hamashita, “The Tribute Trade System, p. 22.

²²⁴ Nishizato Kikō “Ahen sensōgo no gaiatsu to Ryūkyū mondai: dōkō-kanpōki no Ryūkyū shozoku mondai wo chūshin ni,” *Ryūkyū Daigaku kyōiku gakubu kiyō* 57 (Nishihara: Ryūkyū Daigaku Kyōiku Gakubu, 2000), p. 33. In addition to the *Alceste* and the *Lyra*, other British vessels reached Ryukyu in this phase: the trade ship *Brothers* (1818, Captain William Upton Eddis), the warship *Blossom* (1827, Captain Frederick William Beechey) and the East India Company ship *Lord Amherst* (1832, captain John Rees). In 1837 the American commercial ship Morrison (Captain D. Ingersoll) arrived.

In particular, it was the arrival of the French warship *Alcmène* that induced the government of Shuri to comprehend how radically the situation in East Asia had changed. The ship, which was part of the French Oriental Fleet, was headed by Captain Benigne Eugene Fornier-Duplan and arrived in Naha on 28 April, 1844. After Great Britain had secured Hong Kong as its stronghold in the Pacific, France needed to assure its own strategic base that held the same importance as that of the British in order to be able to compete with its imperialistic rival.²²⁵ The appearance of the French vessels along the Ryukyuan coasts in 1844-46 represents one of the attempts by the French government to achieve this goal.

Duplan officially requested the royal government to establish diplomatic and commercial relations. He asserted that the French government had been maintaining relations with China for over two hundred years and that he had now received an imperial order to establish similar relationships with states close to China, including the Ryukyus.²²⁶

The royal government refused to accede to the French request. Nonetheless, Duplan explained that the French Oriental Fleet would soon reach the kingdom to formally receive a reply from the Shuri authorities. Moreover, despite the opposition of the royal government, he decided to leave the Catholic missionary Théodore-Augustin Forcade and his Chinese assistant, Augustine Ho, on the islands so they would learn the local language and could serve as interpreters between the approaching French mission and the Ryukyuan government. Duplan, hence, did not mention the evangelic character

²²⁵ For the French strategies during this phase, see Ikuta Sumie, “Bakumatsu ni okeru Furansu kantai no Ryūkyū raikō to Satsu-Ryū kankei,” *Okinawa bunka kenkyū* 19 (Tokyo: Hosei Daigaku Okinawa Bunka Kenkyūjo, 1992), p. 1.

²²⁶ Shimajiri Katsumi, “Futsusen rairyū jiken to Satsuma han no bōeki kōsō,” *Kyūyō Ronsō*, Shimajiri Katsutarō and Kadena Sōtoku, ed., (Naha: Hirugisha, 1986), pp.327-328.

of Forcade's mission and described him as being an interpreter.²²⁷

Forcade and his assistant settled in Seigenji 聖現寺 temple near Ameku 天久, and remained on the islands for two years. The two missionaries caused several problems to the royal government, especially from the moment when it became evident that the real nature of their mission implied evangelistic activity on the islands.²²⁸ Furthermore, Forcade arrived to denounce the expansionistic ambitions of Great Britain. Quoted below is an entry issued by the royal government that testifies to this episode:

On the same day [the 28th], when the [two missionaries] presented us with some proposals in writing related to matters previously discussed, the content of their requests [with respect to their] previous [arguments] had [completely] changed. First of all, [now they affirm that] from the very beginning Great Britain held a deep interest in our kingdom and gradually [it will launch] its own projects [of conquest]. [Forcade argues with intimidating behavior that] if we accepted the French protectorate they would protect us from Great Britain's [pressures]. It seems to us that [the French] have secret intentions of wishing to own our territory. It is a fact [far] beyond expectation.²²⁹

From this document we can see that, although Duplan had asked for the establishment of amicable commercial relations, the true purpose of France towards Ryukyu was the institution of a protectorate over the kingdom. Nevertheless, during this first phase of contact, the French did not adopt a determined and resolute policy with regard to Shuri

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 320.

²²⁸ Because it was forbidden to spread Christianity on the islands, the royal government made every effort to prevent Forcade from preaching the Catholic faith. As Confucian thought represented the official orthodoxy, the attempts at conversion by the Western missionaries did not lead to the expected results.

²²⁹ Tenpō 15/4/14, 30 May 1844. Ryūkyū Ōkoku Hyōjōsho Monjo Henshū Iinkai, ed., *Ryūkyū ōkoku hyōjōsho monjo* (hereafter *ROHM*), vol. 1, n. 1327, (Urasoe: Urasoeshi Kyōiku Iinkai, 1988) p. 385.

and left the delicate task of laying the foundations for putting the Ryukyus under the protection of France in the near future in the hands of the missionaries.

Two years later, on 6 June, 1846, the French admiral Jean-Baptiste Cecille arrived in Ryukyu on board of the *Cléopâtre* bringing with him the French Oriental Fleet mentioned by Duplan. Cecille officially asked the Shuri government to establish diplomatic and commercial relations as well as permission to spread Christianity. In addition, he presented a document in which he pointed out the merits and benefits for the kingdom if it consented to the French requests.²³⁰ Even though the Ryukyus justified their refusal to concede to the Westerners' requests by referring to the poverty of the islands as well as to its lack of metals, and they argued that the only external relations were those with China and the Tokara archipelago (Tokara *rettō* 度佳喇列島), situated in the southern part of Japan, Cecille said that the trade volume between the Ryukyus and the Tokara Islands was very high. In Cecille's opinion, therefore, there could be no doubt that the Ryukyus possessed goods that could also be exchanged with the French. Cecille even suggested to the Ryukyu government to liberate itself from Japanese control. He argued that if the "emperor of Japan," i.e. the shogun, radically changed his policy towards the kingdom, or if the Ryukyu-based officials from the Tokara Islands misbehaved toward the Ryukyuans, Ryukyu would have faced a crisis. Ryukyu could obtain all the articles needed at a fair price by exchanging goods with Europeans, and as a consequence, the merchants of the Tokara Islands would also act in accordance to this new situation. For this reason—suggested Cecille—the kingdom should establish commercial relations with European states so that it could elude the

²³⁰ *Dai Nihon ishin shiryō* (hereafter *DNIS*), vol. 1-1, (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1984), pp. 671-678.

firm control of the Japanese.²³¹ Furthermore, he underlined the favorable geographic position of the kingdom as it was situated between China, Japan, Taiwan and South-East Asia. He further asserted that Shuri could gain enormous profits if it opened trade relationships with the above-mentioned states. In addition, Cecille did not omit to expose Great Britain's intention to conquer the Ryukyus, inviting the Shuri government to accept French protection to defend itself from the British. In the end, Cecille stated that even if the kingdom refused to accept the French requests, he would have to report this to his emperor and that the French monarch's reply would reach the islands in one year.²³²

In light of what we have explored above, it is possible to infer that for France Ryukyu represented a kingdom to be put under the protectorate of the French government.

Relations with Great Britain

From 1843 until 1845, the English vessel *Samarang* guided by Edward Belcher, caused several problems to the royal government with its continuous requests for supplies and for collaboration in its surveys and explorations along the coasts of the numerous islands of the kingdom.

According to G. Tradescant Lay, a British national and Chinese interpreter residing in Fuzhou, it seems that in 1844 the British forwarded a proposal aimed at establishing relations of amity with the Ryukyu kingdom to the *Ryūkyūkan* in Fuzhou, the official Ryukyuan residence in China. From the document, however, the firm will of

²³¹ (J. 右交易致シ候儀、度往喇商人同様相成候者、日本人之嚴密取締ヲ受候ヲ可免候). *DNIS*, vol. 1-1, pp. 675-676.

²³² *Ibid.*, pp. 676-678.

the British side to open the small archipelago does not transpire.²³³ Therefore, we may surmise that it was an attempt to ascertain the possibility to establish diplomatic relations between the two kingdoms in the near future. Lay tried to inform John Francis Davis, who was both plenipotentiary and superintendent of British trade in China and governor of Hong Kong, about the favorable strategic position of the Ryukyuan archipelago as a southern entrance to Japan. However, Davis considered Lay's report "a little bit sanguine," and the suggestions were not seriously considered.²³⁴ We may assume that the British government was determined to negotiate directly with the Japanese authorities. In any case, Great Britain subsequently lost interest in Japan so it did not raise any objection when the United States manifested their resolute will to open Japan to the West.

On 1 May 1846, around the time Cecille's fleet reached Ryukyu, the medical missionary Bernard Jean Bettelheim arrived in Naha on board of the English ship *Starling*. His arrival caused a long-lasting controversy between the governments of Shuri and London.

After the *Alceste* and *Lyra* had reached Ryukyu in 1816, Great Britain had intended to dispatch a Protestant mission to the islands. The pretext would be to repay the warm welcome that Ryukyuan had accorded the British vessels by offering assistance to improve the methods of medical treatment on the islands. The true aim, however, was to spread Christianity. The arrival of Bettelheim in the Ryukyus represented the realization of just such a mission and the British intended to use the

²³³ Nishizato, "dōkō-kanpōki no Ryūkyū shozoku mondai wo chūshin ni," p. 39. Cf. Kyūyō kenkyūkai, ed., *kyūyō* 21 (Kadokawa Shoten), genponhen pp. 480-481, yomikudashihen pp. 544-546.

²³⁴ William G. Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan, 1834-1858* (London: Luzac, 1951), pp. 57-58.

kingdom to preach Christianity in Japan too.²³⁵

Like Forcade before him, Bettelheim failed in his attempt to spread Christianity in Ryukyu. Unlike his predecessor, however, Bettelheim continuously disobeyed the laws of the royal government, resorting to any means possible to realize his evangelical mission. In this way, he generated a deep distrust among the local officials, who put him under strict surveillance and appealed to China to intercede with Great Britain for his repatriation.

In March 1849, after realizing that the Qing leaders did not have the power to make Bettelheim leave, the royal government took advantage of the arrival in Naha of the British vessel *Mariner*. The Shuri government petitioned the British government through the mediation of the *Mariner*'s commander, Matheson, and asked to repatriate the missionary. At the same time, Bettelheim also sent a letter to Matheson asking for the assistance of the British Parliament. The Vice-Consul Robertson, who was on board of the *Mariner*, wrote in his report of the mission that "*Loochoo is itself a nothing [...] but its connection and communication with Japan is of so important a character, as to warrant a belief that in the event of an arrangement of the residence of Foreigners [...] Napa would become the mart of Japan for foreigners as it is now for home Trade, offering as it does a "Neutral Ground" which the Japanese may not be unwilling to take advantage of, and opening a new and important feature in our relations with that distant and sealed part of the world.*"²³⁶

Bettelheim's request for assistance and Robertson's report about Ryukyu caught the attention of the British government to the extent that in August of the same year

²³⁵ Ōkuma Ryōichi, *Ikokusen Ryūkyū raikōshi no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kajima Kenkyūjo Shuppankai, 1971), p. 116.

²³⁶ Beasley, *Great Britain*, pp. 78-79.

London decided to request Shuri to open trade relations. The British government sent a letter to George Bonham, the Superintendent of Trade in China, in which the royal government was asked to open trade and recommended the protection of Bettelheim. In early 1850, Shuri sent a reply refusing the British request to open trade because of the poverty of the islands and once again pleading with London for the repatriation of the British missionary. Thereafter, Foreign Secretary Henri John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston, and Bonham, did not manifest any further particular interest in opening trade with Ryukyu, although Palmerston continued to support Bettelheim considering him a British subject abroad.²³⁷ When, during a visit to Naha of the British vessel *Reynard* in July 1850, Shuri once again pleaded with the British government to repatriate their missionary, this caused an irritate reaction of Palmerston who threatened the royal government with the dispatch of a military fleet. However, Bonam sent Palmerston's reply to Ryukyu only in 1852, and in that same year the Foreign Secretary was replaced by Earl Granville. In September 1852 Bettelheim wrote personally to Palmerston, even though the latter had already left his post, soliciting London to take advantage of Ryukyu's political position to bypass the Japanese commercial prohibition. However, both Bowring, the new Superintendent of Trade, and Claredon, the new Foreign Secretary, were reluctant to take any further action.²³⁸ Bettelheim thus left Ryukyu in July 1854, after having spent eight years on the islands.²³⁹

It is worth noting that before leaving the islands, Bettelheim met Commodore Matthew C. Perry and explained to him in detail the ambiguous political status of Ryukyu with regard to China and Japan. Because Bettelheim spent eight years on the

²³⁷ Ibid., p. 80.

²³⁸ Ibid., p. 82.

²³⁹ For a detailed account on Bettelheim's stay in Ryukyu, see George Kerr, *Okinawa, the History of an Island People* (Rutland, Vt.: C. E. Tuttle Co, 1958), pp. 279-296.

islands, he had acquired a rather detailed knowledge about the real political situation to which the Shuri government was subjected. Thus, Bettelheim clarified that even though the kingdom was a tributary state of China, it was at the same time under the control of the Satsuma fief, which thus held the monopoly over Chinese-Ryukyuan trade. Perry, hence, acquired this valuable information immediately before trying to open Japan and Ryukyu.²⁴⁰

The British government did not show a profound interest in opening the Ryukyu kingdom. Nevertheless, people such as G.T. Lay, Robertson and especially Bettelheim, who had a first-hand experience in such far-away territories, turned their gaze to the close relations that existed between Ryukyu and Japan and pleaded with their government for using such relationships to try to open Japan. Moreover, as we have seen, since the arrival of Forcade, Cecille and Bettelheim on the islands, Westerners not only knew about the true nature of the relations between Ryukyu and Japan, but they identified the islands as an antechamber from which to reach Japan.

Commodore Perry's aims

Since the US expansion into its northwest territories, especially after gold was found in California in 1848, Japan came to represent a strategic point in the connection between the United States and the Asian continent. Moreover, because the American vessels needed coaling stations as well as harbors for refuge in case of shipwreck, it is not difficult to understand why the United States turned their gaze towards Japan.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ For further details on the meetings between Perry and Bettelheim, see Samuel Well, Williams, *A Journal of the Perry Expedition to Japan (1853-1854)* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1973).

²⁴¹ Already at the beginning of 1852, the United States planned to send a mission to secure a treaty with the Japanese government. Prior to that, Commodore James Biddle had reached Edo Bay in July 1846 and requested permission for American vessels to use Japanese ports. However, after seven

Commodore Matthew C. Perry arrived in Ryukyu on 19 April 1853 and wrote in his diary that his arrival on the islands represented the first moment of contact with Japan.²⁴² The purpose of Perry's mission was to sign a treaty with the Japanese government aimed at securing aid for shipwrecked American vessels that reached Japan, as well as the supply of foodstuffs and timber.

We can summarize the visits of the Commodore to the Ryukyu Islands as follows. After his arrival, Perry left part of his fleet on the islands and with a small contingent headed towards Ogasawara archipelago for some surveys. After briefly returning to Ryukyu, he left for Edo on 2 July to formally ask the shogunate to open Japan. On 14 July, Perry presented the bakufu leaders with a letter of state from President Fillmore and said he would return to Edo in one year to receive a formal answer from the Japanese government. On 25 July he arrived back in Naha and three days later at the school of Wakasa (*Wakasa machi* 若狭町), the site used by Ryukyuan officials for formal meetings with foreigners, he asked the Shuri authorities, permission to lease the temple of Ameku, construct a coal deposit, sell goods and other things. Perry also requested the royal government to put an end to the practice of shadowing foreigners by its officials. On 1 August, the Commodore and his fleet sailed to Hong Kong and Macao, where they spent the winter season. In January 1854, Perry arrived on the Ryukyus a fourth time and then proceeded in the direction of Edo. After having concluded the Treaty of Kanagawa with Japanese authorities on 31 March 1854, the Commodore returned to Naha on 1 July, and on the 11th he signed a treaty of amity, classified as

days Biddle received a formal refusal from the Japanese government, and since he wanted to avoid any conflict his mission ended in failure. Beasley, *Great Britain*, p. 69, p. 87.

²⁴² Matthew Calbraith Perry, *The Japan Expedition, 1852-1854: the Personal Journal of Commodore Matthew C. Perry*, Roger Pineau, ed., (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1968). Perry was nominated Commander-in-chief and extraordinary ambassador for the visit to Japan.

compact, between the United States and Ryukyu.²⁴³

After Perry had been appointed to go to Japan, he had studied in depth Japan's culture and history, as well as its relations with other states. It was during this accurate analysis that the Commodore focused his attention on the Ryukyu archipelago and decided to land at Ryukyu before continuing to Japan. During his entire stay in East Asia, only Ryukyu was visited five times by Perry. This represents without any doubt a testimony to the fact that in the eyes of the Commodore the position of Ryukyu constituted a sort of southern antechamber from which to open Japan as well as a central base from which it was possible to reach all the other East Asian states easily.

On 14 December 1852 Perry sent a letter from the Madera archipelago to John Pendleton Kennedy, the US Secretary of the Navy. A short passage of this missive states:

The islands called the Lew Chew group are said to be dependencies of Japan, as conquered by that power centuries ago, but their actual sovereignty is disputed by the government of China. These islands come within the jurisdiction of the prince of Satsuma, the most powerful of the princes of the empire, and the same who caused the unarmed American ship Morrison, on a visit of mercy, to be decoyed into one of his ports and then fired upon from the batteries hastily erected. He exercises his rights more from the influence of the fear of the simple islanders than from any power to coerce their obedience; disarmed, as they long have been, from motives of policy, they have no means, even if they had the inclination, to rebel against the grinding oppression of their rulers. Now, it strikes me, that the occupation of the principal ports of those

²⁴³ Because one of the crew members who had stayed behind on the archipelago while he was in Edo had been killed by a number of locals, Perry went at great lengths during the negotiations to ensure that Shuri would inflict appropriate punishment on those responsible. Ōkuma, *Ikokusen*, p. 187.

islands for the accommodation of our ships of war, and for the safe resort of merchant vessels of whatever nation, would be a measure not only justified by the strictest rules of moral law, but what is also to be considered by laws of stern necessity; and the argument may be further strengthened by the certain consequences of the amelioration of the condition of the natives, although the vices attendant upon civilization may be entailed upon them.²⁴⁴

Unlike Basil Hall, who had created a romantic image of the islands, Perry evaluated Ryukyu from a political and more realistic viewpoint. However, in order to gain approval of the American government for his plan to invade Ryukyu, the Commodore resorted to ethical and moral principles, as well as to necessity, and considered his mission a civilizing act.²⁴⁵

After Perry had returned to the Ryukyu Islands in early 1854, he sent a new missive to Kennedy. Below is a short passage of this communication:

To this end it is my intention, should the Japanese government refuse to negotiate, or to assign a port of resort for our merchant and whaling ships, to take under surveillance of the American flag upon the ground of reclamation for insults and injuries committed upon America citizens, this island of Great Lew-Chew, a dependence of the empire, to be held under such restraint, until the decision my government shall be known, whether to avow or disavow my action.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ United States. Navy Dept., Message of the President of the United States, transmitting a report of the Secretary of the Navy, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate of December 6, 1854, calling for correspondence, &c., relative to the naval expedition to Japan [microfilm].

²⁴⁵ Maehira Fusaaki, "Perry Ryūkyū raikō no rekishiteki haikai," *Okinawa kenshi bijuaru han 4: Perry ga yatte kita, 19 seiki ni yatte kita ikokujin tachi* (Naha: Okinawaken Kyōiku Iinkai, 1999), p. 43.

²⁴⁶ United States. Navy Dept., Message of the President of the United States, transmitting a report of the Secretary of the Navy, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate of December 6, 1854, calling for correspondence, &c., relative to the naval expedition to Japan [microfilm]. Cf. Maehira, "Perry Ryūkyū raikō," p. 44.

This missive also clarifies that for Perry the Ryukyus were under Japanese control. For Perry, thus, Ryukyu was an extremely important bridgehead for opening Japan that he would not have hesitated to use to achieve his political goals. If negotiations with the Japanese government had not reached a successful conclusion, thus, we can surmise that Perry would have started his project of occupying the Ryukyu Islands.

2.2. Countermeasures of the Shuri government to the *Gaikantorai jiken*

Before the Opium War, the Shuri government deliberately decided to not notify the Qing court and the Satsuma fief of the arrival of foreign vessels along the Ryukyuan coasts, as it deemed these appearances as mere temporary events. For the Shuri government receiving and supplying Western vessels without causing any incident or unforeseen difficulty was essential for the immediate security of the kingdom. In line with this policy, the royal government kindly received foreign ships and offered their crew food and provisions without asking any payment.

However, the growing pressure exerted by Western powers on Ryukyu after the Opium War prompted the Shuri government to revise its policy towards foreigners, until that time based on its own diplomatic skills, and to denounce the presence of the Westerners to Satsuma and the Qing. Here below I quote a notification related to the arrival of the British vessel *Samarang* under the command of Edward Belcher. From 1843 to 1845, the *Samarang* caused several problems to the Ryukyuan with its request of opening the kingdom, in addition to the continued demands for supplies and collaboration in its surveys and explorations.

This notification was issued by the royal government and was addressed to all the officials of the islands. It is one of the documents that best represent the way in which Ryukyu made preparations to receive foreign ships. The document explains that, “as a consequence of the remarkable increase in foreign vessels, such as the *Samarang* which visited the islands of Miyako and Yaeyama on multiple occasions, the government of Shuri dispatched to those territories a number of officials. Since it was not possible to foresee the arrival of foreign ships in the kingdom, the officials of all villages situated along the coasts were responsible for watching the coastlines day and night and for immediately informing the Shuri authorities of sightings of foreign ships. Furthermore, the government ordered that earlier instructions should be followed scrupulously when a foreign vessel cast anchor near the Ryukyuan coasts. The notification ended with imposing strict punishment on those who would violate the stipulations.”²⁴⁷

The document clarifies the worries and concerns of the royal government and the countermeasures that it adopted against the increase of foreign vessels after the Opium War. Shuri perceived these changes as so threatening as to induce the issuance of orders aimed at monitoring all the coasts of the kingdom and to gather information concerning the arrival of foreign ships, clearly considered of primary importance for the safety of the realm.

Moreover, because Shuri could no longer rely on its own diplomatic skills, for a number of issues it had no option but to ask for Satsuma’s advice and guidance.²⁴⁸ As a result, after the collision between China and Great Britain, the policy adopted when Western ships arrived was based on a dialogue between Shuri, Naha (the official

²⁴⁷ In the document they called “Dutch vessels,” but from the context it is possible to deduce this term as the broader meaning of “foreign ships,” British vessels in particular. Tenpō 15/2/x, March-April 1844. *ROHM*, vol. 2, n. 1379, p. 315.

²⁴⁸ Tenpō 15/4/19, 4 June 1844. *ROHM*, vol. 2, n. 1379, p. 316.

residence of the Satsuma magistrate) and Kagoshima (with its, *Ryūkyūkan*, the residence of the Ryukyuan officials and Shimazu castle).

The arrival of Duplan in Ryukyu on 28 April 1844 and his decision to leave Forcade and his Chinese interpreter behind also caused several problems to the royal government. When Duplan pressed Shuri to establish amicable and commercial relations, the Ryukyuan officials eluded the French requests as follows:

[Ryukyu] is a small kingdom [which produces] a few products, lacks precious metals such as gold and silver, and does not possess goods suitable for trade. In particular, [Ryukyu] is a tributary state of the Qing [*shinkoku no heikoku* 清国之屏藩], which maintains relations [only] with them and the Tokara Islands and has no relations with other states. This is also known by the Qing, [thus] it is not possible to establish relations with other states [without consulting them].²⁴⁹

The Shuri government thus tried to counter the French requests by pointing out the poverty of Ryukyu, by asserting that it was a tributary state of China and by concealing the submission of the kingdom to the Satsuma fief behind a fictitious commercial relationship with the Tokara Islands. In addition, the Ryukyuan officials argued that the laws of the kingdom expressly prohibited foreigners to reside on the islands, and that throughout the history of Ryukyu, no Westerner had ever resided in the kingdom.²⁵⁰

From this moment on, the reasons put forward by Shuri to elude Western requests would continuously be grounded in the attempt to define Ryukyu as a very poor kingdom that lacked resources and that did not possess goods suitable for trade. And in

²⁴⁹ *ROHM*, vol. 1, n. 1327, p. 379.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

the fact that the kingdom was a tributary state of China, which maintained relationships only with the Chinese and the Tokara Islands, but that did not have any relation with other states, including Tokugawa Japan. Their argument therefore continued that even if Ryukyu had wanted to establish new international relations, it would have had to ask permission to the Qing. In other words, Shuri employed the mask of exclusive commercial relationships with the Tokara Islands, the same mask it had worn since the beginning of the eighteenth century when dealing with the Qing, also when negotiating with Westerners. Shuri relied on yet another mask to defend its political status vis-à-vis Japan.

As previously mentioned, the two French missionaries left on the islands by Duplan caused a number of problems to the Shuri government. Especially after Forcade had asked Ryukyu to accept the status of a French protectorate and to allow the missionaries to spread Christianity, the real purpose of his mission became evident. However, when the missionary suggested the royal leaders to put Ryukyu under French protection as a measure to avoid conquest by Great Britain, the officials of Shuri, after consulting with the resident magistrate of Satsuma (*zaiban bugyō* 在番奉行), determined that establishing diplomatic and commercial relations with France would have implied separation from the Qing and the Tokara Islands and this would cause the loss of independence for the kingdom.²⁵¹ With regard to Forcade's request, the officials of the royal government in their accounts stated that "it seems to us that [the French] have secret intentions of wishing to own our territory. [...]"²⁵² deducing that behind Forcade's requests there was a French desire to conquer the kingdom.

²⁵¹ *ROHM*, vol. 1, n. 1327, p. 386.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 385.

As a countermeasure to the presence of the French missionary on the islands, the Shuri government went at great lengths to defend the symbolism of the highest offices of the kingdom.

With regard to the designation of [the offices] of *sessei* 摂政 [Regent], *sanshikan* 三司官 [Council of Three] and *goshoin atai* 御書院当,²⁵³ if the French asked [something about these posts], we have dispatched a report letter after having thought hard about whether it is a proper [measure] to reveal the real names [of such offices]. Having consulted everybody, [it was decided that] since it would not be possible to foresee what kind of complications could arise when we reply truthfully, if [the French] asked such questions, reply according to the [document] *sakumei sakukan* 作名作官 [Invention of names and invention of offices] on the attached sheet [that we have sent you]. It is strongly ordered that proper names as well as the designations of the offices of *sessei* and *sanshikan* will not be revealed. Certainly the interpreters, [but also] the guards and in addition to them, all the people, who have access to the temple [where the missionary resides] up to the level of their retainers, have to be indoctrinated [with these dispositions] so that no contradiction will arise. In addition, when the French [missionary] walks around, it is firmly ordered that the [common] people walking by do not give any answer; the interpreters, and also the [officials charged with] following [the foreigners] must act paying great attention [to this matter]. [...] ²⁵⁴

This order was issued on 19 December 1844. Because there are many references to a French missionary whom one could encounter when walking along the streets of the

²⁵³ Office that passed on all the instructions and directives issued by the king and the Great Council.

²⁵⁴ Tenpō 15/11/10. *ROHM*, vol. 18, p 218. At the end of this document it is specified that with regard to the post of *goshoin atai* its true denomination should be revealed in case the French inquired.

kingdom, it is evident that they are connected to the presence of Forcade—a situation without precedent in the history of Ryukyu. The royal government decided to conceal both names and offices of the highest levels of authority in the kingdom, and ordered to reply to foreigners’ questions based on what was stipulated in the document known as *sakumei sakukan*. In this document, the Shuri government created *ex novo* two posts/offices, i.e. two masks, charged with the contacts and negotiations with foreigners. These fictitious offices were those of *sōrikan* 総理官 and *fuseikan* 布政官.²⁵⁵

With regard to the interpretation of the above-mentioned document, earlier studies have not duly considered the addressees of the ordinance, that is to say those officials who more than others were in charge with defending the ideological/symbolic sphere of the Regent and the members of the Council of Three, as well as the physical spaces in which those officials acted. On the one hand, there are the official interpreters

²⁵⁵ Kinjō Isao argues that the royal government of Shuri, in deference to the laws of *sakoku* and being under the watchful gaze of Kagoshima, was always forced to keep the will of Satsuma in mind with regard to matters generated by the arrival of Western vessels. However, he surmises that the creation of the post of *sōrikan* was a measure adopted arbitrarily by the royal government as a response to this complicated context. (“Sōrikan nado no koto nit suite,” *Okinawa shiryō henshūjo kiyō* 9, Naha: Okinawaken Okinawa Henshūjo, 1984). Dana Masayuki points out that the arrival of the French admiral Cecille in 1846 marked a transition from a temporary use of the fictitious posts of *sōrikan*, *fuseikan* and *chihōkan* to their permanent deployment in dealings with foreigners. After the Opium War, foreign vessels not only began to appear with increasing frequency along the Ryukyuan coasts, but they also arrived to pressure the royal government to sign treaties of amity and commerce, as well as to grant permission to spread Christianity. In line with these requests, foreign ships left Western missionaries (such as Forcade and Bettelheim) behind on the islands despite protest by the Shuri authorities. The missionaries, it was thought, would acquire familiarity with Japanese language and would thus later be able to serve as intermediaries between the foreign powers and the Japanese authorities when Japan would be opened. Still according to Dana, it was precisely the presence of these missionaries that determined the transition from a temporary use to a regular deployment of the above-mentioned fictitious posts. (“Ōfu no ikokusen geisetsu taisei: *sōrikan* chūshin ni,” *ROHM*, vol. 14, 1998). Kamiya Nobuyuki argues that the permanent use of *sōrikan* and *fuseikan* started when the Shuri leaders issued the document known as “*Sakumei sakukan*” in November 1844. Kamiya sheds light on the fact that in addition to the fifteen most important offices of the kingdom, fifteen new parallel posts, created *ex novo*, were added in 1848 to be used in dealing with the foreigners. In addition, he relates the creation of the posts of *sōrikan* and *fuseikan* to the so-called Makishi-Onga Incident (*Makishi-Onga jiken*), when, after the death of Shimazu Nariakira, Shuri leaders punished some officials of the kingdom on suspicion of having complied with the secret plans of Satsuma. (“Ōkoku makki Shuri ōfu no ikokujin taiou to Satsuma han,” *Higashi Ajia no seiji bunka to kindai*, Fukaya Katsumi, ed., Tokyo: Yūshisha, 2009).

who often visited Forcade, the guards and all the people, as well as their retainers, who entered and exited the temple where the French missionary resided. These officials moved within a physical space marked off by well-defined boundaries, thus we can designate it as a “closed space.” We may surmise that within this “closed space” it was relatively easy to contain any leakage of secret information.²⁵⁶ On the other hand, the same interpreters and those officials charged with following the missionary wherever he went were ordered to make sure that along the streets of Naha or Shuri no commoner would directly answer to questions posed by the French. The above-mentioned document makes it clear that the questions under consideration were those related to the highest offices of the bureaucratic apparatus of the Ryukyu kingdom. The officials in this second group had to operate in a wider space, which did not have clearly marked physical borders, and in which it was impossible to select the itinerary beforehand as well as to determine who did or did not have the right to be along the route taken by the missionary. As a consequence, it is reasonable to think that a strict surveillance of this “open/public space” was necessary in order to defend the ideological and symbolic sphere of the *sessei* and *sanshikan*.

As we can deduce from the content of the above document, the practice of shadowing the foreigners was already in effect before the creation of the fictitious posts of *sōrikan* and *fuseikan*. Earlier studies have already pointed out that the Ryukyuan authorities followed Satsuma orders and made every effort to prevent Western

²⁵⁶ In the East Asian context there are other examples of this kind of “close spaces” through which Asian countries tried to control the foreigners’ movements. The Chinese at Nagasaki and the Dutch at Dejima could not freely cross the borders of their settlements. The Tsushima officials and retainers were only permitted to stay within the confines of the Wakan house in Pusan during their mission to Korea. Finally, before the first Opium War, the factory in Canton was a place of temporary residence for foreign traders; as a rule, these foreigners could not go out and walk around.

missionaries from spreading Christianity on the islands.²⁵⁷ Other scholarship has argued that the royal government feared that commoners and foreigners could secretly exchange goods.²⁵⁸ Moreover, it is also possible to surmise that Shuri wanted to protect its own people from possible offences caused by foreigners. For these reasons, the royal government endeavored to impede Ryukyuan to enter in contact with Westerners. In addition, as we can deduce from the document, it is important to also underline the fact that the creation of the fictitious posts of *sōrikan* and *fuseikan* was closely related to the necessity to tighten the surveillance of the foreigners.

However, as we have seen, the Ryukyuan leaders made an effort to conceal the true nature of the relationship between their kingdom and Japan to the foreigners. To this end, ever since the first landing of Westerners on the islands, we may surmise that for a political reason the royal government ordered its men to shadow the movements of the foreigners. In other words, it was considered essential to control every movement of the Westerners through the use of a system of officials-followers in order to defend the private affairs of the kingdom.

Most likely the royal government initially decided to leave surveillance of the foreigners to the interpreters because the Westerners did not know the local language. As a matter of fact, most officials in charge of following foreigners were interpreters. However, we may surmise that their official role was a cover, that is to say, it was a mask through which they could conceal their true mission, that of strictly controlling Westerners' movements. Most Ryukyuan commoners, unaware of Shuri's political strategies, presented a threat to the protection of the secret sphere of the kingdom. Thus,

²⁵⁷ Tomiyama Kazuyuki, "Ryūkyū ōkoku makki ni okeru taigai kankei: Ryū-Bei, Ryū-Futsu jōyaku teiketsu mondai wo chūshin ni," *Rekishi hyōron* 603 (Tokyo: Azekura Shoten, July 2000), pp. 32-33.

²⁵⁸ Uehara Kenzen, "Yogawari no taidō," *Okinawaken no hyakunen*, (Tokyo: Yamagawa Shuppansha, 2005), pp. 27-28.

the surveillance of the missionaries by the interpreters/officials-followers should be considered an important measure aimed at avoiding the unmasking of Shuri's private affairs.

When Cecille arrived on the islands in June 1846, the Shuri government continued its policy of falsifying of the highest official posts of the kingdom. In 1844, the royal government had appointed the *fuseikan* to deal with Duplan, but when Admiral Cecille arrived two years later and requested to negotiate with an interlocutor of a status similar to his, Shuri continued this process of concealing the main offices and charged the *sōrikan* to discuss with the French Admiral. From then on, the posts of *sōrikan* and *fuseikan* constituted the customary diplomatic ceremonial by which the Shuri authorities negotiated with foreigners.²⁵⁹

In 1848, the royal government issued a very detailed manual known as *Ikokujin he hentō no kokoro* 異国人江返答之心得 (Instructions related to the answers to be given to foreigners). This document explained the way in which officials of the kingdom should reply to certain questions asked by foreigners. These instructions dealt with three main topics: (1) the policy of concealing the true nature of the relationship between Ryukyu and Japan to Westerners, that is, the defense of the political sphere of the kingdom; (2) the protection of the ideological/symbolical sphere of the highest posts of the government; and (3) the continuation of the strategy that aimed at making Ryukyu appear as impoverished as possible in order to dodge foreigners' requests for trade.

As Kamiya has pointed out, in the section concerning answers relating to the

²⁵⁹ In addition to these two new posts, the office of *chihōkan* 地方官 had already been created when Basil Hall arrived in 1816. The main duties of the *chihōkan* were to deal with the reception of foreigners, to verify in person the purpose of their visit, and to maintain an epistolary dialogue with them through the exchange of missives. Dana, “*sōrikan wo chūshin ni.*”

official posts, the fifteen most important offices of the kingdom received completely new titles, which were very similar to Chinese designations.²⁶⁰ Moreover, the proper names of the officials in charge of those posts were changed into Chinese names.

The royal government, hence, made an effort to draft a handbook of guidelines aimed at defending the political, symbolic and economic spheres of the kingdom from the presence of the foreigners on the islands. However, it is thought that this manual was not made for all Ryukyuan officials, but was for those men who operated within the “closed” and “open/public” spaces defined above. Among the first, we may count those officials who had a prominent role within confined places such as the port of Naha or the temples that were used as the missionaries’ residence. Among the latter, we can list those officials charged with watching the movements of the foreigners, i.e. the interpreters/officials-followers. Ever since the *Gaikantōrai jiken* the Shuri government deemed the shadowing of foreigners a necessary measure to prevent them access to the secret and private affairs of the kingdom. We may thus surmise that the concealment of the true nature of the relationship between Ryukyu and Japan was one of the most important secrets the interpreters/officials-followers had to preserve.

In the documents related to the meetings between the *sōrikan* and *fuseikan* on the one hand and the Europeans on the other, the function of these fictitious posts and the way in which the Ryukyuan government intended to face the foreigners’ requests becomes clear. The titles of *sōrikan* and *fuseikan* designated officials charged of dealing with the foreigners directly. However, they had no power of decision to the extent that their task was limited to refer the Western demands to the Great Council. Then, the highest political body of the kingdom would, in turn, have to inform the king, the other

²⁶⁰ Kamiya, “Ōkoku makki,” pp. 228-229.

high-ranking officials and Satsuma's resident magistrate. The responses to give to the foreigners were, thus, decided based on the consultations among and within these organs and officials. All this shows that the Ryukyuan authorities, though being rather coordinated in dealing with foreigner pressure, at the very least needed to consult the Satsuma fief with regard to the decisions to take.²⁶¹

On the other hand, the fictitious titles of *sōrikan* and *fuseikan* also served to exempt the most important posts of the government, those of the Regent and of the members of the *sanshikan*, from any responsibilities, especially when it came to possible concessions granted to Westerners during the negotiations. Moreover, the

²⁶¹ According to Dana Masayuki, we may synthesize the process through which the governmental machine of Shuri arranged the welcome of a foreign vessel that had appeared along Ryukyuan coasts in the following seven points:

1. Immediately upon the sighting of a foreign ship, the officials in charge of monitoring the coasts had to inform the royal government.
2. The Shuri government then designated a team composed of nearly twenty officials, among them the Regent, the members of the *sanshikan*, the *sōrikan* and other high-ranking officials, to deal with the arrival of the Western vessel.
3. The *taifu* (大夫, Official of high rank of the village of Kumemura) and an interpreter of Kumemura were sent to the foreign ship to ask information about nationality, number of crew members, purpose of the visit, schedule of the mission and situation in China. A letter of the *chihōkan* was also delivered to the captain of the vessel.
4. The officials of Naha, Shuri, Kumemura, Tomari and other important villages, received instructions with regard to the imminent landing of Westerners on the islands.
5. After having examined the account of the Kumemura *taifu*, the government-appointed team prepared to negotiate with the foreigners.
6. The *chihōkan* reached the foreign ship to express the first official greeting to the foreigners and the date of the official meeting of the Admiral of the ship with the *sōrikan* and *fuseikan* was decided.
7. At the stipulated date, the official meeting took place in the school of Wakasa, in Naha, and the negotiations began.

Dana, "sōrikan wo chūshin ni."

documents of the time seem to attest that, despite the control exerted over the islands, Satsuma did not play any role in the decision of the royal government to create *ex novo* these posts delegated to deal with the foreigners.²⁶²

During one of the meetings with Cecille in July 1846, the *sōrikan* refused the French requests for the following reasons after having received instructions from the royal government:

Ryukyu is a small kingdom and its subordinated islands are also of small size. [Within these territories] there are no metals [gold, silver, copper, iron], textile fabrics or other goods are not produced, and the yield of grains is very poor. [The kingdom of Ryukyu] produces only a few products; [therefore] it is hardly definable as a state. Since the Ming period the kingdom is a tributary state of China, and since generations the Ryukyuan kings have been receiving the investiture from the Chinese emperor and have been dispatching tributary missions to China. [...] We purchase [the goods that we carry to China] all exclusively from the Tokara Islands. In addition, we purchase also the goods essential for the kingdom [rice, grains, timber, metals, cotton, tobacco, oils, candles, ceramics, etc.] from the merchants of the Tokara Islands who come to Ryukyu.²⁶³

After the arrival of the British ship *Starling* with Bettelheim on board, the *sōrikan* asked for compassion from the English government with regard to the presence of a Protestant missionary in Ryukyu as follows:

The presence of your host [Bettelheim] in our humble kingdom will create further difficulties to

²⁶² Kinjō, “Sōrikan.”

²⁶³ (Dōkō 26) Kōka 3/interc.5/12 (5 July 1846). *DNIS*, vol. 1-1, pp. 634-635.

the already serious situation of the officials and Ryukyuan population; this will lead to the loss of independence for the kingdom in a short time. For these [reasons], [we ask you with our hearts] to comprehend the privations of our small kingdom and we appeal to the compassion of the great United Kingdom towards a small kingdom [so that you decide] to renounce to let [Bettelheim] remain in this territory; and as soon as the weather conditions would permit [departure], you repatriate your missionary with this [same] ship [by which he had reached Ryukyu].²⁶⁴

From 1846, the Shuri government decided to inform the Qing of the presence of the Western missionaries on the islands and asked their support for resolving this serious situation. The Qing emperor replied saying that for centuries Ryukyu had been a loyal tributary state and that he thus was inclined to lend support to the Ryukyuan request. However, the Qing, exhausted from civil war with the Taiping and from wars with the Westerners, were far from having the ability and strength to help the Ryukyuan.²⁶⁵

As we have seen, early in 1850, Shuri sent its refusal to the British government's request for opening trade citing the poverty of the islands. Moreover, Shuri also mentioned that the laws of Japan strictly prohibited foreign trade, and that since Ryukyu depended on Japan for many supplies the royal government could not break these laws.²⁶⁶

In this chapter we have underlined the fact that the royal government needed at least to consult with Satsuma with regard to the reception of foreigners. There can be no doubt that on various occasions Kagoshima dictated the policy to follow for resolving

²⁶⁴ *DNIS*, vol. 1-1, Tokyo, p. 310.

²⁶⁵ Regarding the support asked by the Shuri government to the Qing for finding a solution to the problem of foreigners' presence in the kingdom, see Nishizato, "dōkō-kanpōki no Ryūkyū shozoku mondai wo chūshin ni," pp. 50-60.

²⁶⁶ Beasley, *Great Britain*, p. 80.

the problems caused by the presence of the Westerners. However, it is incorrect to assume that Shuri passively accepted all the orders issued by Satsuma. First, it is important to keep in mind that the magistrate and other Satsuma officials resident in Naha had no option but to rely exclusively on the information received from the royal government's men concerning the ongoing negotiations and other matters connected to foreign pressure.²⁶⁷ As we will see in the next paragraph, in 1846 and 1847, Satsuma proposed to the Shuri authorities to open international trade with the French as a measure to face the *Gaikantorai jiken*. However, contrary to Satsuma's expectation, the Shuri government argued in 1846 that if the only option was to open trade with France it should only concern goods produced in Ryukyu and not articles imported from Kagoshima as had been suggested by Satsuma. In this way, the profit would be so small that the French would want to put an end to such insignificant trade. In addition, this strategy would not contradict the policy adopted by Shuri with regard to Westerners so far, that of making Ryukyu appear a very poor kingdom. If the Ryukyus could sustain commerce based on the exchange of various articles, its traditional image of poverty would be unmasked, irritating the French and leading to other demands to open trade. In such a scenario the relationship between Kagoshima and Ryukyu may have been exposed and this then might impede the tributary relation with China.²⁶⁸ The following year, Shuri declined Kagoshima's proposal to start commercial transactions at Canton between Ryukyu and the French adducing that the laws of the tributary system allowed the Ryukyus to trade only with the Chinese in the port of Fujian. Moreover, the Qing would not allow Ryukyuan tributary ships to carry out business with the French

²⁶⁷ Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, p. 153.

²⁶⁸ Shimajiri, "Futsusen rairyū jiken," p. 333; Uehara, "Zusho Shōzaemon no ugoki wo chūshin ni shite," pp. 164-167.

within its own territory.²⁶⁹

For the Shuri government, hence, the arrival of the Westerners represented a serious matter that was unprecedented in the history of the kingdom. However, documentary sources of the time make it clear that the royal government did not resign itself to submit to the foreigners' requests, but reacted swiftly and showed in the course of the various negotiations to have acquired a certain level of skill in diplomacy. The government of Shuri, in fact, rejected all requests for opening the kingdom based on its alleged poverty and the shortage of resources of the islands, but also on the fact that Ryukyu was a tributary state of China. In this way, it demonstrated to be an active subject of the East Asian traditional interstate order and made use of the laws of the tributary system to justify the impossibility to establish amicable and commercial relations without Chinese approval. In addition, Shuri resorted to the same laws of the tributary system in order to shelve the proposal of the Satsuma officials, who had found in the concession of trade to the French the key to resolve the complicated matter of the French pressure, as well as an effective means by which to obtain huge profits. Furthermore, the royal government, during its negotiations with foreigners argued that the kingdom's laws expressly prohibited foreigners to reside on the islands and to spread Christianity, and appealed many times to the benevolence and compassion that the great Western powers should have felt towards the small Ryukyu kingdom.

The Shuri authorities, from the king to the low-ranking officials, showed a certain ability to deal with the problems generated by the arrival of Westerners, especially in relation with the creation of fictitious posts delegated to negotiate with foreigners. This strategy served to protect the most important offices, i.e. to defend the

²⁶⁹ *ROHM*, vol. 2, n. 1385, p. 570.

ideological/symbolic sphere of the kingdom. In addition, it is also possible to surmise that such countermeasures were necessary because the titles and names of those who were appointed to offices, being very similar to Japanese designations, would have risked of revealing that Tokugawa Japan *de facto* exerted power over the kingdom. This ability seems to be confirmed by the fact that no Westerner who arrived on the islands in that time appeared to have had doubts about the legitimacy of the posts of *sōrikan* and *fuseikan*.

At the same time, the Ryukyu authorities resorted to presumed relations of a commercial nature with the Tokara Islands in order to conceal the relations they maintained with Satsuma and Edo, and justified the kingdom as a political entity situated between China and Japan which could continue to exist only if it preserved its relations with the Qing and the Tokara Islands. Shuri ordered its officials to follow all the movements of the foreigners, and—through the publication of the *Ikokujin he hentō kokoroe*—provided its men with a detailed guide by which it tried to conceal both its political status and its commercial capacity, as well as to defend its ideological/symbolic sphere.

However, once Ryukyuan missions are dispatched to Edo all the contradictions embedded in the policy that Shuri adopted towards the Westerners since 1844 came to the surface. As we will see, the embassies to Edo—given that Westerners based in Ryukyu or Edo could witness them—risked to put end to the masquerade that the royal government had created *ad hoc* to deal with foreigners.

2.3. Countermeasures of Kagoshima and Edo after the arrival of Westerners in

Ryukyu

Satsuma's policy in relation to the *Gaikantorai jiken*

In the discussion of the notification promulgated by Shuri authorities on the occasion of appearance of the *Samarang* (see page 138), attention was focused on the new orders issued by the royal government regarding the necessity to immediately transmit information related to the sighting of foreign vessels. In the same document reference is also made to a number of directives issued previously by the Shuri government with regard to the steps to undertake when foreign vessels in difficulty reached the islands.²⁷⁰ These instructions, known as *gojōsho* 御條書, were transmitted by Satsuma to the royal government on 16 October 1704 and represented the first in a series of directives related to foreign relations that the southern fief transmitted to Ryukyu. According to these regulations, Ryukyuan officials should erect watch posts along the coast and prevent the landing of foreigners—the major threats at the time being Portuguese and Spanish vessels—in order to avoid any kind of contact between commoners and the shipwrecked. However, in case of emergency, foreigners should be granted permission to come to shore provided they were taken to remote and isolated areas, where a suitable lodge for them should then be built. Ryukyuan officials together with a few Satsuma men were required to monitor the strangers day and night, to supply the foreigners with the foods they requested, and to take care of their belongings. If one of the visitors died, the body should be preserved in salt and the corpse sent to Kagoshima. It was necessary to transmit missives to Nagasaki as well as to keep the Satsuma authorities informed. Even when ships that were not classified as *nanban* 南蛮船 reached the islands, if it was suspected that there were Christians on board, those vessels should be received

²⁷⁰ *ROHM*, vol. 2, n. 1379, p. 315.

following the guidelines set for Christian ships.²⁷¹

Satsuma's main objective of this series of directives was to impede the Ryukyans to enter in contact with populations close to Christianity. Shuri transmitted Satsuma's directives to all the islands of the Ryukyu kingdom and these regulations constituted the traditional protocol according to which Ryukyu welcomed foreigners until the first half of the nineteenth century.

The crisis related to foreign policy that embroiled Ryukyu from 1844 to 1850 also generated understandable concerns among the Satsuma leaders, who feared developments that might have compromised their own hegemonic position over the southern archipelago and their role of mediation between Shuri and Edo. The *Ryūkyū hisaku* 琉球秘策 (Secret plans relating to Ryukyu), drafted in 1844 by the Confucian scholar Godai Naozaemon 五代直左衛門, one of the advisors of the Shimazu family, illustrates in a rather eloquent way the policy followed by Satsuma during this phase.²⁷² According to Godai, the critical situation in which Ryukyu had ended up after the Opium War could have been resolved only with “refusal” (*zetsu* 絶ッ) or “conciliation” (*wakai* 和解) of the foreigners' requests. He was, in fact, convinced that Japan was not in a position to compete with Western military power, so he believed it was necessary to avoid any kind of conflict (*sen* 戦).²⁷³ Godai's strategy is very clear: the total refusal of Westerners' requests was a priority. However, in case this turned out to be impossible, it was necessary to assume a more conciliatory stance that was still aimed at granting only the slightest concessions to the foreigners. First, all requests related to the establishment of diplomatic and commercial relations should be addressed to Beijing. Then, he said

²⁷¹ Hōei 1/9/18. *Kagoshimakenshi*, vol. 2 (Kagoshima: Kagoshimaken, 1940), p. 653.

²⁷² Kuroda Yasuo, “Ryūkyū Hisaku ni tsuite,” *Aichi Gakuin daigaku bungakubu kiyō* 13, (Nagoya: Aichi Gakuin Daigaku Bungakkai, 1983), p. 24. Cf. Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, pp. 154-155.

²⁷³ Kuroda Yasuo, “Ryūkyū Hisaku ni tsuite,” p. 25.

that in case of further pressure by Westerners, the refusal of their requests should be motivated by the fact that Ryukyu was a political entity situated between China and Japan. In fact, the islands sent tribute both to the Qing and the Tokugawa bakufu, since they were under the protectorate of Japan. In addition, for the small kingdom the relationships with its two powerful neighbors were vital for its own independence.²⁷⁴

Thus, Godai ended up suggesting to reveal the true nature of the relationship that existed between Ryukyu and Japan. Moreover, regarding the warning expressed by the French about the British expansionist aims, he argued that both France and Great Britain, though being two different political entities, were European states that shared the same political goal with regard to the Ryukyu kingdom. Moreover, if it was impossible to resist the pressure of opening trade with Westerners, arrangements should be in order for Satsuma to reap the benefits.²⁷⁵ This testifies to the fact that, already in 1844, Godai foresaw the opportunity for the fief of Satsuma to profit from the establishment of commercial relations between Ryukyu and Western powers, a possibility that Kagoshima leaders once more pointed out two years later.

A few months after the appearance of the French ship *Alcmène*, Satsuma leaders ordered a regiment of 150 soldiers to go to the main island of Okinawa. They arrived on 1 October 1844 but were called back home only six months later. Although the dispatch of this military contingent had been communicated to Edo, Satsuma did not inform Edo about the withdrawal of the troops. The *karō* 家老 of Satsuma, Zusho Shōzaemon, believed that the dispatch and settlement of a large number of Japanese guards was pointless because the military strength of the Westerners was clearly superior to that of Japan. Moreover, the fief of Satsuma was facing a financial crisis. Therefore, Satsuma

²⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 29.

was not in a position to maintain this rather large military contingent on the islands for a long time.²⁷⁶

From 1846, Zusho initiated a series of meetings with the *rōjū* Abe Masahiro aimed at finding a solution to the critical situation of Ryukyu.²⁷⁷ Zusho put forward a plan to consent to trade between the French and the Ryukyans, stating that France would probably no longer accept a refusal by Shuri. And among all the requests made by the French, it would be opportune to accept the one related to trade, which appeared to be the least harmful for Japan. Furthermore, he argued that, since the islands were considered a *gaihan* 外藩—that is, a fief (*han*) outside the *bakuhau* system—authorizing trade with France that was limited to the Ryukyu Islands would not have violated the *sakoku* policy.²⁷⁸ In this way, Zusho aimed at obtaining huge profits from a monopoly on the commerce between France and Ryukyu, which could then contribute to restore the impoverished coffers of Satsuma.

On 14 August 1846, Shimazu Nariakira, heir-at-law of daimyo Narioki, explained the international situation that entangled the Ryukyu kingdom in a missive addressed to the former daimyo of Mito, Tokugawa Nariaki:

If [the French vessels] came back to the islands this year, [it would be opportune] to refuse once more all their requests. [However] if they are not disposed to accept [such refusals], then [we could propose] to realize commerce [between the French and Ryukyans] in Fujian, China, adducing the fact that Chūzan [Ryukyu] is a small kingdom and [does not possess

²⁷⁶ Uehara, “Zusho Shōzaemon no ugoki wo chūshin ni shite,” pp. 156-157.

²⁷⁷ At that time two currents existed within the Satsuma fief, one “conservative” led by daimyo Shimazu Narioki and *karō* Zusho, the other “radical” guided by Narioki’s heir, Nariakira. For further information, see Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, pp. 150-168.

²⁷⁸ Kōka 3/interc. 5/25. *DNIS*, vol. 1-1, pp. 758-59.

enough resources to receive the French vessels]. If [the French] do not accept [this explanation], [we could] put forward the proposal to start off trade on the islands of Miyako or Yaeyama, which are subordinate to the control of the government of Chūzan. If this [option] also results in being difficult to realize, then [we could consent to] commerce at Chūzan [on the main island of Okinawa]. However, [in such a case it is considered opportune] to refuse [any request] to erect a commercial building. [In case trade at Chūzan is started] it will be ordered to our officials to begin consultations with the French so that they agree to [our plan which postulates their landing] on the islands once a year to carry out commercial activities; and once business is concluded they [will be asked] to leave the kingdom [without leaving any compatriot behind on the islands].²⁷⁹

From 1846, Satsuma tried to persuade the Ryukyu government to start commercial relations with France. At the same time, Zusho also projected to establish an office within the royal government of Shuri through which to expand trade exchanges with the Chinese market. According to the *Ryūkyū ōkoku hyōjōsho monjo*, the Satsuma officials acting on orders of Zusho, attempted to convince the Ryukyuan by outlining, in 1846, the possibility of huge profits, and in 1847, by emphasizing the fact that trade with the French would contribute to guaranteeing the independence of the kingdom. In addition, the Satsuma officials argued that in Edo the bakufu (the *rōjū* Abe Masahiro, in particular) had authorized Zusho to start trade between France and Ryukyu with the purpose of defending the autonomy of the kingdom, even though the traditional laws of *sakoku* permitted foreign trade only at Nagasaki between Japanese merchants on the one hand and Chinese and Dutch traders on the other.

²⁷⁹ Kōka 3/6/23. Shimazu Nariakira Monjo Kankōkai, ed., *Shimazu Nariakira monjo* (hereafter *Shimazu Nariakira monjo*), upper vol., (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1969), p. 72.

Furthermore, after Shuri leaders refused the Satsuma proposals arguing that the concessions granted to the French would have certainly attracted other Western ships claiming the same privileges, Satsuma suggested to the royal government to carry out French-Ryukyuan commerce at Canton, in China.²⁸⁰ However, the Ryukyu government repeatedly refused the requests of the Japanese fief, appealing to the norms that regulated the sino-centric diplomacy.²⁸¹

The death of the *karō* Zusho in January 1849 put an end to this first attempt by Satsuma to push the Ryukyuan to trade with Westerners.²⁸² From 1851, the new daimyo of Satsuma, Shimazu Nariakira, drew on the same policy in an even more determined way urging Shuri to open trade with the French and Dutch. In this respect, Robert I. Hellyer observes that both Zusho and Nariakira, although they were the leaders of the conservative and radical currents within the Satsuma fief respectively, shared the same spirit of commercial opportunism.²⁸³

As soon as he was appointed daimyo of Satsuma, Nariakira made issued a series of directives to the Shuri government, which, in the light of the *Gaikantorai jiken* of 1844-46, would serve to dictate the process by which the Ryukyuan should welcome foreigners from then on. This series of orders was issued on 17 March 1851 and, like previous regulations, they are also known as *gojōsho*. The orders rectify some dispositions transmitted in 1704 and came to constitute the protocol for dealing with foreigners until the signing of international treaties. The new directives stipulated the

²⁸⁰ *ROHM*, vol. 2, n. 1381, p. 470.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, n. 1385, p. 570.

²⁸² In September 1848, Nariakira revealed to the Edo bakufu some important details related to Zusho's 1846 commercial plan by which he aimed at using Satsuma funds to expand commerce between Ryukyu and China within the port of Fujian. In January of the following year, Abe Masahiro faced Zusho in Edo and severely criticized him for what he had heard. In an attempt to protect his lord, Narioki, from possible retaliations by the bakufu, Zusho committed suicide in the Satsuma residence in Edo. Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, p. 161.

²⁸³ Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, p. 154.

following:

[...] Regarding the procedure on how to welcome [Westerners] when foreign vessels are washed up on [the Ryukyuan shore], [it is necessary] to operate in deference to the content of the directives issued by the bakufu. According to these, for the time being carefully accept [the above mentioned content], and in any circumstance be tolerant and act with great care and calm. Furthermore, if [foreigners] molest or act violently towards [Ryukyuan people] and it is very tough to restore order, through the collaboration of everybody, at the risk of your life commit all of yourself and serve faithfully, so that it does not tarnish the kingdom's prestige. It is forbidden to behave cowardly.

When a foreign ship is washed up on [the Ryukyuan shore], immediately send your officials [to the ship] to ask in detail about the nationality and other [information], and carefully ascertain the size of the ship, the shape of the boat, the number of crew members, the physical features of the foreigners, the appearance of their clothes and other [particulars]; in addition, illustrate with a detailed sketch [other elements that you consider] noteworthy. Pass on the information according to traditional protocol.

Regarding the shipwreck of foreign ships, it concerns very important facts whose information is transmitted to the shogunate, since [it is ordained that the practice of] passing on contents [which wander off from] the bare necessity of the facts [in question] has to be put to an end, it is forbidden to disregard [what is prescribed above].

Concerning the prohibition against letting the foreigners land [on the islands], you are [certainly] well aware [of this ban] because of the directives issued by the bakufu a long time ago. However, if [foreigners] enter pressing reasons and obstinately remain [on the islands], in case you deal [with such a situation] act in a reasonably way. Since it would create a very

complicated situation if it arose [any complication], it is prohibited to take hasty action.

In case foreign vessels are damaged and crew members land on the islands, [accommodate the strangers] in a surrounded lodge and certainly charge the guardians with monitoring [the shelter where they reside]. It is forbidden to let [the foreigners] go out from the above-mentioned surrounded space. If a foreigner dies of an illness, [though we believe you should preserve the corpse in salt and send it to Kagoshima, and act] in deference to the directives that we had transmitted to you in the Hōei era [1704]. However, since in the Ryukyu [kingdom] there is no univocal way of dealing [with such matters] within the several regions of the islands, we think that depending on the circumstances [some incomprehension] could arise. [Hence] manage [all matters] promptly and reasonably.

Regarding the [establishment] of intimate relations with the strangers, you are naturally aware that from a long time ago [with regard to this kind of contact] a ban [issued] by the bakufu is in effect. However, if a foreign vessel is washed up, you must control [the presence of the strangers] firmly with all your energy. If there is even the smallest slackening, this would mean a violation of bakufu laws so it would be very inconvenient. [For this reason,] it is forbidden to act even with the slightest superficial [behavior]. [...]²⁸⁴

At the end, the document orders to follow these new instructions regarding foreign relations as well as to adhere to the directives issued in 1704 concerning all those commands that were not emended on this occasion. From this ordinance it is possible to deduce that the Satsuma fief, after having received instructions from the bakufu, drafted a new list of commands addressed to the royal government. These commands prescribed that strangers should be treated cordially and tolerantly. In deference to the regulations

²⁸⁴ Ka'ei 4/2/15. *ROHM*, vol. 14, pp. 515-516.

issued in 1704, the practice of making detailed accounts on the vessels and their crews was reconfirmed. However, from this moment these accounts should be limited to the bare minimum because some of them were also transmitted to Edo. This testifies to how Satsuma accurately selected what kind of information was suitable to pass on to the shogunate. With regard to the surveillance of the foreigners on the islands, it became clear that it was very complicated to maintain a unique protocol to welcome foreigners. Thus, if complications arose it was possible to deal with it in a different way with respect to traditional protocol. These directives represented a countermeasure conceived by Kagoshima, after having consulted the Edo leaders, with regard to the events that entangled Shuri during the *Gaikantōrai jiken*. When from the years 1844-46 Western missionaries started to reside on the islands, Satsuma ordered Shuri to treat foreigners cordially, while also prohibiting in a peremptory tone to make intimate relationships with them.

Now it is useful to focus our attention on the problems caused by Western presence with regard to the policy of masking the real relations between Ryukyu and Japan.

In 1847 king Shō Iku passed away and the following year Shō Tai became the new king of Chūzan. In line with traditional protocol, a new Ryukyuan mission was planned for 1850 to express gratitude for the enthronement of the new Ryukyuan monarch to the Tokugawa shogun. Regarding this mission of gratitude, Shimazu Nariakira, in a missive dated 2 May 1848 which was addressed to his confidant, Yamaguchi Sadasuke, stated that “given that the foreigners who are residing on the islands went near the residence of the Satsuma magistrate in Naha, the magistrate, Kurayama Sakudayū, had no option but to hide himself. [...] I think with ever more

[enthusiasm] to the Ryukyuan [mission of gratitude] planned for two years from now [1850]. However, if [the presence] of the foreigners drags on, I believe it will be very complicated to realize the mission.”²⁸⁵

This document makes it clear that the Kagoshima officials based in Naha hid themselves when missionaries came close to their residence. In addition, because Westerners resided on the islands, they would be able to witness the dispatch of a Ryukyuan embassy to Edo. This would have certainly contributed to the exposure of the true nature of the relationship between Shuri and Japan. In other words, the Ryukyuan missions came to constitute a serious threat for the masking of the political status of the kingdom vis-à-vis Japan to the foreigners and, as a consequence, to the Chinese.

In a letter sent by Nariakira to Yamaguchi on 29 June, he states that “even though Ryukyu had dispatched a ship [to Kagoshima with the purpose of] expressing their different point of view [with regard to dispatching the planned mission] in the following Dog Year [1850],” [Satsuma] convinced the Ryukyuan by the means of [special] treatment.²⁸⁶

According to Kamiya, this special treatment refers to a loan of eight hundred *kanme* of silver to Shuri in order to finance the afore-mentioned embassy.²⁸⁷ From the content of this missive we can surmise that the Ryukyu government was very concerned about the presence of foreigners in its own territory to the extent that it came to ask Kagoshima to abort the mission projected for 1850. Although, as is clear from the letter of Nariakira, Satsuma, too, was afraid that Western presence might have impeded the mission, Kagoshima authorities were aware that the bakufu would not have consented to

²⁸⁵ Kōka 1/3/29. *Nariakirakō shiryō*, vol. 1, n. 378, pp. 761-762.

²⁸⁶ Kōka 1/5/29. *Ibid.*, n. 379.

²⁸⁷ Kamiya Nobuyuki, “Ryūkyū shisetsu no kaitai,” in *ROHM*, vol. 5, p. 19.

the abortion of such an important event. Thus, they opted for granting a huge loan to Shuri in order to persuade the Ryukyans to dispatch the embassy. Regarding Satsuma's pragmatism, in a letter addressed to Tokugawa Nariaki and dated 6 April 1850, Nariakira mentions that since the mission of gratitude coincided with the presence of Bettleheim on the islands, he was deeply concerned. Nevertheless, there was nothing that could be done, because the presence of the foreigners would not suffice as reason for the bakufu to abort the mission.²⁸⁸

As we have seen, from 1844, that is, from the moment Western missionaries began to reside on the islands, the dispatch of the Ryukyuan missions became complicated for Kagoshima and Shuri. However, according to Satsuma the bakufu would not have agreed to a suspension of the missions merely because of the presence of Westerners in Ryukyu. Therefore, we can surmise that in this phase for Edo their presence was not serious enough to warrant the renunciation of the embassies from Shuri. The mission of 1850—the last Ryukyuan embassy to reach Edo—was thus dispatched.

From 1844, Godai in his *Ryūkyū hisaku* illustrated in detail the way in which Ryukyu would have negotiated with Westerners, showing a rather realistic perception of the international circumstances of the time. Also the *karō* Zusho tried to use the Ryukyuan commercial opportunities to resolve the financial problems of Satsuma. In order to achieve its aims, Satsuma sought to exert its influence both with the bakufu, through the contacts with Abe Masahiro and Mito Nariaki, and with Ryukyu, arguing that the proposals suggested by Kagoshima not only would have brought advantages to Japan but also to the royal government. From 1851, after Nariakira became daimyo of

²⁸⁸ Ka'ei 3/2/24. *Nariakirakō shiryō*, vol. 1, n. 121.

Satsuma, Kagoshima transmitted a series of directives to Shuri as a countermeasure to the situation that had arisen after the *Gaikantōrai jiken*. Satsuma ordered to receive foreigners with courtesy but prohibited once again to establish intimate relations with them. Satsuma aimed at preventing the Ryukyans from becoming close to Westerners and their religious faith because it was afraid to lose its hegemonic position over the kingdom. Nevertheless, as we have seen, Shuri re-interpreted the instructions received from Kagoshima to defend the ideological and political sphere of the kingdom.

The arrival of Westerners on the islands caused all those contradictions embedded in the ambiguous status of Ryukyu to come to the surface. From this moment on, in fact, it was necessary to mask not only to the Chinese but also to the Western powers the true nature of the relationship that existed between the kingdom and Japan. The dispatch of Ryukyuan missions began to represent a serious threat to the policy of concealing the real relationships between Ryukyu and Kagoshima/Edo. However, Satsuma believed the presence of foreign missionaries on the islands would not have sufficed as a reason to cancel the mission. Instead, Kagoshima resorted to a loan to persuade Shuri to dispatch the mission of gratitude. As a consequence, the Ryukyuan mission of 1850 was realized smoothly.

Ryukyu from the bakufu's perspective after the arrival of Western powers

As is well known, the bakufu in 1792 refused the request by the Russian military officer Adam Laxman to establish commercial relations citing as reason that so far Japan had only been maintaining external relations that were either of *tsūshin*, i.e. diplomatic, or *tsūshō*, i.e. commercial.²⁸⁹ In 1805, the shogunate resisted pressure from the mission

²⁸⁹ *TI*, vol. 7, p. 94.

lead by the Russian ambassador Nikolay Petrovich Rezanov saying that Japan had been maintaining diplomatic relations (*tsūshin*) with Korea and Ryukyu, and commercial relations (*tsūshō*) with Chinese and Dutch merchants. And that it had no relations with any other state, since that would be in open violation of the laws issued by its ancestors.²⁹⁰

In 1844, the king of the Netherlands, William II, sent a letter to the Tokugawa shogun, Ieyoshi, in which he suggested that Japan open its ports to Western powers. In the reply sent by the *rōjū* to the Dutch government in 1845, the bakufu also stated that Japan had been maintaining diplomatic relations with Korea and Ryukyu, and trade relations with Chinese and Dutch merchants. Thus, establishing diplomatic relations with Holland or to any other state was impossible.²⁹¹ In this way, the bakufu declared to the Western world that Ryukyu was a kingdom with which it maintained diplomatic relations, implying that the archipelago was not under the jurisdiction of Japan.

Moreover, as we have seen, until 1851 the traditional Ryukyuan protocol regarding the welcoming of foreigners was based on directives transmitted by Satsuma in 1704. Therefore, the Ryukyus were excluded by the “Order to drive away foreign ships” (*ikokusen uchiharai rei* 異国船打ち払い令) of 1825 which had been issued by Edo to all Japanese territories.²⁹²

In order to better understand how Japan perceived Ryukyu in the middle of the nineteenth century, it is appropriate to take into consideration the vision of Tokugawa Nariaki, the former daimyo of Mito, who was one of the most politically influential

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 193.

²⁹¹ Fujita Satoru, *Kinsei kōki seijishi to taigai kankei* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 2005), pp. 23-24.

²⁹² The “Order to drive away foreign ships” was cancel in 1842. Nishizato, “Dōkō-kanpōki no Ryūkyū shozoku mondai wo chūshin ni.”

people of the time. As is well known, for Nariaki the answer to Western pressure should not lay in surrender but in re-armament, including the acquisition of Western-style weapons and ships, in the refusal to open ports to international commerce, as well as in the declaration that Japan would resist any foreign pressure in order to raise morale and increase the popularity of the government.²⁹³

According to Nariaki, foreigners would first arrive in Uruga and after having prepared to occupy Japan, they would first conquer Ryukyu followed by Ezo territories. After attacking from the south and the north, they would penetrate sideways from Uruga. He did not doubt this for a second.²⁹⁴ Therefore, for Nariaki, the lot of Ryukyu was inescapably linked to the safety of Tokugawa Japan. In a proposal sent to the bakufu in 1846, he suggested to annex Ryukyu to Japan. In addition in a missive sent to Abe that same year, he mentioned that before Japan could be robbed of Ryukyu by the barbarians (*iteki* 夷狄=Westerners), Satsuma should dispatch a large contingent to the kingdom. On Ryukyuan territory the Japanese troops should challenge and defeat the Westerners in a decisive battle that would prevent them from approaching Japan.²⁹⁵ Moreover, Nariaki tried to explain in realistic terms the reasons for which Japan could not defend the Ryukyu Islands. Because the bakufu in 1845 had officially affirmed to the Dutch government that Ryukyu was a *tsūshin*-type country, even though the Satsuma fief held *de facto* control over the kingdom, the missive of the *rōjū* constituted an official document. Therefore, not only could Japan not defend the islands from the pressure of foreign vessels, but Satsuma, too, was not in a position to assert any right of sovereignty

²⁹³ Beasley, *Great Britain*, pp. 104-105.

²⁹⁴ Mito Nariaki expressed these opinions in a missive dated 28 July 1846. *DNIS*, vol. 1-2, p. 559.

²⁹⁵ Nishizato Kikō, “Kinsei makki no naisei mondai to taigai kankei,” *Okinawa kenshi. Kakuron*, vol. 4 (Kinsei), Okinawaken Bunka Shinkōkai Kōbunsho Kanribu Shiryō Henshūshitsu, ed., (Naha: Okinawaken Kyōiku Iinkai, 2005), p. 625.

over the southern archipelago.²⁹⁶ This view can also be interpreted as a critique against Shimazu Nariakira.

In 1846, the *rōjū* Abe Masahiro in order to defend the Japanese *kokutai* tacitly consented to the request by the Satsuma fief to establish trade between the Ryukyuan and French.²⁹⁷ For Abe, the question of the true relations between Ryukyu and Japan, in particular, became urgent when Commodore Perry arrived in Japan in 1853.

In 1854, the Shimoda *ōsetsugakari* 応接係 presented a report to the shogunate with regard to the relationship between Ryukyu and Japan. In his account he stated that long ago when the Dutch Captain paid a visit to Edo, the bakufu handed him a memorandum in which it was declared that the Ryukyu kingdom is subordinate to Japan, therefore, the Dutch were forbidden to attack Ryukyuan ships. He also affirmed that Western countries knew the content of the memorandum.²⁹⁸

On the occasion of the stipulation of the Treaty of Kanagawa, Abe tried to draft a guide that indicated the most appropriate answers to Americans questions with regard to the political status of Ryukyu vis-à-vis Japan. Though the tributary relation between the Qing and Shuri was recognized, the kingdom was defined in this manual as a political entity subordinate to Japan. This subordination began during the Keichō era (1596-1615) when the Shimazu punished Ryukyu and subjugated it. Despite the fact that Ryukyu adopted the Chinese calendar and welcomed Chinese investiture missions, one of the suggested answers expressly stated that Satsuma officials were residing on the islands with function of supervising and that on the occasion of the appointment of a new shogun as well as of the enthronement of a new Ryukyuan king, the Ryukyus asked

²⁹⁶ *Shimazu Nariakira monjo*, vol. Sup., p. 74.

²⁹⁷ *DNIS*, vol. 1-2, p. 38.

²⁹⁸ Samuel Wells Williams, *Peri Nihon ensei zuikōki*, translated by Hora Tomio, (Tokyo: Yūshōdō Shoten, 1970), p.447.

permission to dispatch missions to Edo accompanied by the prince of Satsuma.²⁹⁹ This was all intended to corroborate the hegemonic position of Kagoshima and Edo over Shuri.

From the bakufu's perspective, the Ryukyu kingdom was subordinate both to China and Japan. However, this dual subordination was now threatened by the intrusion of the United States. At the bottom of the guide it was, in fact, observed that if Japan did not claim any right over the possession of the kingdom, the Americans could take control over it. That is why it seemed more desirable to clearly assert Japanese claims, too.³⁰⁰

In line with this, Abe asked Hayashi Daigaku-no-kami and Tsutsui Hizen-no-kami to draft a detailed account on the political status of Ryukyu. In their report, which was submitted in the fourth month, they provide as a proof of the subordination of Ryukyu by Japan the argument that the Ryukyus began to obey the Shimazu of Satsuma in the Kakitsu era (1441-1444) and that from that moment on the kingdom became a territory of the same family. Now the prince of Satsuma claims that the Ryukyus are a domain of the Shimazu. A number of Satsuma samurai take turns on duty in Ryukyu. Moreover, on the occasion of the appointment of a new Tokugawa shogun as well as of the enthronement of a new Ryukyuan king, their monarch dispatches his representative envoys who are accompanied by the lord of Satsuma to Edo, they pay homage in Edo castle and have an audience (*omemie* 御目見え) by the shogun. In this way, the

²⁹⁹ It is worthy to note that in the first clause of this guide, with regard to the possibility that the Americans could ask if Ryukyu was subordinate to Japan or China, it was observed that during the negotiations the Americans had already asked Japanese officials permission to build a coal deposit in Matsumae, in Uraga and in Ryukyu. Because this request revealed that they were aware of the fact that the Ryukyus were subordinate to Japan, it was suggested to enquire them why they asked again questions related to this matter. Williams, *Peri Nihon ensei zuikōki*, pp. 448-449.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 449. Cf. Maehira Fusaaki, "Jūkyūsei no higashi Ajia kokusai kankei to Ryūkyū mondai," *Shūhen kara no rekishi* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1994), p. 255.

Ryukyus are a kingdom subordinate to Satsuma. Nevertheless, the Ryukyuan kings have been receiving the investiture missions from China since the Ming dynasty. In addition, the Ryukyus also dispatch missions to China and accept the Chinese calendar. That is why abroad it is not evident the subordination to Japan. It is known that the Ryukyus maintain a trade relationship with islands belonging to Japan (*zokushima* 属島=Tokara Islands). Despite the Ryukyus obey to both countries, it is opportune to state that China represents the father for the islands, while Japan is considered as their mother. Nevertheless, in case Westerners exerted further pressures with regard to the status of the kingdom, at that point the best way out would consist in arguing that Ryukyu is a tributary state of the Qing.³⁰¹

The proposal put forward by Hayashi Daigaku-no-kami and Tsutsui Hizen-no-kami was criticized by both the *kanjōbugyō* 勘定奉行 (Matsudaira Chikanao, Kawaji Saemon-no-jō, Takenouchi Seitarō Yasunori, and Matsui Sukezaemon) and the *kaibō gakari* 海防係 (Ido Hiromichi, Iwase Tadanari, and Arao Shigemasa). The former submitted their objections in a report in the same fourth month of 1854. According to their account, the cadastral register of Satsuma included 120,000 *koku* that corresponded to the revenue of the Ryukyu kingdom. Based on this, the Ryukyus were subordinate to Satsuma. However, given that it was difficult to conclude the matter, they urged the necessity to also consult the lord of Satsuma before taking any decision.³⁰² The latter also submitted an interesting report in the fifth month. According to Hayashi Daigaku-no-kami and Tsutsui Hizen-no-kami, because the Ryukyuan kings have been receiving the investiture missions from China since the Ming dynasty and the Ryukyus accept the Chinese calendar, abroad it is not evident the subordination to Japan.

³⁰¹ Williams, *Peri Nihon ensei zuikōki*, p.450.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, p.450.

Therefore, in case Westerners exerted further pressures with regard to the status of the kingdom, at that point the best way out would consist in arguing that Ryukyu is a tributary state of the Qing. However, the *kaibō gakari* pointed out that the fact that the subordination to Japan is not evident abroad is only the understanding of the Ryukyuan king. And he uses this claiming in order to serve his own interests. But, there is no evidence for this. In addition, they argued that recognizing the Ryukyus as subordinate to both China and Japan corresponded to the truth since they had heard that the islands were greatly influenced by the two countries with regard to language, script, shrines etc. However, neither China nor Japan had strongly pressed Ryukyu to adopt their institutions and culture. Moreover, there was the official certificate of property (*gohanmotsu* 御判物) that the daimyo of Satsuma had received from the Tokugawa shogun in which it is stated that the entire revenue of the Ryukyu kingdom, estimated at 120,000 *koku*, was part of Japan. For these reasons, there can be no doubt that the Ryukyus were subordinate to Satsuma. Nevertheless, it is also important to bear in mind what the bakufu had declared about the status of Ryukyu during negotiations with Westerners so far. In fact, they had stated earlier that Japan only maintained exclusively *tsūshō* relations with China and Holland and *tsūshin* relations with Korea and Ryukyu. It is not possible to claim the possession over a country with which we maintain diplomatic intercourse. Despite the fact that we cannot publicly affirm that Ryukyu belongs to Satsuma, abroad it is well known that the Shimazu handle several affairs in the islands as well as that the Ryukyuan follow the orders of the Satsuma daimyo. Moreover, on the occasion of the appointment of a new shogun as well as of the enthronement of a new Ryukyuan king, the Ryukyuan monarch dispatches his representative envoys to Edo. There is no trace that they had missed to pay their respect

(*gohōkō* 御奉公, serve, go into service) to the shogunate. The Ryukyus are subordinate to both countries, thus it is not opportune to state that they are only a tributary state of China. Finally, it seems more reasonable to assert that they are subordinate to both China and Japan.³⁰³

If the Japanese told the Americans that the islands were not under their control, Commodore Perry could have planned to occupy Ryukyu. Or, on the contrary, if the bakufu officials stated that Ryukyu was under the governance of Satsuma (and, thus, of Japan), Perry could have overwhelmed the bakufu with questions about the fact that since European missionaries (like Bettelheim) were residing on the islands it was as if they were, *de facto*, residing on Japanese territory, and to reply to this type of question would have posed a real dilemma to the shogunate.³⁰⁴

In May 1854, Abe sent for Shimazu Nariakira and asked him to come to his residence in Edo in order to resolve the issue of the political status of Ryukyu. Abe wanted to know if it would be a good idea to reveal to the foreign countries that Ryukyu was in reality a kingdom subordinate to Japan. Nariakira argued that, given the circumstances, a more suitable policy was precisely to publicly release the truth, i.e. that Satsuma controlled the Ryukyu Islands.

After having listened to Nariakira, Abe thought that Ryukyu would happily make its real relation with Japan public.³⁰⁵ This shows that, in reality, Abe did not know the true feelings of Ryukyu as, for the royal government, the masking of the relations between the small archipelago and Japan was a policy that could not be renounced

³⁰³ Ibid., pp. 450-451.

³⁰⁴ According to Ikuta Sumie, the best policy according to Abe was that of defining the political status of Ryukyu so that it would not become an international problem for Japan. Ikuta Sumie, "Furansu kantai no Ryūkyū raikō to Satsu-Ryū kankei," p. 85.

³⁰⁵ *Nariakirakō shiryō*, vol. 2, p. 463.

without disturbing its tributary relations with China. Therefore, Shuri would never voluntarily reveal its subordinate status to Japan to the Chinese or the Westerners.

As we have seen, as soon as the bakufu stipulated an international treaty with the United States, Abe Masahiro drew up a guide in which the kingdom, even though it was considered a tributary state of the Qing, was also defined as a political entity subordinate to Japan. In addition, Abe asked the bakufu officials to submit a relation with regard to the political status of Ryukyu vis-à-vis China and Japan and consulted with Nariakira about the possibility to publicly reveal the real connection between Ryukyu and Japan. The bakufu leaders, fearing that the Americans could take control over Ryukyu, from a defensive stance were evaluating the possibility of asserting their rights of sovereignty over the kingdom. The bakufu provided as proof of the subordination of Ryukyu the fact that the revenue of the kingdom was included in the cadastral register of the Shimazu as well as the presence of a number of Kagoshima officials on the islands. Moreover, it is worthy to underline the fact that some members of the bakufu, such as Hayashi Daigaku-no-kami and Tsutsui Hizen-no-kami, the *kaibō gakari* and Abe Masahiro, saw the dispatch of missions of congratulation and gratitude to Edo as tangible evidence of the subordinate status of Ryukyu. From this, it is possible to infer that on the occasion of the conclusion of the Treaty of Kanagawa, the bakufu began to seriously—but privately—investigate the relationship between the Ryukyu kingdom and Japan as well as if it would be appropriate to publicly reveal those relations. The shogunate considered the kingdom as a realm traditionally subordinate both to China and Japan. However, because the Americans caused a first breach in the traditional East Asian order, Edo leaders understood that it became necessary to prove—and, sooner or later, to publicly assert—that Ryukyu was under Japanese

control.

However, during the meetings before and after the negotiations of the Treaty of Amity between Japan and United States, the *ōsetsugakari* 応接係, i.e. the bakufu authorities delegated to discuss the norms to be inserted in the agreement with the American officials, stated that Ryukyu was a kingdom situated very far from Edo over which the shogun had limited authority.³⁰⁶ The bakufu, thus, for the time being renounced to officially claim ownership of the Ryukyu kingdom.

The Treaty of Amity with the United States did not put an end to the policy of *sakoku*. From then onward, however, Japan entered a new phase characterized by the presence of its traditional relations of *tsūshin* and *tsūshō*, to which was added a new type of parallel relations which were based on a Western matrix and defined as “amity” (*washin* 和親), i.e. diplomatic relations, under international law. However, the bakufu accorded a different meaning to the term “amity” (*washin*) than the Westerners. Hayashi Akira e Ido Satohiro, the officials delegated by the shogunate to negotiate with the Americans, who drafted and signed the first modern treaty based on Western international law in 1854, interpreted relations founded on this new concept as relationships of peace, and argued that the expressions *shinboku* 親睦 (amity/friendship written in *kanbun* classical Chinese in the treaty) and *washin* 和親 (the term with which *shinboku* was translated into Japanese) were written with different characters but did not have different meanings.³⁰⁷ In other words, for Japan, the new *washin* relations introduced by the Westerners were contacts without any form of hostility, that is to say, they represented a mere extension of the order issued by the

³⁰⁶ Maeihira, “Higashi Ajia kokusai kankei to Ryūkyū mondai,” p. 252.

³⁰⁷ Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo, ed., *Dai Nihon Komonjo: Bakumatsu gaikoku kankei monjo* (hereafter *BGKM*), vol. 5, (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1972), pp. 460-461.

bakufu in 1842 by which it was permitted to storm-damaged or shipwrecked ships to come seeking food, fuel or water along the Japanese coasts. The bakufu, therefore, accorded a different meaning to the *washin* relations than to the traditional *tsūshin* and *tsūshō*, that is, external relations that constituted the base on which *sakoku* policy was founded, and relegated the new relations introduced by Westerners to a lower position.³⁰⁸

In February 1856, Satsuma transmitted to Shuri a new series of directives as a countermeasure to the treaties signed by the kingdom with the United States (1854) and France (1855). In the first part of these instructions, which we will see in the next chapter, some commands are mentioned which Kagoshima had previously received from Edo. From these directives it is possible to deduce how the Tokugawa bakufu looked upon the international treaties stipulated by the small kingdom.

[...] [As stated in the first part of this account] given that the bakufu has already signed [a treaty with the United States], from now on, if [Ryukyu] does not operate according to what is prescribed in the treaty [signed between the kingdom and the United States], the Americans would not accept [such misconduct]. Since the content of the treaty also is certainly roughly [similar] to traditional protocol observed so far on the islands, we do not foresee in particular any reasons that could give rise to impediments within the kingdom; with regard to the clauses inserted in the treaty they were all [accepted] according to the judgment of Ryukyu, [thus] it is ordered that from now on [such norms] will be firmly respected. The exchange of goods between strangers and common people is strictly prohibited, in view of the fact that this is also prescribed in this way in the treaty signed by Japan. It is ordered that every effort be made so that no

³⁰⁸ Haga Shoji, "Washin jōyakuki no bakufu gaikō ni tsuite," *Rekishigaku kenkyū* 482 (Tokyo: Rekishigaku Kenkyūkai, 1980), p. 2.

negligence about all that concerns [commerce] will arise.³⁰⁹

First of all, since in the above-mentioned document both the Treaty of Amity between the United States and Japan and the Treaty of Amity between the United States and Ryukyu were defined as agreement/pact (*yakujō* 約定), it is possible to infer that from the Japanese perspective there were no relevant juridical differences between the two treaties, that is to say, that Ryukyu also signed a treaty as an autonomous kingdom. Furthermore, given that Japan had concluded a treaty with the United States, the opening of the Ryukyu kingdom did not cause critical problems for Edo. Then, because the bakufu refused to open trade with the West, Satsuma also ordered Ryukyu to not consent to the exchange of goods between Westerners and Ryukyuans. Although Satsuma had tried to start international trade between Ryukyu and the French after the *Gaikantōrai jiken*, in this phase, in deference to guidelines was set by Edo, it ordered Shuri to not trade with the Americans.

In the light of what we have explored, we may surmise that for Japan the treaty signed between the royal government and the United States constituted an extension of the one signed by the Edo authorities. In addition, according to the shogunate the clauses included in the treaty signed by Ryukyu were roughly similar to those of the traditional protocol. Thus from the perspective of the bakufu they would not constitute serious threats for the kingdom. Nevertheless, as we will see in the next chapter, the signing of international treaties would constitute a watershed in the history of the foreign relations of the kingdom.

As we have seen, during the nineteenth century, Edo on several occasions defined

³⁰⁹ *ROHM*, vol. 14, p. 522.

the Ryukyu kingdom as a *tsūshin* country with which it maintained diplomatic relations. However, the bakufu argument contained a fundamental contradiction. If Edo, in fact, declared that Ryukyu was a *tsūshin no kuni*, Satsuma could not assert any right to jurisdiction over the archipelago, given that Japanese laws could not have been enforced to a state with which it officially maintained diplomatic relations. Even afterwards, up until the negotiations with Commodore Perry in 1854, the bakufu continued to define Ryukyu as a kingdom outside its own sphere of influence. The bakufu, thus, fearing that Westerners could inform the Chinese of the subordination of the kingdom to Japan, declined to officially assert any right over the small archipelago and decided to conceal to the West the true power relations that existed between Edo, Kagoshima and Shuri. It is worthy to note, however, that since the arrival of Perry in Japan, even though at an official level the bakufu did not publicly claim its rights over the Ryukyus, in its private sphere it was investigating the political status of Ryukyu vis-à-vis China and Japan. They considered the Ryukyus as a kingdom subordinate both to China and Japan and, fearing that the Americans could take control over it, they realized that it was necessary to claim their rights over Ryukyu.

Chapter 3

Responses of Edo, Kagoshima and Shuri to the conclusion of international treaties: were Ryukyuan embassies compatible with the stipulations of the treaties?

As is well known, Japan stipulated its first international agreement with the United States in 1854. For Japan, however, the Treaty of Kanagawa, signed by Commodore M. Perry and the bakufu officials, did not represent a radical break with the past since the Treaty did not lead to the complete opening of the country as it was very limited in nature and based on the possibility that American vessels would need help, as well as on the brevity of the contacts. The Treaty, in fact, did not include regulations that would prefigure long-term relations between the two countries.³¹⁰

Unlike the Treaty of Kanagawa, the Treaties of Amity and Commerce signed by the Edo officials with the United States, Russia, Holland, Great Britain and France in the summer of 1858, represented a watershed in the history of Japan, constituting, on the one hand, the epilogue of nearly two hundred years of control over contacts with foreigners which in recent historiography is defined as “prohibition to go abroad” (J. *kaikin* 海禁), and, on the other hand, a further exacerbation of the domestic political crisis that afflicted the bakufu and that in a limited number of years affected the fall of the Tokugawa regime and the instauration of the Meiji government.

In addition, the Treaties of Amity between the government of Shuri and the United States, France and Holland, respectively concluded in 1854, 1855 and 1859, represent a break in the foreign relations of the kingdom. Moreover, as we shall see, a number of articles in the conventions contained the risk of unmasking the true nature of

³¹⁰ Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, pp. 17-18.

the relationships between Ryukyu and Japan to Western eyes, and thus also to the Chinese.

This chapter aims at following the interpretative lines drawn by a series of recent studies intending to re-think in broad terms the significance of the so-called “Unequal Treaties.” A more accurate and precise re-reading of imperialism in East Asia has, in fact, showed that Japan, Siam, Korea and other Asian countries did not passively submit to Western powers but resorted to their diplomatic ability to assure themselves a certain degree of flexibility in their negotiations with foreigners.³¹¹

Here I will try to demonstrate to what extent the conclusion of international treaties with Westerners affected the dispatch of Ryukyuan embassies to Edo, while taking the viewpoints of the bakufu, the fief of Satsuma and Shuri in consideration. Given that earlier studies have already highlighted the strategies and tactics of the shogunate when faced with these international agreements, ample space will be devoted to the Ryukyuan case here as it is still little known even among Japanese scholars. The negotiations between the Ryukyus and Western powers will be examined in detail, some analogies with the Japanese case will be taken into consideration, and Shuri’s perspective with regard to the *Edo dachi* after the stipulation of the treaties will be

³¹¹ The following works may be consulted for details regarding the transition from the tributary system to the treaty system in East Asia. Hamashita, *Chōkō shisutemu to kindai Ajia*; Fujita, *Kinsei kōki seijishi to taigai kankei*; Haga Shōji, “Washin jōyakuki no bakufu gaikō ni tsuite;” Nishizato, “Shō Tai sakuhō mondai to sono shūhen;” Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*. And the various contributions in *Higashi Ajia Kindaishi* 13, (special volume devoted to the international treaties signed by East Asian countries with Western powers), in *Higashi Ajia Kindaishi Gakkai*, March 2010: Mitani Hiroshi, “Jūkyū seiki ni okeru Higashi Ajia kokusai chitsujo no tankan: jōyaku taisei wo ‘fubyōdō’ to kukuru no ha tekisetsu ka;” Sasaki Yō, “Shin matsu no ‘fubyōdō jōyaku’ kan;” Aoyama Harutoshi, “Ryōji saibanken wo kōshi suru Chūgoku: Nichi Shin shūkō jōki no ryōji saiban kitei to Shinchō zainichi ryōji ni yoru ryōji saiban jirei wo chūshin ni;” Tsukiashi Tatsuhiko, “Kindai Chōsen no jōyaku ni okeru ‘byōdō’ to ‘fubyōdō’: Nicchō shūkō jōki to Chō-Bei shūkō tsūshō jōyaku wo chūshin ni;” Ikuta Michiko, “Girei kara miru kinsei kōki no Nichi-Ro kōshō: Nihongata kai chitsujo kara seiyōgata kokusai chitsujo he, mata ha kinsei kara kindai;” Kokaze Hidemasa, “Jūkyū seiki sekai shisutemu no sabushisutemu toshite no fubyōdō jōyaku taisei;” Sugiyama Shinya, “Jōyaku taisei to kyoryūchi bōeki.”

clarified.

3.1. Responses of Edo and Kagoshima to the Ansei Treaties

Negotiation strategies of the bakufu: “space” and “time”

In a December 1857 memorandum asking all feudal lords for their opinion on a possible commercial opening of Japan, senior Councilor Hotta Masayoshi described this new type of agreement as a radical break with tradition.

After consideration of the circumstances the Shōgun has come to the conclusion that he must make major changes in our longstanding laws. [...] I am therefore convinced that our policy should be to stake everything on the present opportunity, to conclude friendly alliances, to send ships to foreign countries everywhere and conduct trade, to copy the foreigners where they are at their best and so repair our own shortcomings, to foster our national strength and complete our armaments, and so gradually subject the foreigners to our influence until in the end all the countries of the world know the blessings of perfect tranquility and our hegemony is acknowledged throughout the globe.³¹²

According to Hotta, the treaty proposed by the American consul Townsend Harris and stipulating the opening of Japan to international commerce and the appointment of a diplomatic agent at Edo, would certainly have required a reform of traditional laws concerning foreign policy; that is to say, a change of the laws of *kaikin* or *sakoku*. In

³¹² William G. Beasley, *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, translated and edited by W.G. Beasley (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 165-168. Original text in *BGKM*, vol. 18, pp. 492-496.

January 1858, the Daigaku-no-kami, Hayashi Akira, and the *metsuke*, Tsuda Hansaburō, whom the bakufu had sent to Kyoto, explained the meaning of this new type of treaty to the *buke densō* 武家伝奏 (the imperial official in charge of communication between the shogunate and the court) as follows:

At present being [in a phase] of renewal of [our] external conditions, [our] traditional system [dating] from the Kan'ei era, [that is to say, our] *sakoku* laws will [also] be changed, [from now on] it is necessary to establish proper [diplomatic] relations with foreign countries. [...] The foreign policy [to be adopted] is a return to the [situation dating from] before the Kan'ei era, [it is in fact opportune] to realize the present-day tendency; certainly, already before the Kan'ei era foreign merchant ships came and went [from Japan], [and] foreigners were also permitted to [enter] Edo.³¹³

As is well known, on 29 July 1858, *tairō* 大老 (Great Elder) Ii Naosuke ordered the bakufu officials to sign the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with the United States without imperial authorization. On 31 July, in a missive addressed to the *buke densō*, the senior Councilors motivated Edo's decision claiming that it had been impossible to postpone the signing of the treaty with the United States any longer.³¹⁴ On 18 and 19 August, the bakufu signed analogous treaties with Holland³¹⁵ and Russia³¹⁶ respectively. On 26 August³¹⁷ Edo leaders signed a commercial treaty with Great

³¹³ Ansei 4/12/x. *Kōmei tennōki*, vol. 2 (Kyoto: Heian Jingū, 1967), p. 713.

³¹⁴ Ansei 5/6/21. *BGKM*, vol. 20, p. 510.

³¹⁵ Ansei 5/7/10. *Ibid.*, p. 719.

³¹⁶ Ansei 5/7/11. *Ibid.*, p. 751.

³¹⁷ Ansei 5/7/18.

Britain and on 9 October³¹⁸ a similar treaty with France. These agreements are known as the Ansei Treaties.

We can surmise that the shogunate had learned from observing China that through negotiations with foreigners it could preserve the integrity of its own territory, while a refusal to deal with them would have certainly caused a military collision. The bakufu did not passively accept the requests of the Westerners; through the negotiations it was not only able to maintain a constant dialogue with them, and, more importantly, it had a voice in the several decisions to make, which on more than one occasion became a form of resistance.³¹⁹

In the Ansei Treaties, the exchange of diplomatic agents was established, in addition to the ports of Shimoda and Hakodate, Kanagawa, Nagasaki, Niigata and Hyogo were opened to foreign trade, a system of extraterritoriality was granted to foreign citizens residing in those ports, and a fixed low import-export duty subject to international control was prescribed.

After the bakufu signed the Ansei Treaties, one of the most urgent matters for Edo to deal with was the defense of Japanese territorial sovereignty. With regard to the background against which the Edo leaders made every effort to defend the bakufu both from foreign threat and from domestic interference in exercising foreign policy, Michael Auslin has delineated three concentric circles. The innermost circle is represented by the ideological border, namely the necessity to preserve the symbolic prestige of the shogun. The middle circle symbolizes the intellectual border; it was, in fact, necessary to safeguard the Japanese intelligentsia from new ideas coming from the West. The

³¹⁸ Ansei 5/9/3.

³¹⁹ Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, p. 4.

external circle denotes the real physical borders, i.e. the tangible space that the bakufu had to protect from foreign and domestic interference.³²⁰

In order to achieve their political goals, the Edo authorities chose a tactic based on negotiations, which was considered to be the only available means to defend the above-mentioned borders. The bakufu, thus, found itself dealing at various levels, not only with Westerners, but also with domestic interlocutors, such as the court of Kyoto and the most powerful feudal lords, as well as with opponents within the shogunate itself. For the bakufu, the physical border was the most important ring to protect. It constituted the first line of defense and it was the most visible symbol of the authority of the Tokugawa regime in foreign policy.

In this regard, it is important to explore the case of Yokohama, inasmuch as it is considered to be emblematic to highlight the strategy adopted by Edo towards foreigners.³²¹ In the agreements that the bakufu officials, on orders of *tairō* Ii Naosuke, concluded with Western powers in the summer of 1858, the treaty port designated for the Kantō area, nearest to Edo, was the station of Kanagawa, located along the main route of the Tōkaidō. Nevertheless, after the signing of the treaties, within the shogunate disagreements arose over whether or not it was opportune to respect the agreements and proceed with the opening of Kanagawa. In this debate, influence of Ii Naosuke was prominent, and after having reduced the power of the officials charged with the reception of foreigners by creating *ex novo* the office of “magistrate of foreign affairs”

³²⁰ Ibid., pp. 13-17.

³²¹ The first official of the bakufu who turned his gaze on the small village of Yokohama was Iwase Tadanari, a reception official (*ōsetsu gakari* 応接係) delegated to negotiate with foreigners who was later appointed magistrate of foreign affairs (*gaikoku bugyō*). According to Iwase, the shogunate needed to centralize all international affairs at Yokohama, where foreign merchants and diplomats would have been contained, and—more importantly—isolated from Edo. At the same time, he argued it was necessary for the bakufu to strengthen its control over the domestic and foreign policy. Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, p. 38.

(*gaikoku bugyō* 外国奉行), who was completely subordinate to the *tairō* and senior Councilors, he was able to push through his intention to violate the agreements and confine the foreigners to Yokohama.

Although Iwase Tadanari, magistrate of foreign affairs, and Inoue Kiyonao, magistrate of Shimoda, underlined that the agreements explicitly mentioned the station of Kanagawa and that, therefore, the bakufu could not simply exclude the foreigners from this place. Ii argued that Townsend Harris, the General Consul of the United States in Japan, would have to be convinced to renounce to Kanagawa, like he had earlier given up the project to open Shinagawa, and Ii confirmed the resolution of the senior Councilors to isolate foreigners from the most significant centers of Japan.³²²

From this moment on, the bakufu officials started a long series of negotiations with the American Consul from which a Japanese negotiation strategy based on the concealment of data and the delay of dealings emerged that would eventually exasperate the American delegation. Even when Harris pointed out that Yokohama was located five miles from Kanagawa station, and that, as a result, it was in an unfavorable position from an economic-commercial point of view, Ii arbitrarily mystified the data written in the agreements and countered Harris's objections by claiming the Tōkaidō, with its continual comings and goings of Kyoto nobles and feudal lords, was dangerous because xenophobic groups could find an easy cover. Moreover, the bakufu officials deliberately used ambiguous geographic terms. In one of the numerous meetings with Harris, Inoue argued that Kanagawa and Yokohama were one and the same since Yokohama was located within Kanagawa and that, as a consequence, it was possible to remove either of the cities from maps. The Edo officials also confirmed that "Yokohama" was simply

³²² Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, p. 49.

another designation for “Kanagawa.” In case the negotiations with the Americans about relegating the foreigners to Yokohama ended in failure, Ii came up with an interesting plan. The *tairō* would, in fact, go as far as to change the course of the Tōkaidō itself in order to isolate the Westerners.³²³

In the end, the bakufu officials did succeed in persuading Harris, who thus consented to the opening of Yokohama instead of Kanagawa. However, the shogunate did not limit itself to isolating the Westerners from Edo and the main artery of Japan; as soon as the foreign diplomats had accepted the opening of Yokohama, the shogunate tried to establish a clear separation within the village between the foreign merchants and the local population. The bakufu divided the village in two in order to confine the Westerners to a bubble like it had done with the Dutch at Dejima since the seventeenth century.³²⁴

For the bakufu, the opening of the village of Yokohama should symbolize the physical manifestation of its own diplomatic strategy.³²⁵ Symbolically, it was necessary to separate the Westerners from the main route that linked the court of Kyoto with Edo. Furthermore, within the borders of Yokohama it was necessary to isolate the Western merchants from the Japanese in order to openly show, within and without the country, that despite the stipulation of the treaties nothing had changed.

From the above, it is possible to conclude that for the most influential bakufu leaders, such as the senior Councilors and *tairō* Ii Naosuke, the conclusion of international agreements was considered a first phase in the negotiation process. The negotiations with foreigners also continued after the signing of the treaties with the

³²³ Ibid., pp. 51-53.

³²⁴ Ibid., pp. 54-55.

³²⁵ Ibid.

purpose of changing *a posteriori* those aspects considered perilous for Japan. Unlike the stance taken by the senior Councilors, however, the highest diplomatic authorities of the shogunate, such as Iwase and Inoue, who had improved their expertise in international law owing to direct contacts and negotiations with foreign ministries, more rapidly understood the sacredness of the treaties and thus also the necessity to honor the stipulations included in such agreements.

Yokohama was opened to trade with Western powers on 1 July 1859. Because the treaties of 1858 stipulated that foreigners could move around within a twenty-five kilometer radius from the village of Yokohama, we can surmise that, except for a limited number of Western diplomats to whom was granted the privilege to travel freely throughout Japan, most Westerners could not reach any station of crucial importance along the Tōkaidō.

With regard to the defense of Japanese territorial sovereignty, it is necessary to correlate the diplomatic success achieved with the opening of Yokohama with the subsequent political strategy adopted by the bakufu to obtain postponement of the opening of the other treaty-ports. This new political objective of Edo was, in fact, a natural extension of the protection of the physical borders of the country which had begun with Yokohama, a coherent strategy that once more represented a form of resistance to Western pressure, crowned with diplomatic success for the bakufu leaders. In this case, too, long and suffocating negotiations were at first carried out with Harris and then with Rutherford Alcock, the British plenipotentiary ministry. The Japanese triumph was achieved by senior Councilors Andō Nobuyuki and Kuze Hirochika, who, citing the price increases and domestic political instability, convinced Alcock that

postponement was of crucial importance for the stability of the country, and that such internal security could have been assured only by the bakufu.

In order to achieve the shogunate's political aims, the dispatch of the first Japanese mission in Europe was crucial. At the request of the British ministry based in Japan, the mission departed from Edo on 1 January 1862. Led by Takeuchi Yasunori, special envoy and plenipotentiary minister, the mission, reached Paris in April for an audience with Napoleon III. The mission then proceeded to London where on 6 June the Foreign Secretary Earl Russell and Takeuchi signed the London Protocol. This agreement, which marked the end of the first phase of Japanese-Western relations after 1858, represents the apogee of the bakufu's attempts to protect the physical and political borders of Japan because the establishment of new commercial areas was avoided, and, moreover, the negotiator nature of the relations between Japan and Western powers was affirmed. In return for the official commitment from the Japanese ambassadors to aid in the realization of free trade, the Japanese government succeeded in postponing the opening of Edo, Osaka and Hyogo until 1 January 1868.³²⁶

The Edo leaders, as we have seen, went at great length to protect the sovereignty of Japanese space, especially with regard to the defense of ideological, intellectual and physical borders. The bakufu did not consider the international treaties to be sacred and inviolable and resorted to the strategy of negotiation to retract all those articles that were considered to be disadvantageous to Japan.

Ansei Treaties and diplomatic missions of *tsūshin*

³²⁶ Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, pp. 86-88.

Let us now turn to how the bakufu authorities interpreted the conclusion of the Ansei Treaties in relation to the dispatch of the embassies from Shuri. In this context, the first article of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Japan and the United States is extremely significant:

There shall henceforth be perpetual peace and friendship between the United States of America and His Majesty the Ty-Coon [sic] of Japan and his successors.

The President of the United States may appoint a Diplomatic Agent to reside at the city of Yedo, and Consuls or Consular Agents to reside at any or all of the ports in Japan which are opened for American commerce by this Treaty. The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General of the United States shall have the right to travel freely in any port of the Empire of Japan from the time they enter on the discharge of their official duties.

The Government of Japan may appoint a Diplomatic Agent to reside at Washington, and Consuls or Consular Agents for any or all of the ports of the United States. The diplomatic Agent and Consul General of Japan may travel freely in any port of the United States from the time they arrive in the country.³²⁷

From what was prescribed in the article quoted above, Japan not only was commercially opened to Western powers, but it also became part of the great family of modern societies, which settled their relationships based on Western international law, because diplomatic agents or consuls, i.e. the foreign plenipotentiaries, were allowed to reside in Edo.

In June 1859,³²⁸ the General Consul of Great Britain, Sir Rutherford Alcock,

³²⁷ Ibid., pp. 214-215.

reached Edo and settled at Tōzenji 東禪寺 in Takanawa. In the same month, the General Consul of the United States, Townsend Harris, established himself at Zenpukuji 善福寺 in Azabu. In September, the General Consul of France, Gustave Duchesne de Bellecourt, settled at Saikaiji 濟海寺 in Mita.

From 1859, therefore, the shogunal capital saw foreign legations parade along its streets and take up residence inside some of the most important temples of the city. There can be no doubt that these developments profoundly changed Edo and marked out the beginning of a new era characterized by the permanent presence of foreign diplomats and officials in Japan.

As was mentioned before, because Yokohama had been designated the treaty-port nearest to Edo, the shogunate was able to keep Western traders away from its capital. However, the bakufu could not prevent foreign ministers from taking office within the borders of Edo. We can thus surmise that the first article of the Ansei Treaties represented a potential threat to the policy of masking the true relations between the Ryukyus and Japan to Westerners and consequently to the Chinese. In fact, given that from 1859 foreign delegations established themselves in Edo, the dispatch of Ryukyuan missions risked to become known to the Westerners because the Ryukyuan envoys' long parade could have been seen by a new "foreign" gaze while passing through the streets of the shogunal capital. In other words, from that moment on, the contradictions implicit in the relations between Japan and Ryukyu (content/truth=Ryukyu is subordinate to Japan, form/mask=Ryukyu appears as an autonomous kingdom) could become a complicated matter for the shogunate.

³²⁸ Ansei 6/5/x.

Nevertheless, despite the increased risk of exposing the true nature of the relationships between Ryukyu and Japan, the bakufu did not deem the instant dismantling of its traditional institutions such as the welcome of the Ryukyuan and Korean diplomatic embassies to be necessary. On 19 August 1858, the Edo leaders postponed the Ryukyuan congratulatory mission in honor of Tokugawa Iesada, which had already reached Kagoshima and was about to set out in the direction of Edo, referring to “multiple and complex State affairs.”³²⁹ Moreover, on 24 June 1860, the Edo authorities cited the same explanation in order to postpone *sine die* the delegation in honor of Iemochi which had been planned for 1862.³³⁰ As for the Korean missions, in 1860 the bakufu officials ordered the Sō family of Tsushima to start negotiations with the Korean court with the purpose of receiving a Korean delegation limited to the fief of Tsushima in 1866. In 1865, the Edo leaders ordered the Tsushima daimyo to defer the Korean embassy by eleven years, that is to say until 1876.³³¹

For the bakufu authorities, therefore, the opening of Japan, the arrival of Western Consuls in Edo, and the settlement of foreign merchants in Yokohama marked the end of the traditional *sakoku* laws; nonetheless, all these changes did not lead to the immediate end of the diplomatic missions of *tsūshin*. This may lead us to think that although the bakufu understood the necessity to renew its old laws and establish relationships of amity with numerous countries based on Western international laws, it also aimed at preserving the traditional rituals—such as the Korean and Ryukyuan embassies—characteristic of East Asia, which were intended to enhance the prestige of

³²⁹ Ansei 5/7/11. Nihon Shiseki Kyōkai, ed., *Yashidai ishin shiryō sōsho*, 28, (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1973), (reprint).

³³⁰ Man'en 1/5/6. Kagoshimaken Ishin Shiryō Hensanjo, ed., *Tadayoshikō shiryō* (hereafter, *Tadayoshikō shiryō*), vol. 1, n. 207 (Kagoshima: Kagoshimaken, 1974).

³³¹ Arano Yasunori, “Chōsen tsūshinshi no shūmatsu: Shin I Kan Kai bō roku ni yosete,” *Rekishi hyōron* 355, (Tokyo: Tanba Shorin, 1979), p. 72.

the Tokugawa shogun in the domestic and international arena. In the eyes of the Edo leaders, the traditional diplomatic missions were thus considered compatible with the treaty system imposed by the Westerners. However, we may surmise that some political changes were necessary for the two rituals to coexist.

In this regard, we may suppose that the decision of the bakufu to reveal the fact that the Ryukyus were a kingdom subordinate both to China and Japan to the British government in the autumn of 1862 was part of a broader political design in which also after the conclusion of the Ansei Treaties the missions from Shuri were considered very significant for their symbolic value. However, the effects generated from the signing of the agreements required at that point a small change and it became necessary to reveal to the British the true nature of the relations between Edo and Shuri. According to the official Japanese document submitted to the British “[the Ryukyu Islands] since ancient times belong to our country; since in the 14th year of our Keichō era [1609] we have bestowed [the Ryukyus] to the lord of Satsuma, Matsudaira Iehisa, [and] until now the general affairs of the islands [have been left in the hands] of the same family [the Shimazu] who has been conducting many matters. Nonetheless, given that since ages the same islands also have been maintaining diplomatic intercourse with China, within the islands there are also affairs [conducted] in accordance to Chinese institutions. We have entrusted in these old traditions without prohibiting it.”³³²

As we will see in chapter five, the above passage does not entail a radical break with the past. In fact, the bakufu did not spontaneously reveal its control of Ryukyu to the Western world; however, in the autumn of 1862, in an official reply to a British inquiry—in which the British openly stated that there were contradictions in what the

³³² Bunkyū 2/9/x. This document was drafted by Mizuno Izumi-no-kami and Itakura Suō-no-kami. *Ihi nyūkōroku*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Nihon Shiseki Kyōkai, 1930), p. 32.

bakufu had publicly declared so far with regard to its relationship with Ryukyu—it made known that the Ryukyu kingdom was subordinate to both China and Japan.³³³ However, it is important to underline that the shogunate did this for certain political reasons. According to earlier studies exploring this document, the bakufu changed its stance of tacit approval about the masking of the subordination of Ryukyu by Japan through this declaration.³³⁴ Although during this phase the shogunate did not make a definite statement with regard to its suzerainty over Ryukyu, it could not but admit the history and the actuality of the dual subordination of Ryukyu to China and Japan. It did not abandon on its own initiative the policy of concealing the true relations between Japan and Ryukyu.³³⁵

As we will see, in 1862 the Ryukyuan missions still constituted one of the traditional symbolic rituals that the bakufu wished to continue despite the stipulation of the Ansei Treaties. Maintaining the relations with the Ryukyus, however, now required a new approach. The shogunate did not change its political strategy completely, however, although mentioned the subordination of the islands to China it also asserted—limited to the Great Britain—its own rights over the possession of the small kingdom. In other words, we can assume that the shogunate, on the one hand, from a defensive stance aimed at containing British interests toward Ryukyu, and on the other,

³³³ It is important to underline that in 1862 it was not the first time the British asked the shogunate clarifications with regard to the relation between Japan and the Ryukyu kingdom. In 1854, during the negotiations of the Anglo Japanese Convention between Admiral Sir James Starling and the Nagasaki magistrate, the English side asked the Japanese officials clarifications with regard to the Japanese territory and its borders. On that occasion, the Nagasaki magistrate affirmed that Ryukyu is a *zokkoku* 属国 or a kingdom subordinate to Japan, while Tsushima is a *kokunai* 国内 territory or a domain that is part of Japan. Thereafter, when in 1860 George Smith Bishop of Victoria (Hong Kong) went to Nagasaki and asked Japanese authorities if Ryukyu was part of the territory of Japan, it is reported that the Nagasaki magistrate was not able to give a clear answer. Maehira, “Higashi Ajia kokusai kankei to Ryūkyū mondai,” pp. 258-259.

³³⁴ Iwasaki Naoko, “Ezochi/Ryukyu no ‘Kindai,’ *Kōza Nihon rekishi* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 2005).

³³⁵ Nishizato, “Shō Tai sakuhō mondai to sono shūhen,” p. 50.

laid the foundation for a suitable international environment in which it could continue to welcome future Ryukyuan embassies.

In chapter five, after having explored in details the events that occurred between the Satsuma domain and the shogunate in early 1862, I will try to demonstrate that the bakufu's decision to reveal to the British government the dual subordination of Ryukyu to China and Japan in 1862 might be ascribed to Edo's wish to continue the dispatch of missions from Shuri.

Responses of Kagoshima to international treaties signed by Ryukyu

As has already been pointed out, on the occasion of the *Gaikantorai jiken* (1844-46), Shimazu Nariakira revealed his worries about the possibility that the missions to Edo could unmask the true relations between Ryukyu and Japan in a number of missives addressed to his confidant Yamaguchi and to the ex-daimyo of Mito, Tokugawa Nariaki. Despite his concerns, the mission of 1850 was dispatched without any impediments as the Kagoshima leaders believed that the bakufu would not have agreed to their request of suspension of the Ryukyuan embassy because of the presence of foreigners on the islands.

In 1854, on the occasion of the signing of the Treaty of Amity with the United States, however, the question of the status of Ryukyu became a delicate problem for Edo. When the *rōjū* Abe Masahiro consulted with Nariakira about the political status of Ryukyu, the Satsuma daimyo argued that the proper policy in the new international situation was that of publicly revealing that Ryukyu was a kingdom subordinate to Kagoshima and Edo. In a missive dated 27 June 1854 and addressed to Matsudaira Yoshinaga (Shungaku), Nariakira described his meeting with Abe:

With regard to the meeting with Abe concerning the question of the Ryukyus, we discussed if it was proper to abandon [our] current [policies] of [stating to Westerners that Ryukyu] is a Japanese *tsūshin* [*no kuni*] and of concealing to the Qing court [the real relationships between Ryukyu and Japan], and since we cannot permit that foreigners act selfishly [as they have been doing towards the Ryukyus since 1844] to reveal that without any doubt Ryukyu is a kingdom subordinate to [Japan], though so far we have never told this. [On this occasion I have argued that] it certainly is the proper [policy to take]. [...].³³⁶

According to Nariakira, the proper solution to face the new developments in the international arena would have been that of taking the initiative and making the first move by declaring to the Chinese what the true nature of the relations between Ryukyu and Japan was. It is important, however, to underline the fact that Nariakira made his proposal after he was inquired by Abe, who after the arrival of Perry began to seriously investigate the relationship between Ryukyu and Japan.

If we consider the proposal of Nariakira from a wider point of view, we can also surmise that Nariakira, from that moment on, wished to realize publicly the dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo, which from then on would have been sent by a kingdom formally under the control of Satsuma. Nevertheless, the discussions between Nariakira and Masahiro came to a standstill.³³⁷

On 11 July 1854, Perry and the Shuri authorities signed the Treaty of Amity between Ryukyu and the United States. Here I will explore the directives transmitted by Satsuma to the royal government in order to deal with the new situation. On 29 July, as

³³⁶ Ka'ei 7/6/3. *Nariakirakō shiryō*, vol. 2, n. 239.

³³⁷ Kamiya, "Ryūkyū shisetsu no kaitai," pp. 20-21.

soon as it had concluded the treaty, the royal government asked the Shimazu to suggest the new policy to be taken with regard to contacts with the Americans. I will focus here on two important instructions that Satsuma passed on to the royal government in February 1856, which suggested following a policy different from the norms written in the treaties.³³⁸ The first of these directives concerns the relations between Westerners and Ryukyans.

[...] In addition, if you obeyed [the foreigners], believed their government ordinances, and moreover became familiar [with them] and accepted the heretic [faith] of West, it would turn out to be inexcusable. First of all, you would corrupt the “Great Ban” [*Dai kin* 大禁] of Japan, [so] needless to say, [your] kingdom would collapse, [and] towards the shogunate it [would cause] injuries to all generations to come, it would really be a grave reasoning. Beginning from the high posts to the lower classes [everybody must be] deeply acquainted with this principle. In years to come it is prohibited to have the slightest slackening.³³⁹

We may consider this instruction an extension of the directives issued by Satsuma in 1704 and 1851. In other words, although the Ryukyus had concluded an international treaty and had been opened by Westerners, according to the new orders from Kagoshima they should establish relationships with foreigners in deference to traditional protocol.

The other important directive concerns the question of the official-followers. In

³³⁸ Ansei 3/1/x. These instructions consists of twelve articles and are known in Japanese as “Ryūkyū Kita Amerika gasshū koku wayaku no kajō tagai ni torikawari sōrō tsuke irai tori hakarai furi no oboe” (Memorandum regarding how to deal with after the stipulation of the Treaty of Amity between Ryukyu and the United States) 琉球・北亞米喇幹合衆国和約之箇條書互ニ取替候付以来取計振之覚. *ROHM*, vol. 14, pp. 522-525.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 522.

the treaties signed by Shuri an end to the practice of having foreigners shadowed by the men of the royal government was prescribed. Nonetheless, according to Satsuma if the Ryukyans acted according to the norms written in the agreements, this would lead to a relaxation of the surveillance of Westerners, the lower officials and the common people would honor with superficiality the state prohibitions and etiquettes—such as the ban of Christianity—and this would arise misunderstandings. Therefore, anytime the foreigners took a walk, no matter how much they protested, it was necessary for the official-followers to continue to watch them in secret.³⁴⁰

These instructions passed from Satsuma to the royal government in February 1856 represented the countermeasures against the conclusion of the treaties signed by Ryukyu with the United States (1854) and France (1855). Here I have taken into consideration the two directives that seem to be in contrast with the stipulations of the agreements. The first article stipulated that when in Ryukyu citizens of the United States or France should be treated with great courtesy and friendship. However, because Satsuma gave the strict order to not become familiar with foreigners, we may assume that Kagoshima aimed at containing the effects that could have generated from a wrong interpretation of the content of the first article. According to Satsuma, therefore, Westerners should be treated with courtesy, however, as had been ordered in 1704 and 1751, it was strictly forbidden to establish familiar relations with them. Kagoshima adduced the fact that if Ryukyans became familiar to the foreigners' customs it would cause great injury to the shogunate. However, we may surmise that in truth Satsuma feared that if Ryukyans became close to Westerners, they could have contained or even freed themselves from Shimazu control.

³⁴⁰ *ROHM*, vol. 14, p. 524.

Moreover, in order to prevent the Ryukyuan population from entering in contact with the visitors, Satsuma ordered Shuri to continue the practice of shadowing the foreigners even if this would raise objection from them. In other words, Kagoshima ordered the royal government to violate the article that forbade the shadowing of foreign citizens by Ryukyuan officials.

In 1663, Satsuma had ordered Shuri to make every effort to prevent the attendants of the celestial envoys and other envoys who arrived with Chinese investiture missions from wandering around freely along the streets of cities such as Naha and Shuri.³⁴¹ Because Satsuma ordered the monitoring of Westerners in the same way it had ordered the supervision of the Chinese, we can infer that Kagoshima wished that Shuri would welcome Westerners following traditional protocol. However, when it came to the Western citizens, Satsuma feared that their free circulation on the streets of Naha and Shuri might have favored contacts between the visitors and the Ryukyuan population and that this could have compromised its own hegemonic position over the kingdom.

In addition, after the conclusion of the treaties, Satsuma understood the apprehensions of the Shuri authorities with regard to the risk that the true nature of the relations between the kingdom and Japan could become exposed and, therefore, instructed the royal government to continue the policy of concealing those relationships. Kagoshima especially ordered the continuation of the policy adopted since the arrival in Ryukyu of the French Admiral Cecille, which had been conceived in order to justify the presence of the Satsuma officials on some of the islands situated north of the main island of Okinawa. Following this policy, Shuri had since 1846 explained the presence of officials from the Tokara Islands in eight of the thirty-six islands constituting the

³⁴¹ *Kyūki zatsuroku. Tsūiroku*, vol. 1, n. 1855.

Ryukyus saying that in order to repay a debt incurred for repeatedly loaning rice from the authorities of the Tokara Islands, it was agreed that the management of the products of some territories would be left directly in the hands of Tokara officials. Satsuma argued that the foreigners were also aware that Japanese to whom Shuri had left the management of numerous affairs were residing on Ōshima and on other islands. In addition, “if on those islands the Japanese happened to meet the foreigners, since before it was prescribed that they would state they were *Tokarajin* [people from the Tokara Islands]; [the foreigners] know that since ancient times the Tokara Islands have been maintaining reciprocal relations with several islands of Ryukyu, [...] also, even if news about the management [of some Ryukyuan territories by] the *Tokarajin* spread to China, [we think] there would not arise any troubles.”³⁴²

Even though in 1854 Nariakira asserted to Masahiro that it was necessary to declare to foreign countries that Ryukyu was subordinate to Japan, in 1856 Satsuma complied with Shuri’s requests and continued with the policy of making the Ryukyus appear as an independent kingdom through the masking of the connection with Japan under the veil of a relationship with the Tokara Islands.

As we will see in chapter four, after Edo was hit by a devastating earthquake on 11 November 1855, Satsuma officials required the shogunate to postpone the Ryukyuan embassy planned for 1856 to 1858. This request testifies to the fact that from Kagoshima’s viewpoint the opening of Ryukyu through the signing of the treaties with the Americans (1854) and French (1855) did not affect the dispatch of Edo-bounded Ryukyuan missions. In the following chapters I will try to explore in detail the political role played by the Satsuma domain in the termination of the embassies sent by Shuri to

³⁴² *ROHM*, vol. 14, pp. 522-523.

Japan.

3.2. Responses of the royal government of Shuri to the international treaties

The Shuri government concluded a treaty of amity with the United States in 1854, with France in 1855 and with Holland in 1859. Even though Ryukyu was insignificant in political and territorial terms, the leaders of the royal government did not passively submit to the will of the Western powers. On the contrary, they showed a certain degree of dynamism in the negotiations on the content of the agreements and on more than one occasion they stood firm so their requests would be recognized. Earlier studies related to this topic have shed light on numerous aspects on the signing of the treaties mainly from the viewpoint of the Western powers.³⁴³ In addition, some of these works have shown that Ryukyu *de facto* did not honor some stipulations acting under orders received by the Satsuma fief.³⁴⁴

Here I will attempt to demonstrate that it is necessary to consider other perspectives, such as the point of view of the royal government, which seems to have

³⁴³ Ōkuma Ryōichi in his *Ikokusen Ryūkyū raikōshi no kenkyū* limits himself to reporting the main facts with regard to the conclusion of the treaty of amity between the Ryukyus and the United States, France and Holland. Yokoyama Itoko argues that France's motivation to conclude the treaty was the attempt to contain the Russian advance, which threatened to disturb the status quo in Europe and Asia. Moreover, against the background of the agreement with Holland, Yokoyama points out that there were the commercial interests of Satsuma as well as those of the Dutch. "Nihon no kaikoku to Ryūkyū," *Kokka to taigai kankei*, Sone Yūji and Kimura Naoya, ed., (Tokyo: Shinjinbutsu Ouraisha, 1996). Maehira Fusaaki explored the question of the status of Ryukyu arose when the bakufu leaders and the Americans negotiated the Treaty of Amity between Japan and the United States, as well as the political strategy of the Dutch against the background of the Treaty of Amity between Ryukyu and Holland. "Higashi Ajia kokusai kankei to Ryūkyū mondai."

³⁴⁴ Tomiyama has shed light on the effects of the treaties on the Ryukyu kingdom, on how Satsuma affected the conclusion of such agreements, and also on the evolution of the dialogue between Shuri and Kagoshima during the negotiations with the foreigners. "Ryū-Bei, Ryū-Futsu jōyaku teiketsu mondai wo chūshin ni."

had a significant role in determining the course of events.³⁴⁵ I will try to clarify how the royal government faced the requests of the Western powers during the phase of negotiations as well as how it dealt with them after the conclusion of the agreements. Furthermore, I will try to shed light on the reasons for Shuri to not honor the stipulations of “reciprocal friendship” and “elimination of the official-followers” included in the treaties.³⁴⁶

Objections raised by Shuri during negotiations

First of all, it is necessary to examine what kinds of objections or protests the royal government raised during the course of their dealings with Western powers. At a point in time when it was about to be drawn into the system of international treaties Shuri, being apprehensive about the future of its kingdom after the signing of the treaties, openly manifested its desire to appear once again as a tributary state of traditional Chinese order.

Negotiations with the United States

Commodore Perry, after having achieved the prestigious success to be able to breach Japanese isolation by virtue of the conclusion of the Treaty of Amity of Kanagawa on 31 March 1854, berthed one more time in Naha with the purpose of concluding a similar agreement with the Ryukyu kingdom. On 11 July, Perry and the Shuri authorities (the *sōrikan* Kin Aji and the *fuseikan* Tanahara Uekata) signed the Treaty of

³⁴⁵ According to Tomiyama, the royal government of Shuri during the negotiations with the Americans obtained a diplomatic success to the extent that it succeeded in including in the treaty the stipulation that prescribed the prohibition of inflicting violence on Ryukyuan women. “Ryū-Bei, Ryū-Futsu jōyaku teiketsu mondai wo chūshin ni.”

³⁴⁶ Termed “*waboku ai majiru*” 「和睦相交」 and “*tsuikōnin hikitoru*” 「追行人引取」, respectively, in the original sources.

Amity between the Ryukyus and the United States. Through an analysis of primary sources drafted by the officials of Shuri I will try to reveal the true concerns of the royal government during its dealings with the Commodore. The following entry is dated 8 July:

[...] This territory being a tributary state of the Chinese court, as a rule [it is considered] impossible to not receive instructions from China with regard to significant issues that are about to be carried out; it is improper [behavior toward] China [that one of its tributary states] newly stipulates a treaty of amity (*shinboku* 親睦) with another country, puts its seal and hands over [the official records], depending on the circumstances it could become an obstacle for the tributary relationship; however, since we are greatly worried, when we asked [the Americans] to comprehend [our conditions] by all means, they asked us what kind of obstacles would arise if we stopped sailing to China. [We replied that] since [the times of] the former Ming dynasty [the Ryukyu kingdom] was enfeoffed as a tributary state of China and we have been continually receiving great benevolence [from the Chinese emperor], moreover, we purchase [in China] the fabrics necessary [to tailor] formal clothes [in Chinese style] of upper and lower officials [according] to tributary order as well as different kinds of medicines; in any case, we obtain [goods] necessary for [the survival of our] kingdom. If the relations with China had come to an end, of course the kingdom cannot maintain [its independence], but first of all it would not be possible to [follow] the way of the vassal [i.e. the relationship lord-vassal between the Son of Heaven and the Ryukyuan king], for these reasons we wish the Commodore changes [his request].³⁴⁷

³⁴⁷ Ka'ei 7/6/14. *ROHM*, vol. 7, p. 589.

For the Ryukyuan authorities to conclude a treaty with the United States without authorization of the Qing dynasty would have caused an obstacle to the tributary relation, and in case China had put to an end to the tributary relationship, the kingdom could not have maintained its autonomy. Then, Shuri was especially worried about the fact that the American requests might have created problems for the relationship of loyalty between the Chinese emperor and the Ryukyuan king. Seen in this light, the Shō family, who legitimated its right to the throne within and without the islands through the investiture received from the Son of Heaven, would thus have seen the source for its authority vanish. According to Ryukyuan records, when the Americans asked the Ryukyuan officials information about the relationship between the Ryukyu kingdom and the fief of Satsuma, the Shuri authorities replied as follows:

With regard to [their] question if the [ship known as] *kaisen* 楷船 that sailed off yesterday is going to Satsuma, since we told them that Satsuma does not maintain relations with this territory and that [the ship in question] was directed to an island belonging [*zokushima* 属島] [to Satsuma], we report that [these answers] have not convinced [the Americans].³⁴⁸

Because the *kaisen* was the official ship used by Shuri officials to send products such as rice and sugar as tribute to Satsuma every year we may deduce that this statement was an attempt by the Shuri authorities to hide the true relations between Ryukyu and Satsuma. Here we might identify those territories towards which, according to the Ryukyuan officials, the Ryukyuan ship was headed as the Tokara Islands, which were under the formal jurisdiction of Kagoshima. On the occasion of the *Gaikantōrai jiken*

³⁴⁸ ROHM, vol. 7, p. 591.

(1844-46), in fact, during the negotiations with the French and the British, the Shuri leaders had asserted that the only connections they had with Japan were those purely commercial relationships with traders of the Tokara Islands and that these connections were also known to the Chinese. Therefore, we may surmise that the royal government aimed at preserving a certain degree of coherence in its foreign policy.

Moreover, when the Americans adduced that Japan had already concluded a treaty of amity with the United States in an attempt to persuade the royal government to sign a similar agreement, the Shuri officials replied that the Ryukyus were a tributary state of China, suggesting in this way that they did have not any relation with Edo, and that if rumors concerning a possible signing of a treaty between the US and the Ryukyus were to reach China, it could become a problem for the kingdom.³⁴⁹

Judging from the above, we can understand that during the course of the negotiations with the Americans the Shuri authorities on more than one occasion defined their realm as a tributary state of China and asserted that the continuation of tributary relationships with the Chinese court was the *conditio sine qua non* for preserving the independence of the kingdom. On one side, they claimed the importance of receiving directives from China with regard to the signing of an international agreement, and on the other, they made every effort to keep the true nature of the relations between Satsuma and Ryukyu hidden under the veil of the Tokara Islands. In 1854 Shuri, thus, continued with the same political strategy it had been using since 1844.

Negotiations with the French

³⁴⁹ ROHM, vol. 7, pp. 594-595.

The second Western power that signed a treaty with Ryukyu was France. On 6 November 1855, Admiral Nicolas Francois Guerin, the Commander-in-chief of the French Oriental Naval Force, arrived in Naha and formally asked the Shuri authorities to conclude an agreement. The negotiations regarding the pact began on 10 November and as many as seven more meetings (on November 12, 14, 16, 17, 21 and 24, to be precise) were needed before treaty was signed.

Although the Ryukyuan officials resolutely refused to grant further concessions to the French, Guerin did not accept Shuri's objections as it had already concluded an international treaty with the United States and ordered his forces to land and march toward the official site for the meetings with foreigners. Surrounded by the French troops, the Ryukyuan officials had no other option than to give into Guerin's requests and, as a consequence, the two sides signed the treaty on 24 November.³⁵⁰

According to the Ryukyuan records, during the negotiations the royal government objected to the French demands as follows:

Although we fully informed [them] [that we were able to conclude an agreement] of amity as well as of [supplying them] fuel, water and food on the occasion of a visit of French vessels, we cannot really comply with [their requests of opening] trade, buying land and houses, or permitting a consul, merchants and [other] citizens [of French nationality] to reside in rented houses.³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ Ōkuma, *Ikokusen*, pp. 224-226.

³⁵¹ *ROHM*, vol. 11, n. 1535, p. 196.

Moreover, the royal government, in response to Guerin's pressure, who claimed to have received the prestigious task of concluding a treaty with Ryukyu from the French emperor, explained the status of the Ryukyu kingdom in the following terms:

Our [humble] kingdom since ancient times has been standing as a tributary state of China. Moreover, since it [could] stand as a kingdom depending on the relationships that since antiquity it has been maintaining with the Tokara Islands of Japan, given that we [absolutely] need to receive instructions from the above-mentioned countries, as we have asked them [the favor] to wait until such replies [from China and Tokara] have reached [Ryukyu], [they objected] that Ryukyu is a province of neither China nor Japan [and that, therefore,] there is no need to consult with those countries. [Also they argued that] of course if it was necessary [to request the opinion of China and Tokara], we should also have consulted them with regard to the [copy of] the treaty that we handed to [them] yesterday; nevertheless, judging from the fact that we said [we were able] to conclude an agreement without consulting them, [they said] they have absolutely no ear for [our claim] that it is necessary to consult with the above-mentioned countries. [Against this, we pointed out that] the [copy] of the treaty that we handed [to them] yesterday, since it corresponded to the same content [of the agreement concluded] with the United States somehow or other we [could] conclude [the agreement] without asking their advice. Nevertheless, the treaty that [the French asked us to sign] on imperial order, given that it has to do with the purchasing of land and houses or the wish to let [French citizens] regardless to their number reside in rented houses, it really is the most difficult problem [we have ever had], [therefore, we think] it is absolutely necessary we receive instructions from the two above-mentioned countries.³⁵²

³⁵² Ansei 2/10/8. *ROHM*, vol. 11, n. 1535, p. 207.

From this entry, which concerns the fifth meeting (held on 17 November) we may deduce that the Shuri authorities attempted to delineate the outlines of a kingdom that since ancient times could position itself as a realm thanks, on one side, to tributary relations with China, and, on the other, benefiting from commercial connections with the Japanese Tokara Islands. For these reasons, Ryukyu absolutely needed to receive instructions from China and the Tokara Islands with regard to the new type of agreement that the French pressed them to sign. As we have seen, during the negotiations with the Americans, the Ryukyuan officials stated that the Ryukyu kingdom maintained trade relations with the Tokara Islands; nevertheless, during the dealings with the French the Ryukyuan side came to argue that it was necessary to obtain the Tokara Islands' approval before being able to accept the French requests. However, the French countered saying Ryukyu was an independent kingdom, and if such consultations were really necessary, the Ryukyuan officials should also have asked advice from China and the Tokara Islands for the agreement that they were able to conclude on 16 November. Nevertheless, the royal government made a clear distinction between the stipulations in the treaty signed with the United States and which could have been accorded to France, and the new clauses that the French insisted would be inserted in their treaty. According to the Ryukyuan officials, this second category of clauses absolutely required consultation with China and the Tokara Islands. The establishment of trade, the right of purchasing or renting land and houses, the appointment of a consul and granting permission to a number of French citizens to reside on the islands, in fact, put the government of Shuri for the difficult choice of whether or not to grant further concessions to Westerners.

From the report below we may infer in which terms instructions from China and the Tokara Islands were vital for maintaining autonomy for the Ryukyu kingdom.

Since Ryukyu is a tributary state of China, if it does not receive instructions from the Chinese emperor it would certainly lose the [proper] way of vassal [between the Son of Heaven and the Ryukyuan king] and tributary relations might be interrupted. In addition, [our kingdom] also maintains relationships with the Tokara Islands since antiquity, [being] a poor small kingdom that could stand by means of the support from such islands, if we do not also receive advice from the officials of the above-mentioned islands, they would interrupt the relations [with us] and [Ryukyu] cannot remain an autonomous kingdom.³⁵³

We may surmise that Shuri appealed to the necessity to receive instructions from the Tokara Islands in order to buy time and to delay the signing of the treaty with France. During the negotiations with Guerin, as we have seen, the Shuri officials emphasized the fact that the Ryukyu kingdom could preserve its independence only thanks to the support of China and the Tokara Islands. On the occasion of the *Gaikantōrai jiken* (1844-46), the kingdom's authorities had also adopted the same defensive strategy. When Benigne Eugene Fornire-Duplan, the captain of the French warship *Alcmene*, had arrived on 28 April 1844 and had pressed the royal government to establish diplomatic and trade relationships, the Ryukyuan officials had refused the French requests appealing to the poverty of the Ryukyus and stating that their kingdom was a tributary

³⁵³ *ROHM*, vol. 11, n. 1535, p. 211.

state of China while masking its submission to the Satsuma domain under the fictitious commercial relationship with the Tokara Islands.³⁵⁴

The Shuri leaders, thus, in the Autumn of 1855, did not rashly conceive a new defensive strategy against the French, but from the documents that we have explored we can infer that they projected the meetings with Guerin within a broader political frame—a frame in which even after a decade it was very important to maintain a coherent strategy in dealings with foreigners.

Negotiations with the Dutch

One of the most ambitious projects concerning foreign trade undertaken by the Satsuma daimyo, Shimazu Nariakira, was that of conceiving commercial trade between Westerners and Ryukyu, taking advantage of the hegemonic position Kagoshima held over the small archipelago.

In September 1857, Nariakira ordered his retainer Ichiki Shirō to go to Ryukyu. On 26 November Ichiki arrived in Naha and on 18 December he sent for the members of the *sanshikan* and other important Ryukyuan officials to whom he revealed the secret plan of the Satsuma lord.³⁵⁵ Nariakira issued seven instructions. First, the royal government should establish trade relations with the Dutch or the French at Ōshima, within the Ryukyu, or at Yamagawa, in Kagoshima. Second, it should purchase steam ships through mediation of the French. Third, it should send students to the Great Britain, the United States and France. Fourth, it should build a station at Taiwan for the anchorage of Ryukyuan ships on their way to China. Fifth, it should enlarge the Ryukyuan official residence in Fuzhou (known, in Japanese as *Ryūkyūkan*) and expand

³⁵⁴ Ibid., vol. 1, n. 1327, p. 379.

³⁵⁵ Shimazu Nariakira *genkōroku*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1944) p. 86.

trade with China. Sixth, it should collaborate with merchants sailing to China and resell small and large guns to the Chinese. The seventh order concerned the discharge of Zakimi Uekata as member of the *sanshikan*. With the exception of the last order, all the other instructions concerned commercial matters. Through the accomplishment of these directives, Nariakira intended to establish international trade that extended from Ryukyu or Yamagawa to Fuzhou, in China, and that would even expand to France or Holland, in Europe.

Unlike what had happened during the negotiations with the United States and France, the dealings with the Dutch took place after the magistrate of Nagasaki had informed the Dutch—who were sounding out the possibility to conclude a treaty with Ryukyu through the mediation of the bakufu—that he, and as a consequence the shogunate, had no authority to give permission to the Dutch government to sign an agreement with the Ryukyu kingdom. Furthermore, against the background of the negotiations between Shuri and the Dutch representatives existed the above-mentioned secret trade plan of Nariakira. In fact, it is possible to surmise that Nariakira took advantage of Dutch interest in Ryukyu for secretly proposing to the representatives of the Dutch government they conclude a commercial agreement with the Ryukyu kingdom.

From May 1858, an epistolary dialogue began between the royal government of Shuri and Satsuma that was aimed at establishing the criteria for the Ryukyu's dealings with the Dutch mission, which would reach Naha in the near future with the purpose of concluding a treaty. With regard to the imminent arrival of the Dutch, let us look at the objections raised by the royal government against Kagoshima.

If the [Dutch] mission argued that because Ryukyu is a kingdom of *tsūshin* and *fukujū* [that is to say that it maintains diplomatic relations with Edo and at the same time it is subordinate to Satsuma] of Japan, and on this occasion, with the purpose of concluding a treaty [with Shuri] had asked and obtained [authorization] from the bakufu and now it reached [Ryukyu to accomplish such a goal], [we wish Satsuma would consent that we] state that [Ryukyu] as they said is subordinate to Japan, but towards the Chinese court it is an independent kingdom which does not maintain any relations with other countries. Since the time of the great Ming [dynasty] so far, we have been paying tribute [to the Chinese emperor] without interruptions and we have been deeply concealing [to the Chinese our] obedience to Japan. Considering the fact that also when before the French and American missions came [to Ryukyu] and we exchanged [with them the documents of] the treaties we deeply concealed [to them] the course of our relations with Japan, with full compliance of them [the Dutch] we wish that they do not reveal [our relations with Japan] of course to the French [missionaries] and their Chinese [interpreter] who are residing in Ryukyu but also to the people of other countries and that [we can count on] their utmost discretion so that [the information about our subordination to Japan] will not be leaked to the Qing dynasty.³⁵⁶

From this entry, we may deduce that the Shuri authorities distinguished clearly between the defensive strategy to follow with regard to the French and the Americans and their strategy with regard to the Dutch. We may surmise that from the viewpoint of the Ryukyuan officials the Dutch, who since the 1630s were the only Westerners to whom the bakufu had granted permission to trade on the man-made island of Dejima, were aware of the real relationship between the kingdom and Japan, i.e. that Shuri maintained

³⁵⁶ Ansei 5/4/x. *ROHM*, vol. 14, n. 1573, pp. 150-151.

diplomatic relations (*tsūshin*) with Edo while at the same time being subordinate (*fukujū*) to Satsuma. As a consequence, it was not considered reasonable to assert any form of emancipation from Japan towards the Dutch, but it seemed more opportune to openly reveal the real status of Ryukyu vis-à-vis Japan, so that the Dutch, in order to conclude a treaty with the kingdom, would contribute to conceal the truth from the Chinese and the rest of the West.

With regard to the commercial plans of Satsuma, the royal government raised the following issues:

Despite the fact that we were told about the secret treaty [from the Satsuma daimyo] that orders us to [start] trade at Ōshima, if by any chance [the Dutch] asked to trade at the port of Uten [in the northern part of Okinawa], [we would object, saying that] Ryukyu is a small kingdom lacking in resources, therefore it in no way can make arrangements to trade with a great power. Also to the French and Americans we argued [using] the same reasons. [...]

If trade [with the Dutch] was opened at Uten, France, the United States, the Great Britain and so on would not give up [the idea to trade with us], most of all because we can see that in the treaty [signed with] France [it is prescribed that] if we start commerce with another country we must concede the same trade [conditions] to them too; of course France, but also other countries, would plan [to obtain] the same [concessions].

Needless to say, if we arrive at a situation in which an excessive amount of Japanese articles are transported to Uten and trade on a large scale is carried out with numerous countries, the fact that we obey to Japan would be spontaneously discovered by the Qing and this would cause problems for [our] tributary relationship. In either case, since we are very concerned, we plead you at any

cost to exempt us from [opening] trade in Uten.³⁵⁷

The passage above is part of a longer document; here I select a number of elements salient to this dissertation. The secret treaty to which the Shuri officials made refer is the secret plan of Nariakira that, as was mentioned before, was transmitted to the highest ranks within the kingdom in December 1857 by Ichiki Shirō. From the document it is possible to infer that Shuri had no intention to open trade activity with the Dutch at Uten, that is to say, within Ryukyuan territory. Therefore, the Ryukyuan officials appealed to the poverty of the islands as well as to the fact that on previous occasions it had refused trade with the French and the Americans for the same reasons. It is interesting to underline that Shuri was very aware of the meaning of the clause of Most Favorite Nation in the agreement signed with France; therefore, if they conceded trade to the Dutch, the French and likely other Western powers would have claimed their rights to establish the same commercial relations. In addition, against the proposal of Satsuma for opening commercial activities at Uten from where Kagoshima would have dispatched numerous Japanese goods, Shuri argued that a high volume of business characterized by numerous Japanese articles at Uten would not pass unnoticed by the Qing who then might have interrupted the tributary relations with the kingdom. For all these reasons, the royal government pleaded with the Shimazu to refrain from pushing for open trade at Uten.

However, on 24 August 1858, in the midst of this animated dialogue between Shuri and Kagoshima, Shimazu Nariakira passed away. Suddenly the main artificer of

³⁵⁷ Ansei 5/4/x. *ROHM*, vol. 14, n. 1573, p. 151.

the ambitious project to open Ryukyu to international commerce disappeared from the picture.

The following year, on 29 June 1859, Van Koperen, a representative of the Dutch government, arrived in the Ryukyus and formally asked the royal government to conclude an agreement. On 30 June, the *sōrikan* Takamine Aji and Van Koperen started negotiations and on 6 July they appended their signatures to the official documents that sanctioned the Treaty of Amity between Ryukyu and Holland.

At the negotiating table, the Ryukyuan officials firmly rejected two requests. The following was their first refusal:

Since we cannot comply with your [requests] of establishing trade relations, appointing a consul and erecting a chapel, we plead you so that you kindly consent to our refusal.³⁵⁸

From this passage we may deduce that the Ryukyuan officials were not willing to grant any further concessions than those accorded before to the Americans and the French. Moreover, despite the fact that a year before Shimazu Nariakira had ordered Shuri to establish commerce with the Dutch, the sudden death of the Satsuma lord had in effect strengthened the negotiating power of the kingdom's officials insomuch that they flatly refused the request of opening trade to the Dutch.

The other matter raised by the royal government concerned the request of the Dutch representatives for the Ryukyuan king to sign the treaty.

With regard to [the fact that] they claimed that the Dutch king and the king of this territory

³⁵⁸ Ansei 6/6/5. (4 July 1859). *ROHM*, vol. 14, n. 1582, p. 498.

should reciprocally append their signatures and exchange [the documents related to the treaty], given that also with the United States and France [the task of] signing and exchange [the documents] was limited to [the posts of] *sōrikan* and *fuseikan*, we have consulted [with them] many times so that they kindly [accept] to arrange according [to our formalities]. Nevertheless, in their country there is the custom [according to which] it is the king who puts his name in the treaties; however, [in our kingdom] it is to the limit of [the posts of] *sōrikan* and *fuseikan* who put their names [in the treaty]. The Dutch grew in intensity to claim that it is absolutely their king who puts his name [on the agreement] and they became irritated. Considering the fact that no matter how much we [attempted] to consult with them more than we have already tried, we do not see any sign that they could accept [our refusal], as they have claimed [we consent to] the king of Holland putting his name [on the document. Nonetheless, with regard to our side we intend to adhere to our protocol]. Thus, we asked the interpreters [of the kingdom] to write the four documents in Chinese that [the Dutch] will exchange with the *sōrikan* and the *fuseikan*; since the French [missionaries] residing [in Ryukyu] have an excellent knowledge of Chinese we think it is opportune to charge them with the task to write [the above-mentioned documents].

[...] ³⁵⁹

As we can see from this entry, the requests of the Dutch put the royal government in a difficult position, a position that risked causing a deep crack in the heart of the policy adopted by Shuri towards foreigners so far. In fact, one of the strongholds on which the defensive strategy of the kingdom has been founded was the unconditional defense of the king and the most important posts of the realm, that is to say of the ideological/symbolical sphere of the kingdom described earlier.

³⁵⁹ Ansei 6/6/5. (4 July 1859). *ROHM*, vol. 14, n. 1582, p. 499.

On numerous occasions during negotiations between Asian countries and Western representatives, the signing of the treaties became a complicated matter. The Chinese, for example, signed the agreements but refused to add the imperial seal since they believed that by attaching his own seal the emperor would injure his honor. In the end, however, they had no choice but to submit to Western international legal protocol.³⁶⁰ The Japanese representatives who concluded the Treaty of Kanagawa, for their part, refused to seal the treaty jointly with the American diplomats and persuaded them to use a copy of the document while submitting a text to which they had previously appended their seals.³⁶¹

With regard to the Ryukyuan case, Commodore Perry had earlier requested to visit Shuri castle and meet the Ryukyuan king, Shō Tai. Despite firm opposition of the royal government, Perry and his long parade of high officials, military band and troops marched to Shuri Castle on 6 June 1853.³⁶² Nonetheless, the Ryukyuan officials using the young age of the king, his indisposition and the like, as pretext, succeeded in defending this sphere of high symbolic value. Moreover, the posts of *sōrikan* and *fuseikan* themselves, created *ex novo* to exempt the most important offices of the government, such as those of the Regent and the members of the Council of Three, from any responsibility with regard to possible concessions granted to foreigners during negotiations, entered into the same logic that aimed at defending the symbolic and ideological sphere of the kingdom.

³⁶⁰ John Peter Stern, *The Japanese Interpretation of the "Law of Nations," 1854-1874* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 7.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³⁶² *Okinawa kenshi bijuaru han 4: Perry ga yatte kita, 19 seiki ni yatte kita ikokujin tachi* (Naha: Okinawaken Kyōiku Iinkai, 1999), pp. 51-52.

During the dealings with the Dutch, we can see that Shuri officials apparently had reached a certain degree of maturity and ability in diplomacy, recognizing on one side the significance of honoring the etiquette of a foreign country, while, on the other, appealing to the same principle in order to free the Ryukyuan king from a dishonorable office such as that of putting his name in a treaty. In addition, the attempt to appeal to diplomatic rituals observed before in dealings with the French and the Americans in order to persuade the Dutch can be also interpreted as a strategy to use barbarians against barbarians. The acknowledgment by the Dutch of the Ryukyuan traditional diplomatic protocol, that is to say the legitimation of the ritual *sōrikan-fuseikan*, was without any doubt a great success in diplomacy achieved by the Shuri government.

Unlike the unease regarding the political status of the islands which emerged in the dialogue between Shuri and Kagoshima in 1857, once the Dutch mission reached Ryukyu, we may surmise from the available documents that during the formal negotiations the Ryukyuan officials did not mention the political status of Ryukyu vis-à-vis China and Japan. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the problems of opening trade, appointing a consul, building a chapel as well as the ritual concerning the signings of the treaties arose.

From the policy adopted by the royal government officials during the negotiations preceding the conclusion of the agreements, we may infer that for Shuri Western powers did not appear as an enormous indistinguishable political entity, within which it was difficult to discern the richness and the complexity of every state, but that every power was very distinctive from the others and that it was necessary with all of them to adopt different political strategies grounded in reasonable and pragmatic criteria, such as, for

example, that of following a coherent policy over time. Towards France and the United States, the royal government, in fact, proceeded along the policy drawn during the *Gaikantorai jiken*, i.e. asserting that Ryukyu was a tributary state of China and masking the relations with Japan under the patina of commercial relations with the Tokara Islands. Nevertheless, before the arrival of the Dutch mission the Ryukyuan officials showed a tendency to reveal to them the true status of Ryukyu vis-à-vis Japan as long as the Dutch would have contributed keep the real nature of the connections between Shuri and Edo/Kagoshima hidden from the Chinese.

3.3. The opening of the Ryukyu kingdom

The Treaties of Amity with the United States and France

Because the content of the treaty between Ryukyu and Holland was based on those concluded with the United States and France, I will here examine in detail the stipulations set forth in the agreements signed with the American and French representatives. The Treaty of Amity between Ryukyu and the United States prescribes the following:³⁶³

Article 1. Hereafter, whenever citizens of the United States come to Lewchew, they shall be treated with great courtesy and friendship. Whatever articles these persons ask for, whether from the officers or people, which the country can furnish, shall be sold to them; nor shall the authorities interpose any prohibitory regulations to the people selling; and whatever either party may wish to buy shall be exchanged at reasonable

³⁶³ Quoted in full from Williams, *Perry Expedition to Japan*, pp. 246-248. For the Japanese version cf. *ROHM*, vol. 14, pp. 519-520.

prices.

Article 2. Whenever ships of the United States shall come into any harbor in Lewchew they shall be supplied with wood and water, but if they wish to get other articles, they shall be purchasable only at Napa.

Article 3. If ships of the United States are wrecked on Great Lewchew, or any of the islands under the jurisdiction of the royal government of Lewchew, the local authorities shall dispatch persons to assist in saving life and property, and preserve what can be brought ashore till the ships of that nation shall come to take away all that may have been saved; and the expenses incurred in rescuing these unfortunate persons shall be refunded by the nation they belong to.

Article 4. Whenever persons from ships of the United States shall come ashore in Lewchew they shall be at liberty to ramble where they please without hindrance, or having officials sent to follow them, or to spy what they do; but if they violently go into houses, or trifle with women, or force people to sell them things, or do other such like illegal acts, they shall be arrested by the local officers, but not maltreated, and shall be reported to the captain of the ship to which they belong for punishment by him.

Article 5. At Tumai is a burial ground for the citizens of the United States, where their graves and tombs shall not be molested.

Article 6. The government of Lewchew shall appoint skillful pilots who shall be on the lookout for ships appearing off the island; and if one is seen coming towards Napa, they shall go out in good boats, beyond the reefs, to conduct her to a secure anchorage; for which service the captain shall pay the pilot five dollars, and the same for going out of the harbor beyond the reefs.

Article 7. Whenever ships anchor at Napa the officers shall furnish them with wood at

the rate of 3600 copper cash per 1000 catties; and with water at the rate of 600 copper cash (43 cents) per 1000 catties, or six barrels full, each containing 30 American gallons.

In light of what was prescribed in the treaty it is necessary to formulate some considerations regarding the significance of this international agreement in the history of the kingdom's foreign relations.

Given that the first article sanctioned the Ryukyans to treat the Americans with great friendship (J. *waboku* 和睦), Ryukyu, like Tokugawa Japan, was included in the world of diplomatic relations of amity based on a Western matrix that regulated the relationships between the modern states. The third, sixth and seventh articles, for the first time in the history of the kingdom, stipulated that the Ryukyans could receive indemnity as compensation for services, such as supplying wood and water and conducting the American ships to safe anchorage, rendered for the benefit of the Americans. The fourth article reflects Perry's success in constantly protesting during his stay in Ryukyu against the shadowing of foreigners by the royal government as it prohibited this practice. Based on the stipulations of the treaty, we may assert that the conclusion of the Treaty of Amity between Ryukyu and the United States represented a watershed in the kingdom's history of foreign relations.

In addition, since the treaty of amity signed with France became the source for new concessions granted to foreigners, it constituted another step towards the full opening of the islands. (The new concessions are contained in Article 2, 10 and 11 of the Treaty).³⁶⁴ Article 2 stipulated that land, houses and ships should be lent to the

³⁶⁴ *ROHM*, vol. 17, pp. 317-320.

French when requested. It was set to carefully safeguard the coal deposit and the houses borrowed by the French. Article 10 specified that Ryukyuan and French lawbreakers must be punished according to the laws of their respective states. Article 12 granted France the status of Most Favored Nation (MFN).

From that moment on, therefore, the French obtained the right to borrow land, houses and ships; however, seen from another perspective, we can also assume that the officials of the royal government achieved an important diplomatic success because they succeeded in turning down the French representatives' requests to purchase land and houses which had been brought up during the negotiations preceding the signing of the agreement.³⁶⁵ The stipulations of Article 10 took away the Ryukyuan jurisdiction over French offenders, that is to say that the French could benefit from the status of extraterritoriality. Without any doubt this clause limited the sovereignty of the royal government and of the Ryukyuan king himself. Moreover, since the MFN was accorded to the French any additional concession granted to another country in the future would immediately be conferred on France as well.

Countermeasures taken by the royal government against the Treaty of Amity with the United States

³⁶⁵ From the *Shōke monjo* 尚家文書 (Naha: Rekishi Hakubutsukan Etsuranshitsu, ed.) we can observe that the royal government considered the treaty stipulated with the French: *kakudan omoku ai nari sōrō* 格段重相成候, that is, particularly heavier or troublesome, with respect to the compact signed with the United States. In fact, since it stipulated that the French could rent land and build a house, Shuri feared that the French missionaries would stay for a long time on the islands. As during the *Gaikantorai jiken*, with regard to the matter of the Westerners' presence on the islands, the Shuri government did not plead with Satsuma. It decided, instead, to inform the Qing of the treaty signed with France and asked their support for finding a solution to the problem of the French presence in the kingdom.

As described above, during the negotiations, the Shuri authorities who had been delegated to deal with the American representatives tried to keep the subordination of Ryukyu to Japan hidden from the United States. Nonetheless, as soon as the agreement with the United States was signed, the royal government appealed to Kagoshima for a new foreign policy to follow from then on.³⁶⁶ In their request for this new policy, the Ryukyuan officials argued that although they had made every effort in order for the treaty to not be concluded, “the foreigners [the Americans] did not take into consideration any further [objections] and [since] we were already in a situation of national danger, for inevitable reasons [we had no other option than] to sign and hand [them the documents] as they had required.”³⁶⁷ In other words, the royal government justified the opening of the kingdom, which was sanctioned by the signing of the treaty, as the only remaining path for Ryukyu in order to avoid an international crisis with the United States.

In addition, the same missive stated with regard to the future countermeasures to adopt in the relationship with the United States that “if from now on we do not handle [our dealings with the Americans] in deference to the articles written in their treaty the matter would become very complicated; [after the conclusion of the treaty] the regulations written in the instructions that we were ordered [by you] in the previous Boar Year [1851] [are] also [subject to] change; now [a very serious situation] is impending, we are so sorry to give you so much trouble. For these reasons, we plead you [to have the courtesy] to pass us some kind of instructions with regard to [the policy

³⁶⁶ The treaty with the United States was concluded on 11 July 1854 and on 29 July Shuri sent their request for information on the new policy to follow to Satuma. With regard to the argument in this paragraph cf. Tomiyama “Ryū-Bei, Ryū-Futsu jōyaku teiketsu mondai wo chūshin ni.”

³⁶⁷ Ka’ei 7/7/5. *ROHM*, vol. 14, p. 516.

to adopt] in the future. Very soon, we wish to transmit the content of [your] instructions to the entire kingdom and the several islands.”³⁶⁸

The Shuri authorities apprehensive about the risks they took when violating the stipulations of the treaty but because adherence to those stipulations would have implied a violation of the instructions concerning foreign policy received from Satsuma in 1851, they asked Kagoshima to suggest new guidelines to follow in the changed international scenario.

The instructions that had been issued in the Boar Year and to which the Shuri officials referred in their petition constituted a series of regulations concerning foreign policy that Satsuma had transmitted to the royal government on 17 March 1851 and that we have already examined in chapter two. These new directives from Satsuma, which they had arrived at after having consulted the bakufu, prescribed the new policy with regard to contacts with foreigners after the arrival of the British and French vessels in 1844-46. In particular, the regulations once again forbade the establishment of familiar relations with Westerners.³⁶⁹

The missive sent to Kagoshima on 29 July allows us to deduce that as soon as Ryukyu was opened to the West through the conclusion of an international treaty grounded in Western law, the royal government appealed to the Shimazu for a new foreign policy to follow. In chapter one we have seen that the Ryukyus in the early-modern period came to identify their kingdom as a political entity under the supervision (*kantoku*) of Satsuma, therefore, Shuri’s appeal to Kagoshima fits this kind of vision perfectly.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 517.

³⁶⁹ *ROHM*, vol. 14, pp. 515-516.

While awaiting Satsuma's reply, however, the royal government transmitted a series of temporary directives to its offices throughout the realm. These directives were endorsed by the resident magistrate of Satsuma.

The following text was transmitted after having consulted the resident magistrate and the *shuei on kata* 守衛御方 [Satsuma official charged with military tasks and resident at Naha] by the *osasunosoba* 御鎖之側 [royal government office affiliated to the Mōshiguchi 申口 and charged with foreign relations and trade].

Whenever the above-mentioned [American] ships are cast ashore or are wrecked on this territory as well as on the islands [of the kingdom], you shall dispatch a lifeboat, rescue the crew and their cargo, care for and protect them, and immediately send [a report] of the events [to the government] by express messenger. If in the meantime a ship of their country reaches [the kingdom], let [the shipwrecked] go on board and repatriate. Nevertheless, if on such occasions [the Americans] request you to accept [indemnities] for the various expenses [sustained for their assistance] you shall accept [such compensations] in moderation. When [the Americans] land [on our territory] and walk around, the people of this territory have the disposition not to follow them; given that in such circumstances hindrances [could arise], [we order] the various officials to pay attention and follow them without being seen by them. If [the Americans] enter a house without reason, or bother a [Ryukyuan] woman, or [try] to purchase goods by force, or commit any other illegal actions, [you shall] immediately inform the captain of that ship without thrashing [the lawbreakers].

With regard to all other issues [which are not mentioned above], you shall handle [foreign relations] according to [what has been ordered] until now based on the [official protocol]. The above has to do with the content of the requests [made by] the Commodore of the United States

who came [to Ryukyu] recently. Since we are ordered [to act] as is written in the transcription of the document [treaty which you find] in the attached sheet, first of all, you shall act in deference to the articles [written in the above transcription]. [With regard to] all other matters, whenever a foreign vessel arrives in Ryukyu, you shall be [well] aware of the above-mentioned [different way of dealing with the situation]. [...]

Tiger Year, 22nd day of the 7th Month [Solar, 15 August 1854]

Kanegusuku Peechin

Ginowan Peechin

Kyan Peechin

[to the officials based at] Miyakojima, Yeyamajima, Kume-Gushikawa majiri, Kume-Nakazato majiri, Keramajima, Iejima, Iheyajima, Tonakijima, Agunijima, Nakijin majiri, Kushi majiri, Katsuren majiri, Motobu majiri, Kunigami majiri, Yomitan majiri, Kyan majiri.³⁷⁰

As we have seen, the royal government, on the one hand, asked Kagoshima to suggest a new foreign policy, and, on the other, on 15 August sent a temporary guideline to officials throughout the kingdom, after having consulted the Satsuma officials resident in Naha. With regard to the content of this account, we need to take into consideration a number of aspects. First of all, according to Shuri, in line with traditional protocol, i.e. the regulations issued by Kagoshima in 1851, it was necessary to rescue and protect shipwrecked American citizens as well as to protect their cargos; nonetheless, from this moment on the Ryukyuan people could receive moderate compensation for the expenses sustained in supplying and safeguarding the Americans. This compensation represented a watershed in foreign relations. Another important aspect concerns the surveillance of

³⁷⁰ Ka'ei 7/7/22, 15 August 1854. *ROHM*, vol. 14, pp. 518-519.

the Americans after they had come to land. The notification argued that if the Americans could walk freely for the islands this could cause certain difficulties; therefore, the order was given to be very careful and to shadow them without being noticed.

In the above-mentioned account, the royal government ordered its officials to observe in principle the norms of the treaty. Nonetheless, with regard to matters not mentioned in the agreement, it commanded to adhere to traditional protocol. Moreover, with regard to those articles that, if honored would have caused serious problems to the kingdom—such as the prohibition to follow the foreigners—Shuri ordered its officials to violate the treaty. Even though Shuri consulted the Satsuma resident magistrate, we may surmise that behind the decision to continue the practice of having the Americans followed lay the objective of the royal government to defend its realm from the presence of the Westerners. Then, in case a non-US foreign vessel arrived, Shuri gave instructions to deal with it according to traditional protocol.

During the negotiations with the United States, the royal government asserted that the Ryukyus were a tributary kingdom of China; nonetheless, once the treaty was concluded, it requested the Shimazu to issue new directives regarding foreign policy. In the meantime, all officials were ordered to violate those articles considered dangerous for the safety of the kingdom. Even though the treaty concluded with the United States represented a watershed in the history of foreign relations of Ryukyu, for Shuri the entrance in a treaty system based on Western international law did not constitute a break with the past, but rather symbolized a forced passage against the background of which the traditional relations of investiture and tribute with China as well as those under the supervision of Satsuma/Japan were considered more essential than ever.

3.4. “Reciprocal friendship” and “elimination of the official-followers:” clashes between Shuri and the French

French voices of protest

On 12 April 1855, three French missionaries—Pères Girard, Furet, Mermet de Cachon—and a Chinese interpreter reached Naha; in June, Furet temporarily left the Ryukyus. On 24 November, as was mentioned before, the royal government concluded the Treaty of Amity with France under pressure from Guerin. One year later, from 25 to 30 October 1856, Guerin returned to Naha bringing with him Pères Mounicou and Furet; on that occasion, the ill Mermet de Cachon was brought to Hong Kong to receive the necessary medical treatment.³⁷¹ During the days preceding the arrival of Guerin, the missionaries Girard and Mermet de Cachon harshly criticized the conduct of the royal government.

[The French missionaries say that], if recently we strictly ordered the entire kingdom [to honor the treaty], [they would not be shadowed] by followers and [Ryukyuan] people who pass along the road would not avoid [them]. They argued that they ascertained proof [of these acts] in the last two or three days. [In response to these objections, the interpreter of the kingdom] Ōwan, in the form of a personal opinion, [argued that] the people of this territory fear [the missionaries] because they are not familiar with people of other countries and [for these reasons] they avoid [foreigners]. In addition, given that two years ago an American crewmember raped a woman of

³⁷¹ Francisque Marnas, *Nihon kirisutokyō fukkatsushi*, translated by Kuno Keiichirō, (*La “Religion du Jesus” (Iaso Ja-Kyo) Ressuscitée au Japon dans la Seconde Moitié du XIX’ Siecle*), (Tokyo: Misuzu Shoten, 1985), p. 128.

Naha, this feeling of fear became more and more intense. Given that these feelings belong to natural order [of human beings], he pleaded with [the missionaries] to [try] to imagine [the apprehension of the Ryukyuan people]. [The missionaries replied that] they already knew about such immoral behavior; [nevertheless,] comparing a crewman with them [the missionaries in order] to justify [the behavior of the Ryukyuan people], is a way to bring shame on the French people. Nevertheless [they argued that] when during their walks the passers-by did not see the [official] followers they did not seem to have fear; for this reason [the missionaries think that the Ryukyuan people] do not dislike the French but that it looks as if they are afraid of their followers. Although [we objected] saying that since the treaty [came into effect] we have withdrawn the followers [and that, thus,] it is the passers-by who misjudge [people close to the missionaries as followers], we did not reach a solution.³⁷²

This entry, dated 5 October 1856, was drawn up by Shuri officials delegated to deal with the French missionaries residing in Naha. It is possible to deduce that the missionaries complained to the royal government about the fact that Ryukyuan did not honor the agreement stipulated the previous year. It is very interesting to see that according to the missionaries, the Ryukyuan people were not afraid of French citizens but rather feared the followers who were always in the vicinity of the foreigners. In other words, the French became aware of the fact that the only entity responsible for the violation of the agreement was the Shuri government.

In response to the objections raised by the missionaries, Shuri officials stated that since the treaty had come into effect the government had ordered the suspension of shadowing the foreigners, therefore it was precisely the common people who

³⁷² Ansei 3/9/7. *ROHM*, vol. 12, p. 349.

erroneously mistook the persons close to the French for government followers. It is interesting to see how in some way it was the behavior of common people that confirmed to the missionaries that the people behind them were not simple passers-by but official-followers.

In light of what we have ascertained, we may affirm that one year after the conclusion of the Treaty of Amity with France, the Ryukyans did not honor all the prescribed norms. The fifth article (article four in the treaty with the United States which imposed the suspension of the official-followers), in particular, was deliberately violated. In addition, if common people avoided coming in contact with the missionaries, it meant the first article of both treaties was also not respected as it prescribed that foreigners “shall be treated with great courtesy and friendship.”

The French missionaries also reported the following issue to Shuri:

[According to the French missionaries], the previous year Admiral [Guerin] came [to Ryukyu] and concluded a treaty with the *sōrikan*, [who] replied [promised the French] that he would have ordered [the observation of the agreement] to the entire kingdom immediately. As almost one year has passed, [the missionaries objected that] when during their walks they asked numerous people [about the treaty], [they ascertained that] there were also persons who answered they do not know in detail about the agreement [...]³⁷³

With regard to the complaints forwarded by the French missionaries to the royal government, we may conclude that, on one hand, Shuri decided to deliberately violate the fifth article as well as to contain the extent of the contacts with foreigners prescribed

³⁷³ Ansei 3/9/26. (24 October 1856). *ROHM*, vol. 12, p. 373.

in the first article; on the other hand, the government did not transmit to the entire kingdom the content of the treaties. Seen in this light, initially, the conclusion of an international treaty without any doubt represented to Shuri a significant event, which, nonetheless, involved in an almost exclusive way the king, the Great Council, the fictitious posts of *sōrikan* and *fuseikan*, and the entire bureaucratic apparatus of the kingdom, and excluding most of the rest of the population. Moreover, the royal government did not consider the agreement to be sacred and inviolable laws, but saw the stipulations rather as directives that necessarily needed to be contained or violated if they endangered the safety of the kingdom. Unlike the strategy adopted by the bakufu, which, as we have seen, recurred to negotiations to retract all troublesome norms already sanctioned by the treaties, Shuri publicly committed herself to honor the agreements, while privately conceiving of a policy that was aimed at observing only those norms that were not considered a threat to the kingdom.

Shuri's responses to the French complaints

As a countermeasure to the criticism of the French, the royal government decided to draw up new regulations regarding dealing with foreigners that would apply to the entire kingdom. Because Satsuma passed on the new directives regarding foreign policy, i.e. the countermeasures to the treaties with the United States and France, to Shuri in February 1856, we may surmise that these instructions profoundly affected the draft of the new manual issued by Shuri. Nonetheless, as we shall see, it is necessary to consider other perspectives, such as Shuri's political strategy, as well, while keeping the foreign policy adopted by the royal government after the *Gaikantōrai jiken* in mind, in order to

try to shed light on the intention of this new regulation. In January 1857, the royal government issued the following instructions:

With regard to various matters [that need to be] dealt with regarding the treaties exchanged with France and the United States, although also in recent times we were ordered numerous [instructions], [now] in addition, as [you can see] in the separate volume, the [original] agreements [concluded] with the above-mentioned countries were translated in Japanese. And we are ordered to attach also the *Ikokujin he hentō no kokoroe*, [and concerning] the observance of the articles of the treaties to conduct according to [what is prescribed in] the supplement of the treaty [concluded] with France. We [shall] be aware of the fact that the articles that are not [taken into consideration] by the [above-mentioned] supplement [should be all honored in deference to the agreements]. Given that the observance of [the norms] in the treaty [signed with] the United States is also [exactly] the same [as that set in the supplement of the French agreement], [it is ordered] to handle [this] according [to what is prescribed for the] French treaty [and its supplement]. [...] Moreover, whenever we are asked something by a foreigner, [it is ordered to] reply without any doubt according to [what is prescribed in the] [*Ikokujin he*] *hentō no kokoroesho*; in such a case, if the foreigners [direct to us] any kind of blame [with regard to] something [that is] different [from the content of] the treaties, we must be well aware that publicly towards them [we need to give] the impression [that we handle everything] in deference to the treaties; still, besides the fact that the [*Ikokujin he*] *hentō no kokoroe* ordered various subterfuge [to conceal the truth],³⁷⁴ and since there are also some changes between the official

³⁷⁴ The original document states 「且返答心得書之儀段々御取繕被仰付置候上」 (*katsu hentō kokoroesho no gi dandan on toritsukuroi ōsetsukeokare sōrō ue*); given that the verb *toritsukuroi* 取り繕う means “to repair,” “to mend,” “to patch up,” the literal translation should be: besides the fact that we were ordered numerous adjustments with regard to the content of the *Ikokujin he hentō no kokoroe*. Nevertheless, in the understanding of this passage I follow the interpretation of Tomiyama Kazuyuki who interpreted such expression as “subterfuge,” “pretext” and the like. Nonetheless, it is

titles and other [names] in respect to [those] used in common parlance [within the islands], if we learn these [adjustments] superficially at present we cannot handle [affairs related to the foreigners]; given that we are apprehensive that trouble could arise, [it is ordered that these instructions] are repeated to each person two or three times a month in order that everybody completely learns them. It is ordered to transmit them scrupulously to all the *majiri* 間切 [villages] and the various islands. These are the instructions [issued by the Shuri government].
Year of the Dragon [1856], 12th Month [solar, January 1857] [...].

At the end of this account we also read that these orders should be carefully observed by wives, children and servants, too. Then, a document that proves everybody's consent to what has been commanded should be collectively submitted based on one's affiliation to a neighborhood group of families. The outcome of this procedure should be forwarded by the middle of the Third Month [solar April] of the following year to the Great Council.³⁷⁵

From this document we may deduce that the royal government transmitted a series of new directives to all local offices of the kingdom in January 1857. These directives needed to be instilled on the Ryukyans and from that moment they had to manifest an appearance of commitment to honor the treaties, but, in reality, they had to observe what was prescribed in the translation of the agreement signed with France and its attached supplement. Moreover, because Shuri ordered to attach to the new instructions the *Ikokujin he hentō no kokoroe*, which, as we have seen in chapter two, specifically prescribed to make every effort in order to portray the kingdom as poor, to

also possible that since 1848 the original content of the *Ikokujin he hentō no kokoroe* could have been revised.

³⁷⁵ Ansei 3/12/x. *ROHM*, vol. 17, pp. 319-320.

conceal the highest posts of the government by the deployment of fictitious offices, and to mask the subordination of Ryukyu to Japan, it is possible to surmise that despite signing the treaties the royal government did not intend to abandon its traditional foreign policy.

The supplement to the French agreement concerned four of the treaty's articles in particular to which the Ryukyuan officials added a special appendix that specified to what extent the clause to which the addition referred should be followed. Below I will consider the supplements appended to the first and fifth articles. Let us turn what the appendix linked to the first article states.

Supplement.

[In the original text of this article], it is prescribed that [relations of] reciprocal friendship [shall be established with foreigners]. Given that due to a misinterpretation you take it to mean “real friendship” [誠之友睦] a difficult problem would arise [for Shuri], [it is prescribed that] officially whenever you encounter a foreigner along the way [manifesting] an appearance of friendship you greet him according to the appropriate time and [then continue for your way] without escaping and avoiding [him]. In addition, if [a foreigner] steps into a house, by gestures invite [him] into the living room [but] do not let women enter [there] and with courtesy offer tea, water as well as tobacco in a tray but be aware that [it is forbidden to] become familiar [with him]. [...] ³⁷⁶

Although the first article of the treaty prescribed that reciprocal friendship between the Ryukyuan and French shall be established, the clause's supplement explicitly clarified

³⁷⁶ *ROHM*, vol. 17, p. 317.

the meaning Shuri accorded to the expression “reciprocal friendship.” For Shuri, thus, the relations of amity introduced by the Westerners did not indicate familiar relations between the people of the two countries, but rather designated the exchange of formal greetings. Inasmuch as the royal government purposely ordered the Ryukyuan population to not stop and have a talk as well as to not become familiar with foreigners we may surmise that Shuri aimed at containing the effects that an erroneous interpretation of the first article could have generated.

Let us see now the content of the appendix linked to the fifth article

Supplement.

[In the original text of this article it is prescribed that] if foreigners speak to you when they are walking around, you shall answer according to the [content of the] *Ikokujin he hentō no kokoroe* [attached to the treaty documents]. In addition, when foreigners push to purchase some articles, or moreover, [commit] illegal actions, [you shall] call [your] neighbors or the inhabitants of the village and without handling harshly [attempt] to kindly have a dialogue [with the lawbreaker]; moreover, if there is [a foreigner] who refuses to converse and who behaves roughly, [you shall] arrest [him] without thrashing [him] and immediately send a report [concerning what happened]. In addition, if the followers were eliminated, foreigners would not know the destination [行先] [of their walks] and since some kind of trouble could arise, [it is ordered] to put the followers secretly [on the foreigners’ trail] as has been [happening] so far.³⁷⁷

According to the Shuri orders, thus, when foreigners were having a walk, every Ryukyuan should reply to any possible question following the guidelines in the *Ikokujin*

³⁷⁷ *ROHM*, vol. 17, p. 318.

he hentō no kokoroe; behind the scenes the official-followers should supervise these encounters as well as make sure that the foreigners did not get lost. When under pressure from the French the royal government decided to transmit the content and translation of the international agreements concluded with the United States and France throughout the kingdom, it also made an effort to append new instructions, in which the entries were re-interpreted or their violation was ordered. In addition, from this moment on the prescriptions regarding observance of as well as noncompliance to the norms of the treaties surpassed the borders of Shuri castle and the government offices, and spread across the islands of the kingdom to reach all Ryukyuan family units.

Regarding the contents of the first article, Satsuma had already prohibited Ryukyu in 1704, in 1751 and in 1756 to establish intimate relations with foreigners. As a consequence, it seems reasonable that the government of Shuri manipulated the Western meaning of “amity” to denote nothing more than a decorous greeting. Moreover, as we have said above, the royal government ordered to violate the fifth article, that is to say to proceed with the practice of firmly monitoring the movements of foreigners. With regard to this policy, the Shuri government already manifested its intention to continue to have the visitors’ followed on 15 August 1854 through the issuance of temporary directives; in February 1856, Kagoshima ordered Ryukyu to not suspend the practice, fearing that a move to do so could compromise its hegemonic position over the kingdom. We may conclude from all this that behind Shuri’s noncompliance to the treaties there was without any doubt the hand of Satsuma.

Ryukyuan objectives with regard to the surveillance of foreigners

It is now necessary to explore the peculiarities that induced the royal government to audaciously proceed with the strict surveillance of foreigners. As we have seen in chapter two, since the *Gaikantorai jiken* the Shuri government considered the shadowing of Westerners as essential in order to hide the very private and secret affairs of the kingdom. Moreover, in 1848, the royal government issued a very detailed guide known as the *Ikokujin he hentō no kokoroe*, which illustrated the way in which the officials of the kingdom should reply to possible questions from foreigners. This manual focused on the necessity to create an image of an extremely poor realm, to protect the fifteen highest posts of the government through the creation of an equal number of fictitious offices, and to mask the true relations between Ryukyu and Japan. From a political perspective, it is possible to surmise that since 1844 until the conclusion of the international treaties, for the royal government, inasmuch as after having studied from end to end the *Ikokujin he hentō no kokoroe* the official-followers within the “open space” were able to reply “correctly” to the foreigners’ questions and limit the contacts between the latter and the common people, the subordination of Ryukyu by Japan did not risk to be unmasked by the visitors. Nevertheless, the agreements should have put an end to the practice of shadowing.

The supplement to the French Treaty specified that “if the followers were eliminated, foreigners would not know the destination [of their walks] and since some kind of trouble could arise, [it is ordered] to put the followers secretly [on the foreigners’ trail] as has been [happening] so far.”³⁷⁸ In other words, the royal government stressed the fact that foreigners had a limited knowledge of the streets of Naha and surroundings, and, therefore, it feared problems could arise. Among these problems we may include

³⁷⁸ *ROHM*, vol. 17, p. 318.

housebreaking and the attempt to spread Christianity as well as to purchase local goods by force. In fact, before the signing of international treaties Shuri on more than one occasion publicly appealed to this type of problems to justify the surveillance of foreigners. Nonetheless, it is important to consider other possibilities, too.

We may surmise that the expression “foreigners would not know the destination [of their walks]” encompasses a broader and more strategic meaning, that it to say that, rather than being apprehensive regarding about the limited knowledge regarding the islands’ streets, in reality, Shuri feared that this offered the foreigners an excellent opportunity to approach common people under the pretext of asking information about their itinerary, while in reality trying to obtain information about the kingdom as well as to proselytize. Furthermore, as a matter of course the royal government could not know beforehand what kind of people the foreigners would encounter on their walks, thus their surveillance was necessary.

From the French protests reported in the accounts of the Ryukyuan officials such as “[they argued that] when during their walks the passers-by did not see the [official] followers they did not seem to have fear; for this reason [the missionaries think that the Ryukyuan people] do not dislike the French but it looks as if they are afraid of their followers,”³⁷⁹ it is clear that the Ryukyuan people showed a certain fear for the followers, that is to say against the government officials in charge of shadowing the visitors, and if foreigners were not followed by the officials of Shuri, common people would not hesitate to enter into contact with them; this could have led to the possibility of important or secret information leaking out.

³⁷⁹ *ROHM*, vol. 12, p. 349.

With regard to the French claims, the royal government discussed in October 1856 if it would be opportune to continue with the practice of having the foreigners shadowed because if the missionaries got lost problems could arise and whether or not the Satsuma officials resident at Naha and the Shimazu really thought about this crucial matter. In this case, Shuri decided to adopt the following strategy:

[...] Given that until now the [officials of the rank of] samurai have been ordered [to follow the visitors], because their garments are refined, they were certainly easily recognizable by the French [missionaries] [based on] their appearance. If we changed [the followers] into peasants, their [style of] dress would undergo various changes; they would not get noticed that easily [and we think their presence could be] easily tolerated. Since we also think that the French [missionaries'] awareness [of them] would become weaker and that as a matter of course their doubts would dispel, for the time being [we order to] withdraw the interpreters and we firmly command to the [officials of the rank of] *chikusaji* 筑佐事 to shadow [the foreigners] in secret. So, although there might come a time at which the French [and the other Westerners] would have dispelled all their doubts, at that time [we would order] the samurai to follow [once again the foreigners]; first of all, at present [we order you] to manage [this] in accordance with the above-mentioned [instructions].³⁸⁰

From this entry it is clear that the royal government did not have any intention to eliminate the official-followers; on the contrary, it attempted to set up an effective strategy, such as the changing of the officials in charge of shadowing the foreigners, so the French would no longer notice they were being shadowed. This account informs us

³⁸⁰ Ansei 3/9/8. *ROHM*, vol. 12, p. 353.

that, at first, interpreters with the rank of samurai were charged with the task of following the foreigners, but they were too easily recognized by the Westerners—and likely also by the common people—because of their refined appearance. Therefore, they were replaced by officials of the rank of *chikusaji*, that is to say officials of low rank, who were now ordered to shadow the movements of the foreigners secretly.

At this point we should correlate the practice of the official-followers to the dispatch of the Ryukyuan missions to Edo. The growing pressure exerted by Western powers after the Opium War induced the Shuri government to raise some issues with the Satsuma fief with regard to the realization of the Ryukyuan embassies.

The twelfth Tokugawa shogun, Ieyoshi, passed away on 27 July 1853; in September of the same year, Satsuma, alluding to the imminent appointment of a new Tokugawa shogun (Iesada would become shogun on 23 December), ordered the Shuri officials based at the *Ryūkyūkan* in Kagoshima to inform their king of Shimazu Nariakira's plan to accompany the Ryukyuan envoys to Edo on the occasion of his next *sankin kōtai*, which was planned for the following Dragon Year, that is to say in 1856.³⁸¹ In October, the Regent and the members of the Council of Three sent a missive to the Ryukyuan officials based in Kagoshima in which they argued the following:

We were informally ordered to dispatch envoys for a congratulatory mission [in honor of the] succession [of the new shogun] to Edo the next Dragon Year. [The king of Chūzan] has accepted [such instructions] and we handle the preparations [for this event]. However, in recent years foreign vessels have frequently come to visit this territory; this year in particular numerous

³⁸¹ *Edo dachi*, n.1.

American ships came [to Ryukyu]. In the meantime, the American Commodore went to Edo with four vessels and once they came back [to the kingdom they] told us that they would come back to this territory in six months and they would go to Edo again. [They also asked us] to protect [the missionaries] and their coal [supplies]. It is [likely] that word about [the fact that the government of Shuri dispatches] Ryukyuan missions to Edo circulates all over Japan. [So far] we have kept the fact that this territory maintains [diplomatic] relations with Japan secret surely to China but also to the foreigners [Westerners]. Recently, we have been asked by the foreigners [Americans] to build a *batō* 馬頭 in this territory, and it is increasingly necessary to be very discrete about the relations [we maintain] with Japan. As we stated above, after six months the American vessels will again come to visit this territory and then they will sail to Edo. Moreover, we have heard that these days [a number of] Russian ships have come to anchor at Nagasaki. If [under these circumstances information] concerning the Ryukyuan missions to Edo accidentally leaks out to the foreigners, this would cause [great] difficulties. Because [we] recently have been extremely worried about [such a possibility], we gave orders throughout this territory in order [for the possibility of this leak] to be firmly controlled. [...].

Ox Year, 29th day of the 9th Month [solar, 31 October]

Ikeshiro Ueekata

Zakimi Ueekata

Sakuma Ueekata

Ōzato Ōji

Niuro Shinsuke

Gushikawa Ueekata³⁸²

³⁸² Ka'ei 6/9/29. *ROHM*, vol. 7, p. 320.

It is necessary to formulate some reflections with regard to the content of this missive. The historical context in which it was written is the phase immediately preceding the stipulation of the Treaty of Kanagawa, when Commodore Perry and his U.S. naval force, after having delivered President Fillmore's official letter to the bakufu officials, returned to Ryukyu and then proceeded to China where they spent the winter season. In the meantime, Perry had made several requests to the royal government and had also communicated his intention to come back to the kingdom early 1854 in before visiting Japan again. In line with this, Satsuma transmitted instructions to Shuri which were related to the dispatch of a Ryukyuan congratulatory mission in honor of the new shogun Iesada in 1856. Nevertheless, the imminent return of the American vessels as well as the presence of the foreign missionaries (Bettelheim) on the islands induced the royal government to take countermeasures against the potential threat of revealing to the Westerners the subordination of Ryukyu to Japan which was contained in the Ryukyuan embassies. In fact, despite the fact that the Shuri officials had so far made an effort to keep the nature of the true relations between the kingdom and Japan hidden from the Chinese and Westerners, if foreigners heard about the dispatch of Ryukyuan missions to Edo, or if they were eye witnesses of the preparations, as well as the departure or the return of such an embassy, they would have certainly become aware of the connections between Shuri and Edo. It is noteworthy to point out that although Shuri's firm intention to keep her relation with Japan hidden from the Chinese and the Westerners emerges from the document, the royal government did not plead with Satsuma for the postponement or interruption of the mission. In other words, the kingdom did not take advantage of the effects generated by the pressure of Western powers in the region to free itself from the realization of what had come to be perceived as a potential threat as

well as a heavy economic and physical burden on the realm. On the contrary, Shuri asserted that surveillance of the foreigners on the islands had been tightened.

Attached to the above-mentioned missive we find the following entry dated 7 November:

On this occasion by a ship [courier] we have been communicated according to what is stated above [it refers to the above-mentioned missive]. In this case, although [we think that] the interpreters as well as all the persons who have access to Tenkuji temple certainly are spontaneously cautious [so that the foreigners will not acquire information about the dispatch of Ryukyuan envoys to Edo], in addition, by way of precaution we order, in particular, [the above-mentioned people to strengthen] control [over the foreigners based in Naha].³⁸³

From this entry we may deduce which form of control the royal government had in mind in order to keep the subordination of Ryukyu by Japan unknown to the foreigners resident on the islands at the time of the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo. We may surmise that “the interpreters” quoted in the document designates those officials who, under the pretext of interpreting, in reality, followed all the movements of the Westerners, in other words the phrase refers to the official/interpreter-followers (before being substituted with the *chisakuji*). In this case, therefore, we may speak of Ryukyu’s control over the “open/public space” and which was aimed at preventing the foreigners from being witnesses of situations linked to the preparations of the embassies. The Tenkuji was the temple where the French missionaries were residing, thus we may surmise that in the

³⁸³ Ka’ei 6/10/7. *ROHM*, vol. 7, p. 320.

above-mentioned entry a necessity to operate a firm control through the officials who had access to this “closed space” is implied.

As we have seen, the practice of the official-followers, which after 1854 represented a violation of the treaties, was a measure necessary to defend the political sphere of the kingdom. We may conclude, therefore, that one of the effects of the defense of the political status of Ryukyu through the surveillance of the foreigners on the islands was without any doubt the necessity to also hide the dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo from Western view.

As was mentioned above, on January 1857 the government of Shuri ordered the *Ikokujin he hentō no kokoroe* to be read to all Ryukyuans. Nonetheless, protecting the political status of the kingdom was crucial; therefore, we may surmise that the reading of that manual to the entire population was not considered sufficient in order to protect the political sphere of Ryukyu. This may lead us to speculate that, even after the stipulation of the agreements (1854 and 1855), in the transitional phase during which Shuri prescribed to all Ryukyuans people to learn to what extent the treaties should be honored (1857), the most effective means to defend that sphere was once again to resort to the practice of the official-followers. If foreigners had found out the fact that Shuri dispatched embassies to Edo, Shuri’s appearance of independence, which the Ryukyuan authorities had been claiming since 1844, would immediately evaporate.

Given that Shuri, despite the signing of the treaties and the presence of the Westerners in Naha, dispatched a mission both in 1855 and in 1858—which, however, did not reach Edo for reasons that we will see in the following chapters—we may conclude that the Ryukyuan authorities succeeded in keeping hidden from foreign eyes all that was linked to the realization of such rituals. We may surmise that such an

achievement was possible through the firm surveillance of the movements of the Westerners. In this way, we have surmised that the royal government found a way to dispatch the missions despite the opening of the kingdom and the presence of Western missionaries in Ryukyu.

In conclusion, from a political point of view, for Shuri to violate the treaties and to continue with the surveillance of the foreigners was an effective measure to sustain the concealment of the true relations between Ryukyu and Japan to the West, and, as a consequence, to China, which since 1844 constituted the basic principles by which the royal government dealt with Western powers.

At this point it is opportune to point out some considerations with regard to the close link between the violation of the first and the fifth articles of the agreements. Because of the practice of the official-followers, which was in violation of the fifth article, foreigners could not obtain secret information about the kingdom during their encounters with common people. In other words, the practice of the official-followers *de facto* prevented a close contact between common people and visitors. This reveals a contradiction in the interpretation of the meaning accorded to “amity” by Westerners and the royal government. As we have seen, in fact, for Shuri this new kind of relation implied contact which was limited to decorous greetings, while from a Western perspective they meant closer interaction; they were, in truth, occasions from which prosperous commerce could originate, or they could create conditions suitable for spreading Christianity. Because the practice of the official-followers prevented all that, it is reasonable to think that the violation of the fifth article also implied the containment of the effects of the first one.

Because the Westerners were granted the status of extraterritoriality, the sovereignty of the royal government was limited with regard to its right to administer justice within the realm. We may, therefore, surmise that the surveillance of foreigners was also an excellent measure to prevent the visitors from committing an offence. Seen from this angle, we can say that the sovereign sphere of the Ryukyu kingdom was also protected.

On more than one occasion since the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Satsuma fief ordered the Ryukyuan to not become familiar with foreigners; in this dissertation, we considered that this order was intended to protect the hegemonic position of the Shimazu over the kingdom. The royal government followed the instructions of Kagoshima and, in addition, took advantage of those directives to sustain its political strategic goals that aimed at protecting the political sphere of the realm. The practice of the official-followers constituted a conflict between the Westerners and Shuri both on the occasion of the *Gaikantorai jiken*, and during the phases immediately before and after the conclusion of the treaties. We may conclude that the institution of this practice represented not only a response but also a form of resistance to the pressures of the Western powers.

In this chapter I have explored from a wide angle the dispatch of Ryukyuan embassies to Edo in relation to the conclusion of international treaties by the Tokugawa bakufu and the royal government of Shuri. Earlier studies have stressed that the bakufu attempted to keep Western merchants away from the shogunal capital and from the main arterial street that linked Kyoto to Edo for a question of high symbolic value. Nevertheless, the Edo leaders could not prevent Western ministers to take office in Edo.

As we have seen, despite the presence of foreign delegations within the borders of the shogunal capital, the bakufu did not put an end to the missions of *tsūshin* from Ryukyu and Korea.

The response of the Shuri government to the pressure of the Western powers can also be interpreted as a form of resistance. The royal government did not consider the treaties as sacred and inviolable, but rather as regulations that could and should be violated if they endangered the safety of the kingdom. From a macro perspective, the encounter between Ryukyu and the Western powers represents one of the numerous instances of imperialism in East Asia, where the Shuri authorities appealed to their diplomatic skills and to the strategy of negotiations to secure a certain margin of maneuver in dealing with foreigners. From a micro viewpoint, it is possible to distinguish a number of peculiarities that are, at times, unique to Ryukyu. The arrival of the Westerners, their requests for establishing diplomatic relations of amity and the subsequent stipulation of international agreements caused all the contradictions that characterized the subordination of the small archipelago to Japan to surface. The royal government not only had been making an effort to keep its subordination to Japan hidden from the Chinese, but after the Opium War, it had no choice but to hide this from the Westerners, too. Given that visitors could freely walk around the islands, after the *Gaikantōrai jiken* we can delineate two types of tangible space one “open/public” and the other “closed” in which the Shuri officials made sure that the private and secret matters of the realm would not be revealed to the foreigners. In this context, Shuri needed to keep everything that could allude to the existence of connections with the Japanese, hidden from the Western eyes.

Here I have tried to shed light on the fact that one of the effects of the necessity to mask the real relations between the islands and Japan to protect the political sphere of Ryukyu was the recourse to the practice of the official-followers. Because the international treaties signed by Shuri prescribed the abrogation of such practice, I tried to demonstrate that this counter-measure represented one of the highest forms of resistance that the Ryukyus could deploy to oppose Western pressures. Moreover, I tried to prove that the establishment of such a practice was Shuri's attempt to prevent foreigners from being witness to procedures linked to the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo.

As we have seen, the conclusion of international treaties by Edo and Shuri did not lead to the immediate end of the Ryukyuan delegations to Japan. In the following chapters, the reasons to end the missions will be explored from a micro-perspective within the relations between the bakufu and Satsuma, as well as those between Kagoshima and Ryukyu during the final phase of the Tokugawa regime.

Chapter 4

Movements of Edo, Satsuma and Shuri against the background of the postponement of the 1856 and 1858 missions

The last Ryukyuan embassy to reach Edo was the mission of gratitude dispatched by king Shō Tai to the twelfth Tokugawa shogun, Ieyoshi, in 1850. Although embassies of congratulation were also planned on the occasion of the appointment of Tokugawa Iesada (the thirteenth shogun) and Iemochi (the fourteenth shogun), the bakufu postponed these missions three times: in 1855, 1858, and 1860. In this chapter I will explore the postponement of the embassies scheduled for 1856 and 1858, both of which were designed to pay homage to Iesada.

Earlier studies have demonstrated that the mission planned for 1856 was postponed in 1855 due the earthquake that hit Edo in that year.³⁸⁴ Concerning the 1858 postponement, Miyagi Eishō argues that the bakufu's decision to suspend the Ryukyuan delegation was the result of the deaths of Tokugawa Iesada in Edo (14 August) and Shimazu Nariakira in Kagoshima (24 August). In addition, he states that the 1858 congratulatory mission was eventually postponed to 1862.³⁸⁵ Miyagi, however, does not provide any documentary source to support his thesis, and, moreover, he does not clearly distinguish between the mission of 1858 and that of 1862; in fact, although both were designated congratulatory missions, the delegation of 1858 was planned in honor of Iesada, while that of 1862 was projected for Iemochi. In other words, since the shogun for whom the missions were planned was different, it is appropriate to reconstruct them separately.

³⁸⁴ Miyagi, *Ryūkyū shisha*, p. 18.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Kamiya Nobuyuki has underlined the fact that Shimazu Nariakira aimed at altering the balance of power of the senior Councilors and the *tairō* Ii Naosuke in favor of the court of Kyoto and of the external daimyo. In fact, as we have seen, on July 29, 1858, Ii Naosuke had issued the order to sign the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with the United States without having received imperial authorization. Shortly thereafter, on August 4,³⁸⁶ Ii, who was the leader of the Nanki 南紀派 faction (which consisted of the senior Councilors and the *tairō*), had made a surprise move and had nominated Tokugawa Yoshitomi 徳川慶福 as heir to Iesada, even though the Hitotsubashi faction 一橋派—whose members were Tokugawa Nariaki, Matsudaira Yoshinaga, and Shimazu Nariakira—supported the nomination of Tokugawa Yoshinobu 徳川慶喜. Nariakira was deeply disappointed about Ii's abuse of power, and he therefore intended to escort the Ryukyuan mission to Edo planned for 1858 and use it as a disguise for reaching the imperial capital with his army without rousing suspicion and from there force political reforms on the bakufu.³⁸⁷ It is, thus, believed that Nariakira conceived of his secret plan in the days immediately before his death.³⁸⁸

Based on this hypothesis, I will try to demonstrate that other reasons for postponing the 1858 mission, such as the deaths of Iesada and Nariakiara, should also

³⁸⁶ Ansei 5/6/25.

³⁸⁷ Kamiya, "Ryūkyū shisetsu no saigo ni kansuru kōsatsu," in *Ryūkyū shihai*; Kamiya, "Ryūkyū shisetsu no kaitai," pp. 13-14. In June of the previous year (1857, Ansei 4), Nariakira halted in Kyoto on his way back from his *sankin kōtai* in Edo and stayed at the residence of the *sadaijin* 左大臣, Konoe Tadahiro 近衛忠熙. On that occasion, Nariakira and a number of nobles, including Sanjō Sanemutsu 三条実万 and Nakayama Tadayasu 中山忠能, discussed how to defend Kyoto through the surveillance of two strategic points, i.e. the city of Osaka and the harbour city of Hyōgo. These cities, in fact, would constitute an entrance to the imperial capital once the Treaty of Amity and Commerce that Townsend Harris was pressing the Edo leaders to sign would be concluded. Kamiya suggests that at this time Nariakira first conceived of his plan to use the Ryukyuan embassy as a disguise to reach the Kansai area with his army. The following year, the purpose of the plan was modified; it was now meant to force the shogunate to reform politically.

³⁸⁸ Tinello Marco, "Bakumatsu Ryūkyū keigashi no enki ni tsuite," *Kinsei ni okeru gaikoku shisetsu to shakai henyō 3: Taikun gaikō no kaitai wo ou*, Yano Misako, ed., (Tokyo: Kamiya Nobuyuki kenkyūshitsu Waseda Daigaku Bungaku Gakujutsuin, July 2009), pp. 117-130.

be considered closely as these have so far been only mentioned as assumptions by Miyagi. In particular, earlier studies have mainly focused their attention on the official orders transmitted from Kagoshima to Ryukyu and which are recorded in a document known as *Edo dachi ni tsuki oosewatasedome* (Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo Shozō, hereafter *Edo dachi*). From this document, however, it is not possible to fully grasp all the various and complex activities that were taking place against the background of such formal communications. Here, I will examine the postponement of this mission from a dual level of communication, i.e. one formal and one informal. I will focus my attention on the official orders (recorded in the *Edo dachi*) which were passed on to the *Ryūkyūkan* by Niiro Hisanori, the chief retainer of Satsuma. By doing so, I will try to integrate the evidence from those orders with the private notes recorded in Hisanori's diary and which were based on secret information obtained from Edo-based Satsuma officials. I will provide a close examination of these private annotations and will clarify the chronology of the transmission of the bakufu order from Edo castle to the Satsuma *Edo yashiki*, and from there to Kagoshima (castle) and finally to the *Ryūkyūkan*. One of the aims of this chapter is, thus, to offer a close study of early modern correspondence diplomacy between Edo, Kagoshima, and Ryukyu with a focus on the role played by Satsuma officials in this interaction. In conclusion, I will try to examine the main problems faced by the royal government of Shuri with regard to the 1856 and 1858 embassies in detail.

4.1. The postponement of the mission planned for 1856

From the 1830s onward several Ryukyuan embassies to Edo were postponed for a

number of reasons—as we will see, all these missions were postponed for different reasons—which were unprecedented in the history of these diplomatic ceremonials. However, it is important to make a clear distinction between the missions postponed before 1850, and which eventually reached Edo, and those delayed afterwards. After 1850, in fact, three missions were postponed and ultimately never took place.

As mentioned in chapter one, the 1832 mission of gratitude celebrating king Shō Iku's enthronement (1829) was originally planned for 1830. However, Kagoshima, citing “the loss of tribute in the ocean” had obtained postponement of the embassy from the bakufu. Suzuki Takayuki sheds light on the possibility that the real motivation behind the postponement of this mission was the severe financial crisis afflicting Kagoshima at that time. In other words, since Satsuma was concerned about the huge expense a mission would entail, the Shimazu sought a reason to have the Ryukyuan mission postponed. They, thus, came up with this *ad hoc* motivation that would not arouse suspicion and that would be accepted by the bakufu.³⁸⁹

The next congratulatory mission, which was dispatched to Edo in 1842, was in reality first planned for the year 1840. In this case, Ikemiya Masaharu argues that the congratulatory mission in honor of the twelfth Tokugawa shogun, Ieyoshi, who succeeded to the head of the shogunate in 1837, was slightly delayed because of the Chinese investiture mission that arrived in Ryukyu in 1838.³⁹⁰ However, in the ‘*o tegata utsushi*’ a different reason for the mission’s postponement is mentioned:

As we are expecting an *Edo dachi* the following Year of the Rat [1840], with regard to the

³⁸⁹ Suzuki, “Tenpō san nen Ryūkyū shisetsu,” pp. 80-88.

³⁹⁰ Ikemiya Masaharu, *Kinsei Okinawa no shōzō: bungakusha geinōsha retsuden* (Naha, Hirugisha, 1982), p. 122.

textiles and goods necessary [as requested by the royal government] as well as the fabrics and various articles ordered with the silver [coins granted by the Shuri government] to the envoys, even though we had ordered you to send all the articles [to the royal government] by boats which from this summer to the next will sail [from Yaeyama in the direction of Naha], the *Edo dachi* has been postponed [by the bakufu] because the Edo Nishinomaru 西御丸 was destroyed by a fire. On this occasion [the royal government] has been told by Satsuma that [the bakufu] will order the new schedule [for the mission] after having completed the repairs [of Edo castle]. With regard to this [instruction], [for the time being] wait to make preparations of all textiles and the various [other] articles [that we had instructed you to prepare before]. When we communicate to you the [new] schedule [for the *Edo dachi*], you are ordered to send [to Naha] [all] the provisions. We transmit you this [directive].

[Year of the] Dog, intercalary 4th Month

Oroku Ueekata

[To the government] officials based on Yaeyama³⁹¹

The missive above is dated June 1838. It was sent by the royal government to the government officials stationed on Yaeyama Island. The document informs us that in order to prepare for the congratulatory mission planned for the following Rat Year, i.e. 1840, Shuri had already placed an order of textiles and other goods necessary. However, in June 1838 Shuri communicated to those government officials that the bakufu had postponed the mission because the Nishinomaru palace, located inside Edo castle, had been destroyed by a fire. The royal government, therefore, ordered its officials on Yaeyama to hold off on sending the requested articles to Naha.³⁹²

³⁹¹ Tenpō 9/interc 4/x. (Solar, June 1838). ‘*O tegata utsushi*,’ p. 142.

³⁹² It is interesting to note that the above missive is signed by Okuro Ueekata, i.e. the government official appointed vice ambassador (or *fukushi*) of the 1840 mission. From this we may infer that the vice ambassador was not only an expert of Confucian ceremonials and responsible for the entire

According to the *Tokugawa Jikki* 徳川実紀, a fire broke out in the kitchen of the Nishinomaru around 5 a.m. on the 10th day of the 3rd Month (solar, 4 April 1838); only the *shoinbansho* 書院番所 survived. The rest was completely destroyed by fire.³⁹³ The *Shimazu Narinobu Nariokikō Shiryō* 島津斉宣・斉興公史料 also states that on the 10th day of the 3rd Month of the 9th Dog year of the Tenpō era, i.e. 4 April 1838, the Nishinomaru was destroyed by fire; a fire broke out in the kitchen and the internal palace [奥向] burnt down completely.³⁹⁴

From these passages we may infer that the Nishinomaru was completely destroyed by a fire that broke out at dawn on 4 April, 1838. Therefore, there can be no doubt about the extent of the damages suffered by this important part of Edo castle. At that time, the Nishinomaru was the residence of both the retired shogun, Ienari, and Ieyoshi's heir apparent. Soon after, senior Councilor Mizuno Tadakuni appointed a team to reconstruct this prestigious building and imposed payments on several daimyo to finance such works. The reconstruction was completed in 1839 and without any doubt came at a great cost.

According to the *Tsūkō ichiran zokushū* 通航一覽続輯, when the Ryukyuan envoys first visited Edo castle in 1832, they made their appearance in the Nishinomaru after having completed the official formalities inside the Honnomaru 本丸.³⁹⁵ With regard to the same congratulatory mission of 1832, the *Gieisei nikki* 儀衛正日記 records that the Ryukyuan envoys first paid their respects in the Honnomaru and then in

embassy during his journey to and from Edo, but that he was in charge of the mission already from the planning stage and was responsible for informing the government officials on Yaeyama, and likely on other areas too, about urgent matters such as the suspension of provisions due to the postponement of a delegation.

³⁹³ Tenpō 9/3/10. *Tokugawa Jikki*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1976), p. 351.

³⁹⁴ Tenpō 9/3/10. Kagoshimaken Rekishi Shiryō Sentaa Reimeikan, ed., *Shimazu Narinobu Nariokikō shiryō*, (Kagoshima: Kagoshimaken, 1985), p. 263.

³⁹⁵ *Tsūkō ichiran zokushū*, vol. 1, Hayashi Fukusai, ed., (Osaka: Seibundō Shuppan, 1968), p. 8.

the Nishinomaru. From these records we may infer that on the occasion of their first visit to Edo castle, the Ryukyuan mission, most likely in accordance to traditional protocol, visited both the Honnomaru and the Nishinomaru in order to accomplish important ceremonies.

For these reasons, we may conclude that the real reason why the mission first planned for 1840 was postponed was the destruction by fire of the Nishinomaru. The bakufu's decision to postpone the embassy seems, in fact, motivated by a practical reason keeping in mind the traditional formalities of the Ryukyuan missions in Edo castle. Taking Ikemiya's interpretation in consideration, we may, however, also surmise that Shuri welcomed the suspension of this project, because at that time she was also dealing with the reception of another extremely expensive state function, that of the Chinese investiture mission.

Let us now turn to the postponement of *Edo dachi* after 1850. First, we will explore that of the embassy planned for 1856. The twelfth Tokugawa shogun, Ieyoshi, died on 27 July 1853. On 23 December of the same year, Iesada succeeded at the head of the shogunate and the bakufu ordered the Shimazu to accompany a Ryukyuan congratulatory mission in honor of the new shogun in the next Dragon Year, that is, in 1856. The Ryukyuan delegation left Naha harbor on 2 July 1855 and reached Kagoshima on 12 July; however, on 11 November, while the Ryukyuan envoys were still residing in the Satsuma domain, Edo was hit by the Ansei Edo Earthquake, the aftermath of which disrupted the whole country. Shimazu Nariakira's Edo residence, the *Shiba yashiki* 芝屋敷, suffered considerable damage. This prompted Satsuma to plead with the bakufu for the postponement of the mission to 1858. From the following document drafted by Satsuma officials, we may infer that on 10 December the bakufu

accepted the Shimazu's request:

With regard to the shogun's succession, although [our prince Nariakira] was ordered [by the shogunate] to accompany a congratulatory mission from the king of Chūzan to Edo in the next Dragon Year [1856], the palace and the surroundings of the residence [of Nariakira] were especially damaged by the earthquake and the large fire that recently hit Edo. We handed to the official in charge [for the preparations of the Ryukyuan mission], the senior Councilor, Kuze Yamato-no-Kami, a request [in which our prince] would like [to have such embassy] postponed and accompany it in the next Horse Year [1858] on the occasion of [his next duty of] *sankin kōtai*, because it is not possible to complete the reconstruction works [in time] for next autumn. On the 2nd day of this month [solar, 10 December], we were communicated that we are told [by the bakufu to act] in accordance with our request. We ordered to send this [directive] immediately to the *kikiyaku*³⁹⁶ [based at the] *Ryūkyūkan* [in Kagoshima] so that the king of Chūzan would be aware and accept [this instruction]. Hare [Year, 1855] 11th Month [solar, December] Ōmi (Matsukawa Kyūhei³⁹⁷).³⁹⁸

From this entry we may infer that, as requested by Satsuma, the bakufu postponed the Ryukyuan congratulatory mission because of the earthquake and fires that hit Edo in November 1855.³⁹⁹ With regard to the damages caused by this earthquake, Gregory Smits states that «*estimates of deaths in and around Edo ranged from 7,000 to 10,000. Property damage from the shaking and fires was severe in places, destroying at least*

³⁹⁶ A Satsuma official based at the *Ryūkyūkan* in Kagoshima and charged with mediating between the Satsuma fief and the Shuri government.

³⁹⁷ Matsukawa Kyūhei was one of the *karō*, i.e. a chief retainer of the Satsuma domain.

³⁹⁸ Ansei 2/11/2 (Solar, 10 December 1855). *Edo dachi*, n. 8.

³⁹⁹ Miyagi and Kamiya agree in considering the Ansei Edo Earthquake as the main reason behind the postponement of the embassy planned for 1856.

14,000 structures. As many as 80 aftershocks per day continued to shake the city until nine days after the initial earthquake. Despite a relatively low 1 in 170 fatality rate, the extensive injuries and property damage, lingering danger of fires, a long and vigorous period of aftershocks, and the focus of the destruction in Japan's de facto capital city exacerbated the earthquake's psychological impact».⁴⁰⁰

According to Kitahara Itoko, the Ansei Edo Earthquake caused the greatest damage in the lower town or *Shitamachi* 下町.⁴⁰¹ In addition, Kitahara states that many structures in the Shiba were ruined.⁴⁰² As we know, it was precisely in Shiba that Nariakira's residence was located.

We may infer from Smits and Kitahara's research that due to the high number of casualties, the enormous material damage as well as the news that circulated with regard to the scale of the tragedy, the surviving population in Edo was in a confused state of mind. When the earthquake hit Edo, Nariakira was actually living in his Shiba residence. Let us now take a detailed look at the records of the Satsuma authorities with regard to the extent of the damages inflicted on the *Shiba yashiki* residence:

21 buildings [used as] storehouses,

[a line of] row houses,

[a building used as stage for] watching [the Noh theatre performance],

a house for rent inside the main gate [of the residence] (御表御門内借屋)

[were all destroyed].

⁴⁰⁰ Gregory Smits, "Shaking up Japan: Edo Society and the 1855 Catfish Picture Prints," *Journal of Social History* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2006), p. 1045.

⁴⁰¹ The *Shitamachi* was originally an area of Edo where the common people lived and carried out their business and hand-crafting activities.

⁴⁰² Kitahara Itoko, *Ansei daijishin to minshū* (Tokyo: Sanichi Shobō, 1983), pp. 23-31.

In the Public recreation building (御表御休息所), in addition to the Hall, the *toritsukenoma*, the *ninoma*, the reception room and the entrance hall of the *sannoma*, the front door [reserved to the entry and exit of our lord], the corridor, the [most important seats] and their surroundings were all completely destroyed.

The front entrance of the inner palace (大奥御玄関) fell down. The rooms of our lord and his wife, those of their entourage and the rest of the inner palace were all destroyed. The [external] wall [built with kneaded mud in between tiles or stones] was completely destroyed.⁴⁰³

We may infer from this document that Nariakira's residence suffered huge damage both in its public and private quarters. The former, in the document referred to in Japanese with the term *omote* 表, designated buildings and spaces used for public purposes. The latter, expressed in words by *ōoku* 大奥, were the spaces reserved to the private life of the daimyo and his entourage. In particular, we may surmise that the public spaces, such as the Hall inside the Public recreation building, were places reserved for the reception of the Ryukyuan envoys. Considering the damage suffered by these structures and their significant public function, we may conclude that Satsuma's decision to plead with the bakufu for postponing the Ryukyuan delegation was a logical outcome grounded on pragmatic and symbolic criteria.

During their stay in Edo, the Ryukyuan delegation was required to take part in important official ceremonies both in political and in symbolic terms, such as the three visits to Edo castle,⁴⁰⁴ those to the residences of the Three Branch Families of the

⁴⁰³ *Nariakirakō shiryō*, vol. 2, n. 368.

⁴⁰⁴ On the occasion of the first visit, known as *shinken no gi* 進見の儀 or *omemie* 御目見, the Ryukyuan envoys expressed their respect to the shogun and handed the king's official letter, as well as the list of gifts brought for the most influential members of the shogunate. The second visit, called *sōgaku no gi* 奏楽の儀, was dedicated to the performance of Ryukyuan and Chinese music by talented young musicians. After the musical performance, the bakufu offered a rich banquet in honor

Tokugawa house (*gosanke* 御三家), and the pilgrimage to the Ueno mausoleum. Because of the Ansei Edo Earthquake, almost the entire stone wall that once encircled Edo castle fell down, while the rest suffered great damage. In addition, the residences of the *gosanke* were seriously damaged.

The considerations mentioned above may lead us to think that after the Ansei Edo Earthquake it was actually very difficult to realize the Ryukyuan mission in accordance to traditional protocol. For the Tokugawa bakufu, “to show” the Ryukyuan envoys, in the same way as it had done for the Korean embassies, the majesty and regality of Edo castle, as well as the opulence and splendor of the numerous daimyo residences, was an excellent means through which they could enhance the prestige and authority of the shogun, and show the bakufu’s high level of refinement. During the Tokugawa period, Edo was not only the shogunal capital, it was what Clifford Geertz calls an “exemplary center” or the “state itself.” It was a microcosm of the supernatural order as well as the material embodiment of political order.⁴⁰⁵ However, after the Ansei Edo Earthquake, the city of Edo was very different from the image of a majestic city of which the bakufu could be proud. In addition, its inhabitants were living in a state of confusion, panic and fear. We may assume that the bakufu accepted the petition of Satsuma and postponed the embassy for the reasons we have described above. The Ryukyuan mission, in line with traditional protocol, should parade in front of thousands of excited people along the marvelous *daimyo yashiki* of Edo. For these reasons, I agree with Miyagi and

of the Ryukyuan ambassadors. During the last visit, known as *giken no gi* 辞見の儀, which from the end of the eighteenth century had been merged with the musical performance and the banquet for financial reasons, the envoys received the official letter signed by the senior Councilors and addressed to their king, as well as permission by the bakufu to leave Edo and return to their kingdom.

⁴⁰⁵ Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 13.

Kamiya's hypothesis that the real reason behind the postponement of the 1856 mission was the Ansei Edo Earthquake. Shortly thereafter, the Ryukyuan envoys left Kagoshima and returned to Shuri.

4.2. The postponement of the mission planned for 1858

The Shuri government, following orders received from Satsuma, dispatched a new congratulatory embassy in 1858 in honor of the thirteenth Tokugawa shogun, Iesada. On 7 July, the *seishi* 正使, i.e. the ambassador, prince Ie Chōchoku 伊江朝直, reached Kagoshima; the *fukushi* 副使, i.e. the vice ambassador, Yonahara Ueekata Ryōkyō 那原親方良恭 arrived three days later. Before leaving Satsuma for Edo, the Ryukyuan mission was required to take part in several important official ceremonies, such as visiting Kagoshima castle to pay homage to Nariakira, attending official banquets, and watching Noh theatre performances. The meeting with Nariakira took place on 17 August.⁴⁰⁶

According to the schedule fixed by Satsuma officials, the Ryukyuan envoys, accompanied by the daimyo (Nariakira) and his retainers, were expected to leave Kagoshima on 27 September.⁴⁰⁷ However, the sudden death of Nariakira on 24 August⁴⁰⁸ disrupted the projected schedule. I will now try to reconstruct the main

⁴⁰⁶ Ansei 5/7/9. Originally, the official banquet, called *oryōri wo kudasare* 御料理被下, and the Noh theatre performance were planned for 17 August; however, since the musicians arrived were delayed, these events were postponed. Another official banquet, known as *ozen shinjō* 御膳進上, would have taken place after the meeting with Nariakira, but because of his sudden death, it did not take place. *Edo dachi*, n. 8. Cfr. *Kinsei Nihon ni okeru gaikoku shisetsu to shakai henyō 3. Taikun gaikō kaitai wo ou*, Yano Misako, ed., (Tokyo: Kamiya Nobuyuki Kenkyūshitsu Waseda Daigaku Bungaku Gakujutsuin, 2009), n. 52.

⁴⁰⁷ Ansei 5/8/21.

⁴⁰⁸ Ansei 5/7/16.

events taking place in Kagoshima and Edo in the summer of 1858.

First of all, as Kamiya has pointed out, we must see this Ryukyuan embassy against the background of a military project known as *ichi taisaku* 一大策, thought up by Shimazu Nariakira during his final days. In his plan, Nariakira intended to gather an army of three or four thousand samurai from Satsuma with whom he would have traveled to Kyoto, where he would have commanded some of his men to defend the imperial palace. After having received an imperial decree, he would then have moved to Edo with the rest of his troops with the purpose of forcing political reforms onto the shogunate. Furthermore, in order to strengthen the military apparatus of Satsuma, Nariakira had ordered his men to purchase Western weapons at Nagasaki.⁴⁰⁹ Nariakira had planned to escort the Ryukyuan mission and to use it as a disguise for reaching the imperial capital without being suspected by the bakufu. In other words, in Nariakira's secret project, the Edo-bound Ryukyuan mission planned for 1858 was, in reality, limited to Kyoto.

On 19 August, however, less than a week before Nariakira died, senior Councilor Naitō Kii-no-Kami Nobuchika ordered the Satsuma daimyo to postpone the Ryukyuan mission adducing “multiple and complex state affairs” (*J. kokujitatan* 国事多端):

The document that Kii-no-Kami transmitted [to the Satsuma officials based in Edo] on the said date (11th day of the 7th Month) [solar, 19 August 1858] [is addressed] to Matsudaira Satsuma-no-kami [Nariakira]. With regard to the [shogun's] succession, some time ago [the bakufu] ordered [Nariakira] to accompany the Ryukyuan [envoys] to Edo this autumn. Given that [the shogunate is facing] a situation of multiple and complex state affairs that it cannot leave

⁴⁰⁹ *Nariakirakō shiryō*, vol. 3, n. 248.

it as is (*sashioki gataki gokokujitatan no origara ni tsuki* 難差置御国事多端之折柄に付), [the bakufu] first of all ordered [Nariakira] to postpone the visit to Edo of the Ryukyuan [envoys]. [However,] [Nariakira is required] to come to Edo for [his duty of *sankin kōtai*]. Pay heed to this [order] since it is addressed to Satsuma-no-kami in accordance to [what it is written above].⁴¹⁰

From the document above we know that on 19 August the bakufu ordered Nariakira to postpone the Ryukyuan mission; however, it required him to come to Edo for his *sankin kōtai* duty. Even though the shogunate had already ordered Satsuma to defer the Ryukyuan embassy before Nariakira died, on 2 September the Satsuma authorities (Niuro Hisanori) informed Shuri of the death of Nariakira and explained that, after having consulted with the bakufu, it was decided a new schedule for the Ryukyuan delegation would be decided on:

Even though this winter [our prince Nariakira] was expected to accompany the Ryukyuan envoys to Edo, we have inquired the bakufu with regard to [his sudden] death. Given that later we will pass on to you some sort of [decision taken by the shogunate with regard to the Ryukyuan mission], [we require you to transmit] this instruction to the king of Chūzan so that he can be aware of it. We also order you to pass this instruction, addressed to the *seishi* and *fukushi* [who now are staying] at Kagoshima, to the *kikiyaku* based at the *Ryūkyūkan*. 7th Month [s. 2 September 1858], Suruga^{411 412}.

⁴¹⁰ Ansei 5/7/11, 19 August 1858. Nihon Shiseki Kyōkai, ed., *Yashidai ishin shiryō sōsho*, 28, (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1973), (reprint).

⁴¹¹ This is the *karō* of Satsuma, Niuro Hisanori. On 2 September, Kimotsukizamon (an official of Satsuma) was charged with transmitting this instruction to the *Ryūkyūkan*; on the same day, Honda Sōkurō acknowledged the content of the above communication.

⁴¹² Communication dated Ansei 5/7/25, 2 September 1858. *Edo dachi*, n. 71.

From this document we know that Hisanori presented the postponement of the Ryukyuan embassy as connected to Nariakira's death. Later, on 8 September, Satsuma leaders (Niuro Hisanori) transmitted to the royal government the official bakufu order to postpone the mission:

Even though we were ordered [by the shogunate] to accompany the Ryukyuan [envoys] to Edo this autumn, because [His Majesty, the bakufu] is facing a situation of multiple and complex state affairs [to the extent] that it cannot leave [this situation] as is,⁴¹³ with regard to the visit to Edo of the Ryukyuan mission, we are ordered first of all to postpone [such embassy]. We transmit to you what we were ordered by senior Councilor Naitō Kii-no-Kami. In order for the king of Chūzan to be aware of this order, and in order to transmit [this instruction] to the prince [the *seishi*] and the *fukushi* [now] based at Kagoshima, too, it is ordered to pass [such information] to the *kikiyaku* based at the *Ryūkyūkan*. 8th Month [solar, September], Suruga.⁴¹⁴

As was mentioned before, Shimazu Nariakira planned to escort the Ryukyuan envoys to Kyoto and to use them as a disguise for reaching the imperial capital with his army without arousing any suspicion from the bakufu. However, as we have seen, Nariakira suddenly died on 24 August and even before his death on 19 August the bakufu had already ordered him to postpone the embassy. According to Kamiya, the bakufu's statement about "complex and multiple state affairs" was a countermeasure of the Edo leaders, who after having discovered the intention of the Satsuma daimyo, decided to postpone the embassy with the precise purpose of preventing Nariakira from realizing

⁴¹³ *Sashiokaregataki gokokujitatan no origara ni tsuki* 難被差置御国事多端之折柄二付.

⁴¹⁴ Missive dated Ansei 5/8/2, 8 September 1858. *Edo dachi*, n. 73. According to this letter, on 2 August the monthly duty *goyōnin* 御用人, Kawagami Ukon, received the order to transmit the message to the *Ryūkyūkan*. Honda Sōkurō acknowledged the content of the missive.

his subversive plan. Even though so far the context in which these events took place seemingly tend towards Kamiya's explanation that there can be no doubt that Nariakira was planning to use the Ryukyuan mission to reach Kyoto with his troops and force the bakufu to carry out reforms, there is no document that testifies to the fact that the bakufu deferred the 1858 mission precisely for obstructing Nariakira's plan.

All this might lead us to rethink the postponement of the 1858 embassy by also considering other important circumstances in order to endorse or add something to Kamiya's hypothesis. Therefore, with the purpose of trying to investigate from another perspective the true reasons behind the bakufu's postponement of the Ryukyuan embassy, I will provide a close examination of the diaries of Niino Hisanori. These documents have never been taken into consideration in research regarding the postponement of the 1858 embassy. Hisanori's diary sheds light on events taking place between Edo (Edo castle and Satsuma *Edo yashiki*) and Kagoshima (Kagoshima castle and the *Ryūkyūkan*) from the beginning of August until 8 September. On 2 September, Hisanori wrote the following:

25th day of the 7th Month [Solar, 2 September 1858]. Around 8 in the morning, an urgent messenger⁴¹⁵ [who] had left Edo on the 3rd day of the 7th Month [s., 11 August] arrived [in Kagoshima]. In addition, around 8.30 an extremely urgent messenger⁴¹⁶ [who] left Edo on the 9th day of the 7th Month [s., 17 August] reached [our domain]. The previous evening, a number of missives regarding information which we had requested earlier arrived. [According to the information received by the messenger who left Edo on 17 August], as [previously we have been told] that the shogun [Tokugawa Iesada] was indisposed, [we are now told that] the truth is that

⁴¹⁵ *Isogi hikyaku* 急キ飛脚.

⁴¹⁶ *Goku goku kyū hikyaku* 極々急飛脚.

around 5 pm of last 6th day of the 7th Month [s., 14 August] [His Majesty] breathed his last. [This information] is transmitted in all secrecy. The actual circumstances are truly a serious [matter] for the whole realm, we are filled with astonishment [about this news].⁴¹⁷ [...].

According to the diary of Hisanori, the Satsuma officials stationed in Edo made every effort to inform their leaders in Kagoshima about the death of the shogun Iesada as soon as possible. They hired an express messenger who traveled from Edo to Kagoshima in a mere 16 days. We may surmise that those same officials were able to use their connections with the shogunate in order to obtain such vital information in a very short time. In fact, from the *Bakumatsu Gaikoku Kankei Monjo* 幕末外国関係文書 we may also infer that in those days the bakufu made every effort to prevent that news about the shogun's death would be publicly revealed. On 16 August, the senior Councilors transmitted a communication addressed to *ōmetsuke* 大目付, *gokanjō bugyō* 御勘定奉行, *gaikoku bugyō* 外国奉行, *ometsuke* 御目付, *gokanjōginmiyaku* 御勘定吟味役. I will examine the first part of this document later and will initially focus on the second part of this message: “with regard to the disposition of the entire Tokugawa Family⁴¹⁸ [i.e. the succession of the Tokugawa shogun], within the public chambers [*omotegata* 表方] [of Edo castle, the news of Iesada's death] have not yet been acknowledged. In case it were to be revealed publicly, in particular since the feelings of the general public might be hurt if the content of private discussions were to be revealed [before any official announcement], it is from now on strictly ordered to not reveal any information

⁴¹⁷ Ansei 5/7/25. Kagoshimaken Rekishi Shiryō Sentaa Reimeikan, ed., *Kagoshimaken Shiryō: Niuro Hisanori zatsufu* (hereafter *Niuro Hisanori zatsufu*), vol. 2, (Kagoshima: Kagoshimaken, 1987), pp. 388-390.

⁴¹⁸ 全 徳川家御所置之儀は.

[about the shogun's passing away] in particular to the *omote daimyō* 表大名⁴¹⁹ with whom you have friendly interactions, but also to the retainers (*fudai shū* 譜代衆).⁴²⁰

As we have seen, Iesada passed away on 14 August. We may surmise that the bakufu could not foresee the repercussions of the news of the shogun's death might on the daimyo, especially since the Nanki and Hitotsubashi factions had different ideas about who should be Iesada's heir. In addition, we may also assume that before the death of a shogun was publicly announced, specific traditional protocols needed to be followed within Edo castle which would have required some time. We may surmise that one of these protocols was the immediate suspension of state events involving the shogun, such as, for example, the welcoming of a Ryukyuan embassy. For these reasons, Edo leaders tried to conceal the death of Iesada for nearly one month under the guise of the "shogun's indisposition," and only on 14 September they publicly announced his passing.⁴²¹

Let us now return to Hisanori's dairy:

1st day of the 8th Month [Solar, 7 September]. This morning at dawn, a messenger [*machi bin* 町便, i.e. *machi hikyaku* or private express messenger] [who left] Edo on the 14th day of the 7th Month [s., 22 August] arrived [in Kagoshima]. The most important information communicated to us is that the Ryukyuan mission was postponed because of multiple matters [concerning] the shogunate [*kōhen gojita ni tsuki* 公辺御事多二付]. The rest [of the message] has dealt with inquires about several private affairs. It is said that the above-mentioned multiple matters [concerning the shogunate] are due to the death of the shogun^{422 423}.

⁴¹⁹ I.e., the external daimyo.

⁴²⁰ Communication dated Ansei 5/7/8, 16 August 1858. *BGKM*, vol. 26, pp.708-709.

⁴²¹ *Tokugawa Jikki*, vol. 13, pp. 511-527.

⁴²² *Migi no gojita ha kōhen goseikyo no wake nite sōrō yoshi nari* 右之御事多ハ 公辺御逝去之

According to Hisanori's diary, the messenger who arrived in Kagoshima with the information concerning the postponement of the Ryukyuan embassy left Edo on 22 August and arrived at his destination 18 days later. Because this message was sent by private courier, we may surmise that the messenger was charged by the Satsuma officials based at the shogunal capital, after they had received a formal order from senior Councilor Naitō Kii-no-Kami on 19 August to postpone the mission from Shuri. In fact, according to Hisanori's 7 September note, the bakufu ordered to postpone the embassy because of "multiple matters [concerning] the shogunate." Hisanori did not use the expression *sashioki gataki gokokujitatan no origara ni tsuki* 難差置御国事多端之折柄に付, mentioned in the bakufu's formal order. Instead, he used the term *kōhen gojita ni tsuki* 公辺御事多ニ付. Nonetheless, we may assume that the latter is an abbreviation of the expression used by Edo leaders. This abbreviation, in fact, might be understood as a short form in order to meet style requirements, that of a diary, as well as to meet practical needs, considering the large volume of missives that reached Kagoshima in those days.

It is important to underline that Hisanori, after having received the letter from Edo, wrote down that—according to what he had heard or was told (in the document this is expressed with the term *yoshi* 由, which indicates a reported speech) the real reason for the bakufu to postpone the Ryukyuan mission was the shogun's death. Therefore, we may surmise that the messenger from Edo brought with him two messages. One was the official order issued by the shogunate (Naitō Kii-no-Kami). This formal command was copied by Satsuma officials and transmitted by Niuro Hisanori to

訳ニテ候由也。

⁴²³ Ansei 5/8/1. *Niuro Hisanori zatsufu*, vol. 2, pp. 388-390.

the *Ryūkyūkan* the following day (8 September).⁴²⁴ In this message, the official reason for postponing the Ryukyuan delegation was “multiple and complex state affairs.” The second one was a confidential message (probably a verbal communication) in which the Satsuma officials based in Edo revealed to their leaders in Kagoshima that according to information obtained in the shogunal capital the reason why the bakufu postponed the Ryukyuan embassy was the death of Tokugawa Iesada.

As a matter of fact, immediately after Iesada passed away, rumors with regard to the shogun’s death spread outside Edo castle despite the shogunate’s attempt to conceal his passing. One of the rumors that circulated portrayed his death as a case of high treason in which the head of the shogunate was poisoned by a group of traitors.⁴²⁵ This, however, should not lead us to think that the information transmitted by the Satsuma officials stationed in Edo to their leaders in Kagoshima was the mere fruit of rumors. Instead, they are additional testimony to the complex and intricate situation the Edo authorities needed to deal with after Iesada’s death. In addition, we may surmise that Satsuma officials were informed directly by the shogunate officials about the true reason behind the postponement when the latter handed them the official order of Naitō Kii-no Kami. Therefore, all this may induce us to consider the bakufu’s decision to postpone the embassy because of Iesada’s death as reasonable.

Furthermore, if we reconstruct the timeline of how the information was passed from Edo to Kagoshima we observe the following: on 2 September, a messenger who

⁴²⁴ The official document transmitted to the *Ryūkyūkan* uses the same phrasing as the formal order issued by Edo to the Shimazu. However, Kagoshima officials added a number of honorifics to refer to the shogunate: (bakufu to Satsuma officials) *sashioki gataki gokokujitatan no origara ni tsuki* 難差置御国事多端之折柄に付→(Satsuma to *Ryūkyūkan*) *Sashiokaregataki gokokujitatan no origara ni tsuki* 難被差置御国事多端之折柄ニ付.

⁴²⁵ Takahashi Satoshi, *Bakumatsu orugi: korera ga yatte kita* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 2005), p. 56.

had left Edo on 17 August informed Kagoshima that Iesada had died on 14 August. On 19 August, the bakufu (in the person of Naitō Kii-no-Kami) formally ordered Nariakira to postpone the Ryukyuan mission for “multiple and complex state affairs” and on 7 September a messenger, who had left Edo on 22 August, arrived in Kagoshima with this information. Hisanori interpreted the postponement as resulting from Iesada’s death. Then, on 8 September, Satsuma (Hisanori) informed the *Ryūkyūkan* that the bakufu (Naitō Kii-no-Kami) had ordered the postponement of the Ryukyuan mission for “multiple and complex state affairs.” Based on this chronological reconstruction, our hypothesis of the bakufu deciding to postpone the Ryukyuan embassy because of the shogun’s death seems plausible.

In the genealogical record of prince Ie, the ambassador of the 1856 and 1858 Ryukyuan missions, it is recorded that Satsuma ordered Shuri to postpone the Ryukyuan embassy for “multiple and complex state affairs” which the bakufu faced at a time when the Ryukyuan envoys were already in Kagoshima. Only later did the Shimazu communicate the news about the shogun’s death to the royal government.⁴²⁶ It is thus interesting to see that despite the fact that on 7 September Hisanori was informed that Iesada’s demise was the reason behind the 1858 mission’s postponement, he did not convey this information to Ryukyu. In fact, the next day he informed the *Ryūkyūkan* that Satsuma had been ordered by the bakufu to postpone the embassy for “multiple and complex state affairs.” We may reasonably surmise that he did so because at that time the death of Iesada had not been publicly announced yet. However, as we can understand from the genealogical record of prince Ie, even after the public statement of the shogun’s death was made, Satsuma did not reveal the true meaning of *kokujitatan* to

⁴²⁶ *Naha-shi shi, shiryō hen*, daiichi kan nana, Kafu shiryō 3, Naha, 1982, p. 344.

Ryukyu.

Seen in this light, we may infer that at the official level, i.e. in the missives formally transmitted from Edo to Kagoshima, as well as in those sent from Satsuma to the *Ryūkyūkan* and subsequently to Shuri, the bakufu postponed the Ryukyuan mission for “multiple and complex state affairs.” Unofficial networks, such as the informal channels between the Satsuma residence in Edo and Kagoshima castle, however, existed parallel to the official channels. As we have seen, in this private network it is revealed that the shogunate deferred the Ryukyuan embassy because of Iesada’s death. For these reasons, we may say that the diaries, such as the one written by Hisanori, are important instruments through which we may better comprehend the multiplicity and complexity of official and unofficial communication systems in the Tokugawa period. Most of all, they are precious testimonies that can help us to uncover a truth that is quite different from the one transmitted by official records.

However, at this point our analysis requires an attempt at answering the following question: why did the Satsuma domain on 2 September motivate the postponement of the mission by referring to Nariakira’s death and its resulting consultation with the bakufu in a missive addressed to the Shuri government?

In order to shed light on this matter, we first of all need to keep in mind that during the Tokugawa period the delivery of correspondence by express messengers between Edo and Satsuma took almost three weeks⁴²⁷. Let us try to clarify also this point by referring to Hisanori’s diary. As was mentioned before, on 24 August daimyo Nariakira suddenly passed away. On the same day, Hisanori wrote in his diary that when it became evident that Nariakira would not recover, Satsuma leaders dispatched

⁴²⁷ Sasaki Suguru, *Bakumatsu seiji to Satsuma han* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2004), p. 42.

an express messenger to Edo. At that time, Shimazu Narioki, ex-daimyo and father of Nariakira, was residing in the shogunal capital. The following day (i.e. 25 August) Hisanori recorded that it was customary in the Satsuma domain for an official *sobayaku* 側役 to be charged with communicating the death of the daimyo to the previous lord (Narioki) and the daimyo's wife, while a chief retainer was expected to go to Edo to ask permission for the appointment of a new daimyo. After various deliberations, the Kagoshima leaders intended to select Yamaguchi Naoki as *sobayaku* and Hōki (Shimazu Hisatomi) as chief retainer. Both on the 24th and the 25th, Shimazu Hisamitsu also visited the chief retainers' room to consult about the policy to take. As a result, it was decided that Yamaguchi would leave on the 26th and Hōki on the 27th.

On 28th August, Kagoshima authorities publicly announced the death of Nariakira. Hisanori wrote that with regard to this matter they dispatched two units (most likely composed of two couriers each) of express messengers, one by sea and one by land, to make enquiries. In addition, Hisanori sent a letter to the Bungo-no-kami (Shimazu Hisataka, *jōdai karō*) and Nagae Yasu-no-jō. We may surmise that one of the consequences of the public announcement of Nariakira's death was that it became necessary for the Satsuma authorities to decide what to do about the Ryukyuan mission planned for that same year and which had already reached Kagoshima. With regard to this important issue let us turn to the above-mentioned letter from Hisanori to Nagae Yasu-no-jō. According to Hisanori, Kagoshima received the news about Iesada's death on 2 September. However, on 28 August, in a missive addressed to Nagae Yasu-no-Jō, with regard to the demise of Nariakira, Hisanori wrote the following:

Also with regard to the visit to Edo by the Ryukyuan envoys, anyway [I do not see] another

solution but to postpone [the mission] due to the [unfortunate] event [i.e. Nariakira's death] that occurred recently. I am totally confused. With regard to this matter [i.e. the deferment of the Ryukyuan mission], upon having inquired the shogunate in Edo, when it is convenient I think it is appropriate that you deal with this matter.⁴²⁸

From this passage, we may infer that Satsuma officials, even before acknowledging information about Iesada's death, had already intended to start consultation with the bakufu about a possible deferment of the Ryukyuan delegation because of the death of Nariakira. From their perspective, in fact, they did not see "another solution but to postpone [the mission]." In other words, as soon as the Satsuma daimyo died, Kagoshima authorities pleaded with Edo for the Ryukyuan delegation to be postponed. In addition, on 2 September the news about Iesada's death reached Kagoshima. However, because at that time the bakufu had not yet transmitted any order with regard to the deferment of the mission—as we have noted earlier, the official order reached Kagoshima on 7 September—we may surmise that for Satsuma leaders it was reasonable to ascribe the postponement of the mission to the demise of Nariakira when on the same day (2 September) they informed the *Ryūkyūkan*. On 8 September, Satsuma authorities transmitted to Shuri the formal command to defer the mission because the official order of the shogunate to postpone the Ryukyuan embassy had finally reached Kagoshima the previous day.

On the one hand, Satsuma (Hisanori) on 2 September cited consultations that were in progress with the bakufu and alluded to a possible postponement of the embassy because of Nariakira's death; on the other, on 8 September Kagoshima (Hisanori)

⁴²⁸ Ansei 5/7/20. *Niuro Hisanori zatsufu*, vol. 2, p. 385.

communicated to Ryukyu that it had received the official order by the shogunate to defer the mission for *kokujitatan* reasons. On 24 October, the Ryukyuan envoys departed from Kagoshima and on 1 November they arrived at Naha harbor.⁴²⁹

Kokujitatan delineated a situation of national emergency which was purposely ambiguous and behind which were concealed several circumstances that played a role in aggravating the political crisis. It is one of those expressions of political print by which the shogunate veiled the factual truth in order to defend its own ideological/symbolic sphere. In order to try to make the real reasons behind the “multiple and complex state affairs” related to the postponement of the 1858 mission as clear as possible, we might discern between direct and indirect circumstances that jointly affected the suspension of the project.

According to Hisanori’s dairy, the bakufu ordered to postpone the Ryukyuan embassy because of the death of Iesada. In addition, based on other passages of his dairy, we also understand that Satsuma authorities intended to exert their influence with Edo for deferring the embassy because around that same time Nariakira had died suddenly in Kagoshima. In other words, the Satsuma daimyo’s death also constituted a reasonable cause for postponing the Ryukyuan delegation. Therefore, we may infer that the passing away of two key people in Edo-Kagoshima-Shuri diplomacy, i.e. those of the shogun and of the Satsuma daimyo, was the real reason why the Ryukyuan embassy was deferred. We can surmise, in fact, that since both the man, who was expected to accompany the Ryukyuan delegation to Edo as lord of Kagoshima, and the ultimate political authority of Japan, in honor of whom the embassy was planned, had passed away, it was reasonable and pragmatic for Edo leaders to decide to suspend the project.

⁴²⁹ Ansei 5/9/18-26. *DNIS*, vol. 3, n. 7, pp. 648-690.

We may point out that the analysis of this episode could also serve to shed light on one of many aspects of the ceremonies connected to the Ryukyuan missions to Edo. That is to say that the death of the lord of Satsuma or that of the shogun would lead to the postponement of the embassy, even if the dispatch of a mission was already in progress and despite the fact that at an official level it was considered vital to hide this under non-specific expressions such as various complex state affairs.

Let us now focus on the indirect events, both international and domestic, behind the postponement of the 1858 mission. As was already mentioned, according to Kamiya, the project of Nariakira to use the Ryukyuan mission as a disguise for reaching Kyoto with his army was the reason behind the bakufu's postponement of the Ryukyuan embassy. However, as we have observed earlier, there is no primary source that testifies to this interpretation. Therefore, we may surmise that the state of tension between Edo leaders and Nariakira as a result of the signing of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Japan and the United States, as well as the appointment of Tokugawa Iemochi as heir to Iesada, both on order of Ii Naosuke, constituted one of multiple scenarios against the background of which the mission was postponed. We may surmise that Ii Naosuke also intended to purge Nariakira in an effort to silence opposition against his foreign and domestic policies.⁴³⁰ However, there is no evidence of a direct relationship between such tension between Ii Naosuke and Nariakira and the 1858 Ryukyuan mission's postponement. That is why we might consider this circumstance as an important but supplementary fact.

Ichiki Shirō, a samurai at the service of Nariakira, in his *Nariakirakō shiryō* 斉彬

⁴³⁰ The Ansei Purge (*Ansei no taigoku* 安政の大獄) was the prosecution of political opponents by Ii Naosuke and the senior Councilors in 1858 and 1859. More than 100 people were purged from their positions within the shogunate, as well as from several fiefs or from the imperial court in Kyoto.

公史料 (*Documents on Prince Nariakira*) compiled in the Meiji era, glossed the episode as “indisposition of the shogun and arrival of foreign vessels” in a note regarding the postponement of the 1858 mission.⁴³¹

As we have seen, Iesada’s death presented the shogunate with a serious problem and for almost a month, the bakufu authorities publicly concealed the passing away of the shogun under the veil of his “indisposition.” However, it is not possible here to clarify if Ichiki knew that such “indisposition” was a mere cover, since Iesada was already dead when the embassy was postponed. As a matter of fact, the true reason for which the mission was deferred was the death of Iesada and not his state of indisposition.⁴³²

With regard to the arrival of foreign vessels, let us return to the first part of the document drawn up on 16 August by the senior Councilors and addressed to the *ōmetsuke*, *gokanjō bugyō*, *gaikoku bugyō*, *ometsuke*, and *gokanjōginmiyaku*. This passage may, in fact, support Ichiki’s testimony.

With regard to the arrival of foreign vessels, given that we are in a phase in which people [tend to] prick up their ears [to everything they hear about such matter], we have heard that there are also people, [such as] the *kunimochi shū* 国持衆⁴³³ and officials with whom you are on intimate terms, who manifested their wish to know the truth. What kind of [problems] can we expect [from this]?⁴³⁴

⁴³¹ *Nariakirakō shiryō*, vol. 3, n. 388.

⁴³² Kamiya maintains that the “shogun’s indisposition” refers to the dispute between the Nanki and Hitotsubashi factions.

⁴³³ Daimyo who possessed one or more fiefs.

⁴³⁴ Ansei 5/7/8. *BGKM*, vol. 26, pp.708-709.

It is also important to look at the broader international picture at the time when the 1858 embassy was suspended. This was, in fact, an extremely important phase in terms of Japanese foreign policy. On 31⁴³⁵ July, that is, as soon as Edo authorities had signed the commercial treaty with the US, the senior Councilors pushed Edo's foreign policy towards the *bukedensō*, citing the impossibility of postponing any longer the signing of the treaty with the United States.⁴³⁶ Then, on 18⁴³⁷ and 19⁴³⁸ August, the bakufu signed analogous treaties with Holland⁴³⁹ and Russia⁴⁴⁰, respectively. From this we may surmise that the shogunate was extremely concerned about the implications that these epoch-making changes would bring within and without Japan.

On 28 August Hisanori recorded that a private messenger from Edo, who had left the shogunal capital on 3 August, had arrived in Kagoshima. This courier informed Kagoshima leaders about the state of affairs between the bakufu and the foreigners, i.e. about the stipulation of the commercial treaty with the United States, as well as about the bakufu's decision to discharge Hotta Masayoshi and Matsudaira Tadakata as senior Councilors, i.e. the beginning of the Ansei Purge, and to appoint Ōta Sukemoto and Manabe Akikatsu as *rōjū* for a second time. Based on the above, the situation in Edo was described as one of great confusion.⁴⁴¹ Then, on 31 August Hisanori noted that a messenger, who had departed from Edo on 6 August, had reported that the state of affairs in the shogunal capital was very complicated and confused due to the dealings with the foreigners. The following day (1 September) another messenger informed Kagoshima leaders about the Ansei Purge and the problem of the Western powers'

⁴³⁵ Ansei 5/6/21.

⁴³⁶ *BGKM*, vol. 20, p. 510.

⁴³⁷ Ansei 5/7/10.

⁴³⁸ Ansei 5//7/11.

⁴³⁹ *BGKM*, vol. 20, p. 719.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 751.

⁴⁴¹ *Niuro Hisanori zatsufu*, vol. 2, p. 385.

presence in Edo. He also reported that the bakufu had ordered Tokugawa Yoshikatsu, Mito Nariaki, and Matsudaira Yoshinaga to confinement, and the situation in Edo was depicted as a condition of great confusion because of the foreigners' pressure.⁴⁴² In light of the notes in Hisanori's dairy, we can surmise that at the beginning of August 1858 the bakufu was facing a difficult situation due to the presence of the Western powers in Edo Bay. It is, thus, reasonable to think that behind the vague "multiple and complex state affairs" there was also this serious international issue. Let us now examine the domestic situation.

Recently, Maehira Fusaaki has proposed a new and interesting hypothesis with regard to the deferment of the 1858 delegation. He points out that when in 1858 the arrival of a Ryukyuan mission was expected in the shogunal capital, epidemic cholera was spreading all over Japan, and within the borders of Edo city alone more than 10000 deaths were recorded. An Earthquake and an epidemic dealt a double blow to the shogunate. These events, in fact, affected the authority of the bakufu to the extent that it could not deal adequately with the reception of the Ryukyuan embassy and, therefore, the project was postponed.⁴⁴³ Maehira, thus, focused his research on social matters that were afflicting the Edo leaders when the Ryukyuan embassy was expected to reach the shogunal capital.

As we have seen, because of the Ansei Edo Earthquake (1855) Satsuma obtained authorization from the bakufu to postpone the 1856 Ryukyuan mission until 1858. However, in 1856 the Kagoshima-based Ryukyuan officials heard an interesting rumor. The Ryukyuan officials residing in the *Ryūkyūkan* asked Satsuma for information because they had heard that a large number of buildings in Edo had been destroyed by

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Maehira, "Edo bakufu to Ryūkyū shisetsu," p. 70.

the earthquake of the previous year, that their reparation would not be completed in time for 1858, and that, therefore, the bakufu was not in a position to receive a Ryukyuan embassy. However, the Kagoshima leaders replied that they had not received any instructions from the bakufu with regard to this matter.⁴⁴⁴ Furthermore, on 13 July 1858, the bakufu appointed *ōmestuke* Tamura Iyo-no-kami as official in charge of receiving the forthcoming Ryukyuan mission.⁴⁴⁵ Based on this, we can understand that what the Ryukyuan officials had heard was merely gossip, and that the bakufu firmly intended to welcome the embassy from Shuri.

In particular, Maehira's hypothesis is based on Takahashi Satoshi's research on the appearance of cholera in Japan. It is, therefore, necessary to explore this research in order to ascertain if these social problems affected the suspension of the Ryukyuan mission. From one of the documents mentioned by Takahashi it is clear that from the beginning of September (solar calendar) epidemic cholera spread widely, causing approximately 2000 deaths per day in Edo and Osaka.⁴⁴⁶ Elsewhere, we observe that from the beginning of August the cholera infection spread from Akasaka in Edo, then many cases were recorded in nearby Shinkawa. A few days later, many other places were infected, and from the beginning of September until the middle of the month the disease spread widely causing up to 100 deaths in numerous districts.⁴⁴⁷

In other words, epidemic cholera appeared in Edo from mid-August 1858; around mid-September the disease reached its peak. There can be no doubt that this situation created general confusion and panic among the inhabitants of the shogunal capital.

⁴⁴⁴ *ROHM*, vol. 13, p. 343.

⁴⁴⁵ *BGKM*, vol. 20, p. 387.

⁴⁴⁶ Takahashi, *Korera ga yatte kita*, p. 38.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 160. Cf. Bettina Gramlich-Oka, "The Body Economic: Japan's Cholera Epidemic of 1858 in Popular Discourse" *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 30 (2009), pp.32-73.

However, Takahashi also points out that he suspected the bakufu of acting slowly when it came to attempting to prevent and contain the spread of cholera. As a matter of fact, according to the *Tokugawa Jikki*, the shogunate issued only one edict on 28 September with regard to the prevention and cure of cholera.⁴⁴⁸

As we have seen, the shogunal leaders ordered the postponement of the Ryukyuan mission for “multiple and complex state affairs” on 19 August, i.e. immediately before cholera spread widely in Edo. In light of Takahashi’s work, we may, thus, suggest another scenario—a domestic scenario—characterized by the existence of social problems that further complicated the already difficult circumstances the Edo leaders found themselves in. Nevertheless, when we take the period in which cholera reached its peak in Edo as well as the delay with which the shogunate issued an edict against the spreading of the disease into consideration, we may conclude that in this case too there was no direct connection between the diffusion of cholera and the deferment of the mission by the bakufu. Therefore, we should also consider this to be a secondary reason for suspending the delegation.

We may conclude this section by stating that through an investigation of Hisanori’s dairy we were able to look closely into the perspective of the Satsuma officials with regard to the real reasons for the postponement of the 1858 mission. In other words, we have tried to reconstruct what the men of Kagoshima effectively saw and perceived in the summer of 1858; a point of view that was not taken into consideration in earlier studies. Even though we cannot state with certainty that the deaths of Iesada and Nariakira were the main reasons behind the deferment, we reconstructed a mosaic of events that mirrors in a rather realistic everything that took

⁴⁴⁸ Ansei 5/8/22. Takahashi, *Korera ga yatte kita*, p. 194.

place during the summer of 1858. Depending on the angle from which we try to look at this mosaic, we can have the impression that one aspect stands from the others; however, as soon as we change our position, that same aspect loses some of its brightness and another one sticks out. This depends on the complexity of the situation as well as on the ambiguity included in an expression such as *kokujitatan*. However, even if we change our angle more than once, there are always some facts that “seem” to catch our eye more than others. That is why we may consider the deaths of Iesada and Nariakira as direct reasons for the deferment of the 1858 mission. While the tension between Edo leaders and Nariakira, the arrival of foreign vessels as well as the spreading of cholera in Edo can be considered as an integral part of multiple scenarios that interwove in the summer of 1858 and acted as secondary reasons to support the decision of the shogunate to suspend the dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassy.

In conclusion, as we have seen, from a missive that was written by the Satsuma officials based in Edo and that arrived in Kagoshima on 7 September 1858, Niino Hisanori understood that hidden behind the bakufu’s vague “state affairs” was the death of the shogun. Moreover, even though those same Satsuma officials were residing in Edo when the bakufu ordered to postpone the 1858 mission, it seems they did not mention the tension between Nariakira and the shogunate, neither did they mention the spreading of cholera as possible reasons behind the bakufu’s decision to defer the Ryukyuan embassy in the missive they sent to their leaders in Kagoshima.

4.3. The missions of 1856 and 1858 seen from Shuri’s standpoint

The decision to postpone or suspend a mission was a prerogative that was granted only

to the Edo leaders. As we have seen, Satsuma officials could try to have an embassy deferred, but the last word still rested with the bakufu. In the available documents, there is no trace that might lead us to think that Shuri played a decisive role in the suspension of the 1856 and 1858 missions. The hypothesis that we have sustained so far is that the mission planned for 1856 was postponed because of the Ansei Edo Earthquake which occurred in 1855 and that the embassy planned for 1858 was deferred because of the death of the shogun and of the Satsuma daimyo, while necessarily acknowledging the complex and intricate web of domestic and international events. This, however, does not mean that Shuri's function was marginal in the project of sending those embassies. In chapter three, I have tried to demonstrate that even though the Treaty of Amity with the United States and France stipulated the end of the practice of shadowing foreigners by Ryukyuan officials, Shuri did not plead with Satsuma to have the embassies suspended. The royal government intentionally violated the treaties and made an effort to keep foreigners' eyes away from situations linked to the dispatch of missions to Japan. In this section, I will try to narrow my perspective and investigate in detail which problems the royal government needed to deal with during the preparations for the 1856 and 1858 missions. With regard to this topic, research by Tamai Tatsuya and Yano Misako has already shed light on several important aspects concerning Shuri's perspective of and role in these two missions.⁴⁴⁹ Despite the fact that I will follow the result of their

⁴⁴⁹ Tamai Tatsuya has clarified that against the background of the embassies planned for 1856 and 1858 Shuri made an effort to cut several expenses with regard to the preparations of the Ryukyuan embassies. In addition, the royal government faced problems of political character caused by the arrival of Westerners in Ryukyu. He also explained what kind of matters Shuri had to deal with once the 1856 mission was deferred. "Ryūkyū shisetsu haken junbi to kaitai katei: saigo no Ryūkyū shisetsu wo tsūjite," *Kōtsūshi kenkyū* 67 (Tokyo: Kōtsūshi Kenkyūkai, 2008). With regard to the same topic, Yano Misako has demonstrated that the preparations concerning the dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassies in the *bakumatsu* were accomplished giving priority to the will of Satsuma. She also emphasized that Shuri tried to economize on the costs of the embassies as well as to keep concealing to Westerners and Chinese the subordination of Ryukyu to Japan. "Bakumakki Ryūkyū ni

research and will use a number of sources they also explored, I will try to contextualize Shuri's perspective in the framework of my dissertation's discourse. Let us first see which problems with regard to the dispatch of the congratulatory mission planned for 1856 Shuri put forward to Satsuma in 1853:

[...] With regard to the dispatch of the [Ryukyuan] envoys to Edo the next Dragon Year [1856], after [having experienced a long series of great *yosooi* (大粧) [=great events] which implied [huge] expenses in the last few years, [we are in a situation of] extreme distress. Although it is a complicated period, particularly due to the residence of foreigners [at Naha], [the ceremony] of the congratulatory mission [to Edo] is a rigorous service which [we] have had to carry out successfully since ancient times; therefore, [also on this occasion] we foresee huge expenses [for its realization]. In addition, [we suppose that] you certainly felt compassion for the distressful conditions throughout [our] kingdom; we have heard that we are [granted] by your orders to borrow one thousand eighty *kanme* [approx. 3,5 kg] of silver as a special favor [for realizing the embassy with regard to] the actual circumstances. From the king to ourselves, with gratitude we are really happy of the great benevolence [received] [...].⁴⁵⁰

Even though this document was dated 30 May 1855, it refers to a missive first sent by the regent and the Council of Three to Satsuma on 31 October 1853.⁴⁵¹ From the content of the letter we may infer that, at an earlier time, the officials of the royal government had stressed to Satsuma the poverty of the islands whereupon the Shimazu

okeru Edo nobori shisetsu haken junbi,” *Kinsei Nihon ni okeru gaikoku shisetsu to shakai henyō 3: Taikun gaikō kaitai wo ou*, Yano Misako, ed., (Tokyo: Kamiya Nobuyuki Kenkyūshitsu Waseda Daigaku Bungaku Gakujutsuin, 2009).

⁴⁵⁰ Ansei 2/4/15. *ROHM*, vol. 10, p. 343.

⁴⁵¹ The original missive, dated Ka'ei 6/9/29 (31 October 1853) is reported in Yano Misako, “Edo nobori shisetsu haken junbi,” p. 50.

decided to grant Shuri a considerable loan to fund the cost of preparing the embassy. Despite the presence of the foreigners in Naha (Bettelheim was residing in Ryukyu), Shuri considered it very important to continue with the practice of sending Ryukyuan missions to Edo. At the same time, the royal government emphasized the poverty of the islands so that Satsuma would take care of a large percentage of the cost.

Let us now focus our attention on the poverty to which the royal government referred. It is well known that from the second half of the seventeenth century natural disasters, such as typhoons, droughts, long period of rain, earthquakes and tsunami occurred frequently in the Ryukyu kingdom. These calamities caused famines and epidemics both of which led to a sudden decrease in the Ryukyuan population. In addition, many Ryukyuan could not afford to pay their taxes and ended up in debt. These misfortunes and the nonpayment of taxes impoverished the royal government's coffers.⁴⁵²

Furthermore, from the middle of the nineteenth century this dire domestic situation was aggravated by external factors, such as the arrival of Westerners in Ryukyu. An interesting document of 1854 allows us to understand what these "great events"—*yosooi* in the excerpt above were. It also clarifies how the presence of the foreigners caused economic distress to the Shuri authorities. The royal government leaders pointed out that "on three occasions in the span of 32 years from 1832, i.e. in 1832, 1842, and 1850, they had dispatched a Ryukyuan embassy to Edo, and that they had welcomed a Chinese investiture mission in 1838. These important events (=great events) implied a disbursement of huge capitals. In addition, from 1844, Western vessels frequently reached Ryukyu and foreigners began to reside in the kingdom. For

⁴⁵² Nishizato, "Naisei mondai to taigai kankei," pp. 616-618.

Shuri it became a huge burden to provide those foreigners with daily food and other required articles, as well as to supply grain to those government officials charged with assistance and surveillance of Westerners. Above all, last year (1853) and this year (1854) in particular numerous foreign ships came to Ryukyu several times and Westerners gradually started to reside in the kingdom for a long time. This implied further expenditure. Then, with regard to the foreigners' presence, it also became necessary for Shuri to send numerous express ships to Satsuma and China to ask for their support. These dispatches brought about further expenditures. This situation caused grave distress to the finances of the entire kingdom.”⁴⁵³

As mentioned above, Satsuma leaders understood the serious financial problems of the kingdom and granted a loan of 1080 *kanme* to finance a large portion of the Ryukyuan embassy's cost. Nevertheless, the dire economic situation described above could not be resolved by a mere loan granted by Kagoshima. From Shuri's perspective it was, in fact, also necessary to cut several expenses related to the realization of its embassies. In another missive jointly signed by the *Ryūkyūkan kikiyaku* Niiro Tarōaemon Shinsuke (the Satsuma official) and the *zaiban* Gushikawa Uekata Chōfuku (the Ryukyuan official based in Kagoshima, who had reached Satsuma in 1853 as *nentōshi*)⁴⁵⁴ and addressed to Satsuma authorities we can see an attempt by the Ryukyuan side to economize on the expenses related to the mission planned for 1856. According to this missive, even though an official from Satsuma known as the *Yamato kurayaku* was charged with accompanying the Ryukyuan envoys to Edo and helping the mission with the management of note books or registers concerning important matters related to the progress of the delegation, because many expenses with regard to the

⁴⁵³ *ROHM*, vol. 8, p. 87.

⁴⁵⁴ Yano, “Edo nobori shisetsu haken junbi,” p. 50.

dispatch of a Ryukyuan mission increased, from 1796 on the occasion of every delegation it was decided to assign to 5 members of the fixed number of the Ryukyuan envoys to hold two offices. Among them, two envoys were charged with the additional post of *kurayaku*, one envoy with that of *kakiyaku* and two other envoys with the post of assistants. Other than their main duty, these envoys were also charged with the same tasks as those of the *kurayaku* working at the *Ryūkyūkan*, and upon consultation with this official they were assigned to manage account books. Thus, a certain cost reduction can be observed in the embassies since there were fewer people to pay. At the same time the smooth handling of the account books was ensured. Because the finances of the Ryukyus were in dire straits during the preparations for the 1856 mission, the Ryukyuan side pointed out that it was necessary to closely examine where superfluous expenses could be eliminated and only those cost that were considered essential to carry out the official ceremonies were retained. To this end, Niino and Gushikawa pleaded with Satsuma to also allow the royal government to assign to 5 members of the fixed number of the Ryukyuan embassy to hold two posts of *kurayaku*, one of *kakiyaku* and two of assistants, respectively in the 1856 mission. They also suggested they would consult with the *Yamato kurayaku* with regard to the handling of the account books.⁴⁵⁵

From this missive, we may infer that, from Shuri's perspective, an excellent means to cut cost was to assign two duties to a number of envoys. The Ryukyuan side, thus, showed its commitment to Satsuma's earlier orders to not surpass the limit of 99 members for one delegation,⁴⁵⁶ as well as to accomplish official ceremonies according to traditional protocol, even though—given Ryūkyū's poverty—it emphasized the necessity to cut all those expenses that were not considered essential for the embassy.

⁴⁵⁵ *ROHM*, vol. 9, p. 137.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 142. Cf. Yano, "Edo nobori shisetsu haken junbi," p. 54.

Shuri, however, was not just facing economic problems. As we have seen in chapter three, the presence of foreigners in Naha also caused political problems. During his visit to Ryukyu in 1853, Perry informed the Shuri leaders of his intention to return to the kingdom early in 1854 before his next visit to Japan. Connected to this, Satsuma transmitted instructions to Shuri that were related to the dispatch of a Ryukyuan congratulatory mission in 1856 in honor of the new shogun, Tokugawa Iesada. Nevertheless, the impending return of the American vessels as well as the presence of the foreign missionaries (Bettelheim) on the islands prompted the royal government to take countermeasures against a potential threat contained within the Ryukyuan embassies themselves, that is, of exposing to the Westerners the subordination of Ryukyu to Japan. In a missive addressed to the Shimazu, Shuri asserted that it had tightened surveillance over the foreigners on the islands in an attempt to avoid them from finding out. We already noted that the royal government used precisely the practice of the official-followers to conceal the dispatch of Edo-bound embassies. Here, it is important to emphasize the fact that Shuri pleaded with the Shimazu so that also in Kagoshima the dispatch of Ryukyuan embassies would be kept secret to the foreigners. With regard to this, the Shuri government instructed its officials based at Kagoshima as follows:

[...] Even though [we think that] anyway there will be a close investigation with regard to such [possibilities, i.e. the possibility that foreigners could see or hear about the Ryukyuan missions when they were in Kagoshima] in Satsuma too, in case of particular developments choose at your [own] discretion the proper time and communicate to Bungo-no-kami [Shimazu Nariakira] your personal opinion. Handle [the situation] so that control [over the foreigners in Kagoshima] will

[also] be [strengthened] at all cost.⁴⁵⁷

From this document we may infer that the royal government required its officials based in Kagoshima to exert their influence so that the Shimazu would also strengthen their control over foreigners within their domain in order to keep the dispatch of Ryukyuan missions to Japan a secret.

However, the Shuri's concerns were not limited to Kagoshima. From another document, in fact, we may conclude that the royal government through the mediation of Satsuma also pleaded with the bakufu to keeping the true nature of the relationship between Ryukyu and Japan concealed to the Westerners. According to this document, Shuri expressed its strong desire "that the foreigners in Edo would be kept away from those shogunal officials who were wearing clothes from Ryukyu. If, by any chance, foreigners saw those clothes and inquired where they came from, Shuri asked Edo leaders to instruct their officers to answer that they were fabricated in Japan." In addition, Shuri stated "it had heard that Ryukyuan products such as raw sugar, Ryukyuan liquor (*awamori*), and turmeric (*ukon*) were delivered and sold in the Kyoto-Osaka area. If foreigners saw those products, Shuri asked the bakufu to order its retainers to answer that these goods were also originated from Japan." In addition, the royal government reiterated that "if information about the dispatch of Ryukyuan missions to Edo were to be revealed to the foreigners, it would have serious consequences for the kingdom. For this reason, it pleaded with the shogunate to instruct all the inhabitants of Edo to conceal this vital information from the Westerners." Furthermore, Shuri leaders asked the bakufu "ban all prints and picture scrolls

⁴⁵⁷ Ka'ei 6/9/29. *ROHM*, vol. 7, p. 320.

portraying the long parade and other features of the Ryukyuan embassies which, as they had heard, were being sold in the shogunal capital when a mission from Shuri arrived.”⁴⁵⁸

As we have seen, in the 1850s the royal government was facing several financial and political problems that hindered the smooth realization of the Ryukyuan embassies. As for financial problems, I pointed to the huge expenses incurred on occasion of great state ceremonies such as the realization of earlier *Edo dachi* (in 1832, 1842 and 1850) and the reception of a Chinese investiture mission (in 1838). In addition, Westerners began residing in Naha in 1844 and providing them with food and other goods was a grave burden, not to mention paying all the officials charged with their care and surveillance. As we have seen, the presence of the foreigners became a political problem on the occasion of the dispatch of Edo-bound Ryukyuan missions. These embassies from Ryukyu to Japan could have revealed to the foreigners the true nature of the relationship between Shuri and Edo/Kagoshima. However, despite this difficult situation, the royal government wanted to continue the *Edo dachi* as it considered them an important traditional ritual.

In the above, I pointed out that the royal government raised their concerns in missives addressed to Satsuma leaders. I also observed that Shuri suggested a possible solution for the problems it raised. Shuri leaders, in fact, asked Satsuma for permission to assign more than one duty to a number of envoys. They also pleaded with Kagoshima to strengthening control over foreigners residing on Satsuma territory. Finally, they asked the bakufu to ban the images representing the Ryukyuan envoys, as well as to instruct the entire population of Edo to keep the dispatch of Ryukyuan delegations

⁴⁵⁸ *ROHM*, vol. 8, p. 200.

hidden from the Westerners. Seen in this light, we may infer that the royal government played a key function when the 1856 and 1858 missions were being prepared. It actively raised a number of concerns for which they suggested a solution that was considered to be the most convenient for itself.

As we have seen, in 1855 and 1858 Shuri sent two Ryukyuan embassies to Kagoshima; however, before these missions left Satsuma for Edo, the bakufu ordered their postponement. Because it took Shuri on average almost two years to complete the preparations necessary for an Edo-bound embassy and because of the huge expense that went into realizing this big event, we may conclude that, at least until 1858, the royal government showed its commitment in ensuring that the Ryukyuan missions would follow traditional protocol.

As soon as the Ryukyuan envoys returned to Ryukyu in the autumn of 1858, the Ryukyuan envoys, now that it seemed they could not accomplish their mission due to unavoidable circumstances, asked the Shuri government to release them from their duties in the postponed Edo-bound mission so they could return to their offices within the royal government.⁴⁵⁹ This request confirms that when the bakufu ordered to postpone the 1858 mission it did not set a new date for the mission to be sent. Therefore, the Ryukyuan ambassadors assumed it would take a while before the royal government would receive such an order from the bakufu through the mediation of Satsuma. As a matter of fact, as we have seen, the embassy planned for 1855 had been deferred until 1858 to coincide with the next *sankin kōtai* duty of the Satsuma daimyo. The delegation expected for 1858, then, was suspended because of the deaths of the shogun and of the lord of Kagoshima. It was, therefore, necessary to appoint a new shogun and nominate a

⁴⁵⁹ *Naha-shi shi, shiryō hen*, daiichi kan nana, Kafu shiryō 3, 1982, p. 344.

new Satsuma daimyo before the dispatch of a new Ryukyuan mission to Edo could be discussed which is why it was expected to take some time.

The request of the royal government to Kagoshima and Edo to keep the subordination of Ryukyu to Japan secret to Westerners could have been conceived only in a context in which the foreigners were residing temporarily in Japanese territories. However, because of the first article in the Ansei Treaties, a Western diplomatic legation began to permanently reside in Edo from 1859. From that moment on, therefore, the Ryukyuan envoys could have been seen by Edo-based Western diplomats. Considering all the efforts that the royal government put into hiding the dispatch of Ryukyuan missions to Edo from Westerners, we might consider 1859 as a watershed in Shuri view of the *Edo dachi*, and most likely from then on it would have preferred to avoid needing to send them.

As we have seen, almost every Ryukyuan embassy to Edo was postponed from the 1830s; only the mission planned for 1850 was dispatched without any delay. The Japanese expressions “*enki* 延期,” i.e. postponement/deferment, and *kokujitatan* can be taken as important keywords in these events. Earlier research has shed light on the possibility that the real motivation behind the postponement of the 1830 mission was the severe financial crisis afflicting Kagoshima at that time. Satsuma, however, came up with an *ad hoc* motivation (i.e. “the loss of tribute in the ocean”) that would not arouse suspicion and that would be accepted by the bakufu. Against the background of the mission projected for 1840, I have demonstrated that in 1838 the Nishinomaru burnt down. Therefore, this might be considered as a reasonable motivation for the bakufu to decide to defer the embassy. In 1855 Satsuma asked the shogunate to postpone the

embassy projected for 1856 because of the considerable damage the Ansei Edo Earthquake had caused to the *Shiba yashiki*. As for the suspension of the mission planned for 1858, on the one hand, Satsuma officials pleaded with Edo to defer the embassy because of the death of their lord Nariakira; the bakufu, on the other hand, was facing with several domestic and international problems, namely the death of shogun Iesada, the tension between Ii Naosuke and Shimazu Nariakira, the spreading of cholera and the arrival of foreign vessels in Edo Bay. The shogunate postponed the embassy citing “multiple and complex state affairs.”

Not taking into account serious calamities such as the fire that broke out in the Nishinomaru in 1838 or the strong earthquake that hit Edo in 1855, we can observe that Satsuma tried to come up with false pretenses to mask its real reasons for wishing a deferment, while the bakufu purposely used the ambiguous expression *kokujitatan* in order to defend its ideological/symbolical sphere. As is known, Ryukyuan embassies were traditional diplomatic rituals whose most important purpose was that of enhancing the Tokugawa shogun’s prestige and authority. That is why Satsuma, at an official or *omote* level, could not give priority to its internal financial or political problems while at the same time the shogunate decided to conceal its real motivations for a postponement when those reasons concerned grave political matters. The bakufu claimed its military authority as *kōgi* 公儀, that is, as shogunate government.⁴⁶⁰ In this assertion the bakufu, like all politically organized regimes, needed to maintain a distinction between all that was considered as private, and that which was regarded as the surface pretense or the façade. Referring to Roberts’ *Performing the Great Peace*, we might argue that in the *omote* sphere the bakufu, in his hierarchically superior status upon daimyo, had also the

⁴⁶⁰ For a superbly concise and clear analysis of *bakuhan* governance see Watanabe, *A History of Japanese Political Thought*, pp. 51-52.

right to give orders without necessarily explaining the underlying causes.⁴⁶¹ As we have seen, the term *enki* was one of the expressions that during the *bakumatsu* came to appear very often in documents that testify to the suspension of the Ryukyuan missions. Having a general connotation, however, *enki* was not limited to postponements of political affairs. It was used also for deferments related to natural and other calamities. *Kokujitatan*, instead, was the perfect expression to preserve this distinction.

⁴⁶¹ Roberts, *Performing the Great Peace*.

Overview of the main events in Kagoshima and Edo between 7 July and 24 October 1858

Kagoshima	Edo
7 July: Prince Ie, the ambassador, arrived in Kagoshima.	29 July: Edo authorities signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with the United States.
	14 August: Tokugawa Iesada died.
	16 August: The senior Councilors ordered bakufu officials to not publicly reveal the news about the shogun's death. 18 August: The bakufu signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with Holland.
	19 August: <i>Rōjū</i> Naitō Kii-no-kami ordered Shimazu Nariakira to postpone the Ryukyuan mission because of "multiple and complex state affairs." 19 August: The shogunate signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with Russia.
24 August: Shimazu Nariakira suddenly passed away.	
28 August: Niuro Hisanori informed Nagae Yasu-no-jō of ongoing consultations with Edo about the deferment of the Ryukyuan mission due to Nariakira's death (Hisanori's dairy).	
2 September: Satsuma referring to negotiations with the bakufu alluded to the postponement of the mission because of Nariakira's death in correspondence with Shuri. (Hisanori's dairy): A messenger who had left Edo on 17 August transmitted the news of Iesada's passing.	
7 September: A messenger who had left Edo on 22 August transmitted the order to postpone the Ryukyuan embassy because of multiple matters concerning the shogunate. According to Niuro the above referred to the shogun's death (Hisanori's dairy).	
8 September: Satsuma officially communicated to Ryukyu that the bakufu had ordered the Ryukyuan mission's postponement because of "multiple and complex state affairs."	
	14 September: The shogunate publicly announced the demise of Iesada. 28 September: The bakufu issued its first edict about preventing and curing cholera.
24 October: The Ryukyuan envoys left Kagoshima.	

Chapter 5

The postponement of the 1862 Ryukyuan mission to Edo

In this chapter I will explore the postponement of the last Ryukyuan congratulatory mission, which was to be dispatched in 1862 to honor Iemochi and which was discussed by the bakufu in June 1860.

Miyagi Eishō argues that due to the political struggles and upheaval that characterized the *bakumatsu* period, the bakufu and the Satsuma domain were not only unable to afford the luxury of receiving an embassy from the small kingdom of Ryukyu, but that Shuri was also struggling with several domestic problems, and, therefore, it was unable to successfully prepare for the dispatch of a mission.⁴⁶²

Kamiya Nobuyuki states that Shimazu Hisamitsu, in pursuit of the union of the court and the shogunate (a movement known as *kōbugattai* 公武合体) in 1862 (Bunkyū 2), after having received the imperial decree in Kyoto, left for Edo with the purpose of launching a program to politically reform the bakufu. Due to his fear that the most extremist Satsuma samurai might attempt to attack shogunal leaders or other political opponents on the occasion of the dispatch of the congratulatory mission for Iemochi, he solicited the bakufu to defer the mission to prevent the possibility of infiltration of the Ryukyuan envoys by those associated with the *sonnō-jōi* 尊王攘夷 movement.⁴⁶³

According to Nishizato Kikō, in the 1850s and '60s, the missions to Edo became both risky and financially burdensome for the Ryukyu government; Shuri was therefore reluctant to dispatch them. On the other hand, during the same period the royal

⁴⁶² Miyagi, *Ryūkyū shisha*, p. 19.

⁴⁶³ Kamiya, "Ryūkyū shisetsu no saigo ni kansuru kōsatsu;" Kamiya, "Ryūkyū shisetsu no kaitai."

government showed a strong will to continue sending tributary embassies to China.⁴⁶⁴ Although I agree with the aforementioned interpretations, I will try to demonstrate that it is also necessary to take into consideration other factors that seem to have helped bring about the termination of the missions to Edo. According to this earlier research, the postponement of the embassies planned for 1862, which was decided in June 1860, marked the *de facto* end of the Ryukyuan delegations to Japan. In fact, these studies postulated that after the deferment there was no intention to send another Edo-bound Ryukyuan embassy. However, because this was technically a postponement rather than a termination, an investigation of the events taking place between Satsuma, Edo, and Shuri during the months immediately after the deferment seems necessary in order to determine whether or not additional Edo missions were planned after 1860, and, if not, to clarify why no missions were planned.

Yokoyama Manabu and Tamai Tatsuya considered the embassy that reached Tokyo in 1872 the last Ryukyuan mission to Japan; however, before exploring this Tokyo-bound delegation, it is important to shed light on the historical evolution of the missions during the last phase of the Tokugawa regime. Only after having done so, will we be able to clarify why the Tokyo-bound mission of 1872 could be also considered an extension of the Edo-bound Ryukyuan delegations.

Therefore, this study aims to fill in a gap in our knowledge of the various motivations behind the termination of Ryukyuan missions during the last phase of the Tokugawa bakufu. In this chapter I will focus the analysis on the period between the summer of 1860 and the spring of 1862.

⁴⁶⁴ Nishizato, “ShōTai sakuhō mondai to sono shūhen,” pp. 50-51.

5.1. June 1860: Postponement of the Ryukyuan mission planned for 1862

Before analyzing the motives behind the 1860 postponement, it is necessary to remind ourselves of the larger historical context outlined in chapter three, i.e. the opening of Japan in 1858. One of the main goals of this research, in fact, is to comprehend to what extent the opening of Japan determined or influenced the postponement as well as the demise of the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo.

Taking the larger picture into consideration, the result of the imperialistic policy of the Western powers in the East Asia context will be a transition, albeit gradually, from a tributary system to a system governed by Western-dictated treaties with East Asian countries.⁴⁶⁵ During the *bakumatsu* and early Meiji period, therefore, we are confronted with a situation characterized by the coexistence of the two systems. Within this new international scenario, the presence of the Westerners forced Shuri and Edo to keep the nature of the real connections between the kingdom and Japan hidden. As a consequence, they made an effort to create a situation in which the content/truth, i.e. Ryukyu as subordinate to Japan, would be camouflaged by the form/mask, i.e. Ryukyu as an autonomous kingdom. As we have seen, the royal government fully concealed from the Western powers the relations with Japan under the veil of a purely commercial relationship with the Tokara Islands, as it had been doing since the beginning of the eighteenth century with the Qing. On the other hand, the bakufu defined in 1792 (Laxman), in 1805 (Rezanov) and in 1844 (William II) the connections that it maintained with Ryukyu as diplomatic relationships or *tsūshin*. In 1854, the shogunate officials confirmed to Perry that Naha was far from Edo and that the shogun had limited

⁴⁶⁵ Hamashita, *Chōkō shisutemu to kindai Ajia*, p. 142.

authority over the kingdom.

It is well known that on 29 July 1858,⁴⁶⁶ the *tairō*, Ii Naosuke ordered the bakufu officials to sign the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Japan and the United States despite the fact that he did not have imperial authorization to do so. As was already mentioned, Japan was not only commercially opened to the Western powers, but because Western diplomatic agents or consuls, i.e. the foreign minister plenipotentiaries, were granted the right to reside in Edo, Japan through these treaties became part of the great family of modern societies in which international relationships were grounded in Western international law.

In the summer of 1859, the General Consul of the Great Britain, Sir Rutherford Alcock, the General Consul of the United States, Townsend Harris, and the General Consul of France, Gustave Duchesne de Bellecourt, arrived in the shogunal capital. From 1859 onward, therefore, Edo saw foreign legations taking up residence in some of the city's most important temples. These developments profoundly changed the image of the shogunal capital and marked the beginning of a new era characterized by the permanent presence of foreign diplomats and officials in Japan. This was the situation in Japan when in 1860 the Ryukyuan mission planned for 1862 was postponed.

First of all, let us provide a chronological overview of the events taking place between the beginning of 1859 and the spring of 1860. On 4 January 1859,⁴⁶⁷ Tokugawa Iemochi became the new shogun. According to the traditional view, as soon as the new shogun was nominated Satsuma asked the bakufu for permission to dispatch the Ryukyuan embassy of congratulation. However, no accounts remain that identify precisely when the decision was made to get the mission in honor of Iemochi

⁴⁶⁶ Ansei 5/6/19.

⁴⁶⁷ Ansei 5/12/1.

underway.⁴⁶⁸

In accordance with Shimazu Nariakira's will, the nineteen-year-old Shimazu Tadayoshi, the eldest son of Nariakira's younger brother Hisamitsu, was made the new daimyo of Satsuma. On 31 January 1859,⁴⁶⁹ Tadayoshi was officially appointed the new Satsuma daimyo in Edo Castle. On 11 March,⁴⁷⁰ the new daimyo was granted an audience with shogun Iemochi and on that occasion he was granted permission to change his name to Mochihisa.⁴⁷¹

On 4 April 1860,⁴⁷² Tadayoshi left Kagoshima for Edo to fulfill his duties related to the system of alternate attendance or *sankin kōtai*, a system with a high symbolic value through which the various daimyo showed their allegiance to the shogun. The daimyo were required to build two or three splendid residences in Edo and spend every other year in their palaces in the shogunal capital. When the feudal lords returned to their fiefs, they had to leave part of their entourage in Edo.⁴⁷³

Nonetheless, on 13 April,⁴⁷⁴ near the city of Matsuzaki in Chikugo province

⁴⁶⁸ In *Yamato he goshisha ki* 大和江御使者記 it is reported that the Ryukyuan prince Kunigami Seishū 国頭王子正秀 on 14 July (lunar, 15th day of the 6th Month) 1859 arrived in Kagoshima to pay his kingdom's homage to Shimazu Tadayoshi, who had become the new Satsuma daimyo on 31 January (lunar, 28th day of the 12th Month). It seems that on that occasion the messenger of Shuri also expressed his congratulations for Tokugawa Iemochi's appointment to shogun. In an entry of August 25 (l., 27th day of the 7th Month) 1859, in the diary of Niuro Hisanori (*Niuro Hisanori zatsufu*, vol. 2, 1987) a notification drawn by Kunigami and three other Ryukyuan officials and addressed to the Shimazu is reported. The dispatch of the next *Edo dachi* is alluded to in this notification. It seems, thus, that the schedule for the new Ryukyuan mission was decided when Kunigami was residing in Kagoshima. In light of this, Kamiya Nobuyuki assumes that the Ryukyuan mission was planned between July and August 1859. Kamiya, "Ryūkyū shisetsu no saigo ni kansuru kōsatsu," p. 285.

⁴⁶⁹ Ansei 5/12/28.

⁴⁷⁰ Ansei 6/2/7.

⁴⁷¹ Sasaki, *Bakumatsu seiji to Satsuma han*, pp. 12-17. On 9 February 1868 (Keiō 4/1/16), Mochihisa changed his name in Tadayoshi. In this dissertation we will always refer to him with the name Tadayoshi.

⁴⁷² Man'en 1/3/13.

⁴⁷³ For scholarship on the *sankin kōtai* system, see Constantine Nomikos Vaporis, *Tour of Duty: Samurai, Military Service in Edo, and the Culture of Early Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008); and, Maruyama Yasunari, *Sankin kōtai* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2007).

⁴⁷⁴ Man'en 1/3/23.

(present Fukuoka prefecture), the lord of Satsuma heard about the assassination of *tairō* Ii Naosuke—an episode known as *Sakuradamon gai no hen*. He immediately suspended his mission to Edo and returned to Kagoshima ostensibly because he was ill. On 21 June, Tadayoshi sent a petition to the bakufu in which he indirectly asked the Edo leaders to postpone the Ryukyuan mission planned for 1862:

With regard to the change [of the head of the shogunate], in connection with the accompaniment [to Edo] of the Ryukyuan [envoys] planned for the next Dog Year and undertaken for the purpose of celebrating [the happy event], in accordance with the request we [previously] submitted, we [i.e., the Shimazu] were ordered to [accompany the Ryukyuan envoys to Edo]. However, because these days we are in a situation in which many foreigners are within the [borders of the] bakufu's capital we inform you that we are very worried that the truth [about the relationship between Ryukyu and Japan] might be revealed to China. However, since on this occasion it is an embassy of celebration [namely of congratulation], it turns out that it will be very problematic to ask you [to allow us] to postpone [the mission]. [Therefore, if it is possible we would like] to ask you to think about the best course of action.

Matsudaira *Shūri daibu uchi* 修理大夫内 [Shimazu Tadayoshi]

3rd day of the 5th Month [Solar, 21 June 1860]

Nishi Chikueemon

Memorandum:

With regard to the change [of the head of the shogunate], in connection with the accompaniment [to Edo] of the Ryukyuan [envoys], we state our personal intention. If for unavoidable reasons [the true nature of the relationship between the Ryukyus and Japan] is

revealed to China, we shall see to it that the kingdom of Ryukyu [would communicate] with China in short order in order to find a compromise, so that [we can accompany the Ryukyuan envoys] to Edo publicly without creating any inconvenience. We will inform you of the situation in due course.⁴⁷⁵

The phrase “next Dog Year” refers to 1862 (Bunkyū 2), the year in which the Edo-bound Ryukyuan mission in honor of Iemochi was to be dispatched. From the bakufu’s perspective, the signing of the treaties of amity and commerce—in other words, the opening of Japan to the West—did not mean the immediate termination of its traditional ceremonies, such as the welcoming of the Ryukyuan embassies. However, as a result of the Ansei Treaties (Article 1 in particular) the Western diplomats had come to Japan and were residing in Edo from 1859; therefore, the contradictions implicit in the real relations between Japan and Ryukyu (content/truth=Ryukyu’s subordination to Japan, form/mask=Ryukyu appears an autonomous kingdom) were complicated even further. Nevertheless, because this mission was a congratulatory one to celebrate the new shogun, Tadayoshi felt he could not ask Edo directly to defer the embassy. He therefore limited himself to pointing out the question and asking the bakufu to carefully consider the appropriate steps to take.

In the attached memorandum, the Shimazu argued that if rumors about the true nature of the relationship between the Ryukyus and Japan leaked to China, Satsuma would exercise its influence over Shuri so that Ryukyu would agree to a compromise with Qing China with the aim of creating a suitable network of international relations in

⁴⁷⁵ Man’en 1/5/3, 21 June 1860. *Tadayoshikō shiryō* (hereafter *Tadayoshikō shiryō*), vol. 1, n. 184.

which the Shimazu daimyo could publicly escort the Ryukyuan envoys to Edo.⁴⁷⁶

On 24 June, three days after Tadayoshi's petition was handed to Edo, *rōjū* Kuze Hirochika transmitted the official order addressed to the lord of Satsuma that stipulated the postponement of the Ryukyuan mission, giving as reasons "multiple and complex state affairs:"

With regard to the change [of the head of the shogunate], in relation to the visit to Edo of the Ryukyuan [envoys] planned for the next Dog Year [1862], since we are facing a situation of multiple and complex state affairs, [we issue the order] to postpone the embassy. At a later time we will transmit a [new] schedule for the visit to Edo [of the Ryukyuan mission] to you.⁴⁷⁷

From the above it is clear that once again the Edo leaders used the unclear expression "*kokujitatan*" to explain the reasons for suspending the Ryukyuan mission. Subsequently, Satsuma transmitted the following to Shuri:

The postponement of the visit of the Ryukyuan envoys to Edo is due to the multiple and complex circumstances [that afflict] Japan at the present time; also, the bakufu is not in a [suitable] condition to welcome the envoys celebrating the congratulations [for the new shogun]. As for our domain, with regard to the news about the incident concerning the Ii family, this spring, [Tadayoshi], who was on his way [to Edo for the *sankin kōtai*] from the station of Matsuzaki near Chikugo, [interrupted his mission] and returned [to Satsuma] attributing this to his ill health. Because the return [to Kagoshima] and the like was an emergency, he appealed [to

⁴⁷⁶ According to Kamiya, Satsuma officials transmitted this memorandum in writing or through a verbal note, when they requested the bakufu authorization to dispatch the Ryukyuan mission for celebrating the appointment of Iemochi as new shogun. Kamiya, "Ryūkyū shisetsu no kaitai," p. 17.

⁴⁷⁷ Man'en 1/5/6. *Tadayoshikō shiryō*, vol. 1, n. 184.

the bakufu] to postpone the visit of the congratulatory mission [sent] by the *Chūzan ō* 中山王 [the king of Ryukyu] to Edo. Comply with [the content] of this notification.⁴⁷⁸

This document informs us that Satsuma told Shuri that the congratulatory mission was deferred because Japan was facing a difficult situation, namely, the crisis resulting from the assassination of Ii Naosuke. In fact, the bakufu was not in a position to receive the Ryukyuan envoys, and the lord of Satsuma, after having heard about the attack on the *tairō*, pleaded illness and returned to Kagoshima; his sudden return was perceived as an emergency.

However, as we have seen previously, when Tadayoshi pleaded with the bakufu to think hard about the dispatch of the Ryukyuan mission planned for 1862, he raised the issue of Westerner legations in the shogunal capital. It is believed, however, that this served as a pretext for obtaining bakufu permission to postpone the embassy. In fact, in the missive sent by Satsuma officials to Shuri in connection with the deferment of the mission there is no reference to the presence of the Western diplomats in Edo.⁴⁷⁹

Furthermore, it is difficult to imagine that Shuri would have complied with pressure from Satsuma to reach a compromise with the Qing court, as was proposed in the above-mentioned memorandum of the Shimazu, in order to guarantee the continuation of public dispatches of Ryukyuan missions to Edo. In truth, for the royal government, the masking of the relations between the small archipelago and Japan was a policy that could not be renounced without disturbing the tributary relations with

⁴⁷⁸ *Tadayoshikō shiryō*, vol. 1, n. 207.

⁴⁷⁹ During the *Gaikantōrai jiken* (1844-46), because the problem of the missions to Edo possibly unveiling the true relations between the Ryukyus and Japan arose, Shimazu Nariakira stated to senior Councilor Abe Masahiro, after the latter had brought up the matter, that the best policy to adopt was that of publicly revealing the subordination of Ryukyu to Japan to foreign countries. However, the discussion between Nariakira and Masahiro with regard to the plan reached a deadlock and nothing came of it. Kamiya, “Ryūkyū shisetsu no kaitai,” pp. 20-21.

China. Therefore, Shuri would never have voluntarily revealed its subordinate status to Japan to the Chinese.

Despite the fact that the presence of foreign legations in Edo would have in fact potentially compromised the policy of masking the subordinate status of Ryukyu vis-à-vis Japan, we must look at contemporaneous political movements and turmoil in Kagoshima to better understand the situation. According to Sasaki Suguro, at that time there was a group of low-ranking samurai, the *seichūgumi* 誠忠組 or “Loyal Party,” who were led by Ōkubo Toshimichi and Saigo Takamori. From 1859, the members of this faction were plotting to leave their fiefs to become master-less samurai and eventually attack *tairō* Ii Naosuke.⁴⁸⁰ In particular, Ōkubo and his followers aimed at completing the plan that their earlier daimyo Nariakira had developed during his last days. As we have seen in chapter four, Nariakira intended to reach Kyoto with his army, defend the imperial palace and after having received an imperial decree, move to Edo to bring political reform to the shogunate.⁴⁸¹ As a countermeasure against the threatening activities by these lesser samurai, daimyo Tadayoshi, on 28 November 1859, officially stated in a personal letter addressed to all the samurai of his domain that if there was a (national political) incident (*jihen* 事変), he would first of all devote himself to follow the will of Junseiin (Nariakira), he would then mobilize the Satsuma troops to defend the Kyoto court and be faithful to the *tennō*.⁴⁸² In other words, Tadayoshi proclaimed as “Satsuma policy” the continuation of Nariakira’s plans and allegiance to the court of Kyoto with an eye on securing the collaboration of the *seichūgumi*.

However, as is clear from the document below, Tadayoshi, Hisamitsu and other

⁴⁸⁰ Sasaki, *Bakumatsu seiji to Satsuma han*, p. 26.

⁴⁸¹ *Nariakirakō shiryō*, vol. 3, n. 248.

⁴⁸² Ansei 6/11/5. *Tadayoshikō shiryō*, vol. 1, p.85.

important figures of Satsuma accorded a very different meaning to “political incident (*jihen*)”, than Ōkubo, Saigo and their low-ranking followers:

In effect, there can be no doubt that what we have heard with regard to the events that recently took place in the Kantō area had to do with an incident (*henji* 変事 = *jihen*). However, [these events] have not yet been made public; we have learned about them through the words of Sakaguchi Yūemon 坂口勇右衛門. Furthermore, with regard to [the role played in the incident] by the [group of just] seventeen [samurai coming from the] fief of Mito, the written notes report that they are *rōnin* [who made a clear break with] the domain of Mito, so we can cautiously expect that they disappear without a trace. In effect, it has to do with a [political] incident (*henji*), but since we cannot confirm that it is a war (*heiran* 兵乱) [that it is disrupting the country], to send our troops carelessly without thinking about future developments would be an improper [act] in relation to future matters; [and in any case a move like that would certainly need a carefully considered] plan. The army is an important [element] for the [Satsuma] domain. It is very important that every liege makes every effort to simultaneously weigh facts and the immediate repercussions on the fief.⁴⁸³

This document is extracted from a larger entry in the diary of Ōkubo Toshimichi that concerns a meeting between Hisamitsu and Ōkubo. The news about the assassination of Ii Naosuke reached Kagoshima on 13 April⁴⁸⁴ and the following day Ōkubo attempted to set up a military expedition with the purpose of achieving his political objectives in the name of his earlier daimyo, while Hisamitsu suppressed such actions. Thus, we may observe that within the Satsuma domain there were two main currents of thought with

⁴⁸³ *Ōkubo Toshimichi nikki* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1969), pp. 73-74.

⁴⁸⁴ Man'en 1/3/23.

regard to the policy to adopt: one moderate, represented by the highest authorities of the Shimazu (Hisamitsu and Tadayoshi), which wanted to act with extreme caution; the other more radical and represented by low-ranking samurai (*seichūgumi*) who wished to take action immediately by mobilizing the troops of the fief in order to defend the emperor and attack the corrupt officials of the shogunate.

It was in connection with these events that, on 13 April, in nearby Chikugo, Tadayoshi received the news of the assassination of the *tairō*, aborted his mission of *sankin kōtai* and returned to Kagoshima. Then, on 21 June he sent a petition to the bakufu in which he indirectly asked for the 1862 Ryukyuan embassy to be postponed, raising the issue of the presence of foreigners in Edo. It is, therefore, necessary to correlate the social turmoil and political debate in Kagoshima following the assassination of Ii Naosuke, with the decision of Tadayoshi to ask the bakufu to postpone the mission from Shuri. Kamiya, in fact, places the termination of the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo in 1860, when Satsuma leaders, after the murder of the *tairō*, began to fear that the realization of the missions could offer the extremists within their domain an excellent occasion to infiltrate the parade of Ryukyuan envoys and to reach crucial areas of the country to carry out terrorist acts under the aegis of the *sonnō-jōi* movement.

5.2. Considerations with regard to the postponement of 1860

Although I agree with the hypotheses formulated in earlier studies, it is, however, necessary to try to reconstruct the postponement of 1860 within a larger context. Kamiya is certainly right when he argues that from March 1860 the dispatch of a

Ryukyuan embassy became a potential cover under which the most radical samurai of Satsuma could secretly reach important strategic areas of the country. However, in his reconstruction he took into consideration only the fact that after the assassination of Ii Naosuke the Satsuma leaders (Hisamitsu and Tadayoshi) came to conceive only the Ryukyuan envoys' parade as cover for Kagoshima's extremist factions. However, as I will try to demonstrate, there was another, equally important parade that caused Satsuma leaders concern. In addition, according to Kamiya, no other Ryukyuan embassies were planned after 1860. However, even if the Ryukyuan mission was postponed for the last time in March 1860, it is necessary to explore in detail what happened afterwards in order to find out whether or not conditions under which another embassy could be planned existed. We should thus try to integrate the interpretations of earlier research with additional important elements that may serve to further clarify what brought about the termination of the Edo-bound Ryukyuan delegations. For this purpose, the incident known as *Sakuradamon gai no hen* will be interpreted within a broader temporal context, with a focus on the political maneuvering of Satsuma in order to deal with the resulting crisis.

We may surmise that the assassination of Ii Naosuke put Satsuma leaders in a very difficult political situation that was unprecedented. Kagoshima leaders needed to proceed carefully and implement both short- and long-term policies. On the one hand, as we have seen, soon after the murder of the *tairō*, Tadayoshi, who was in nearby Matsuzaki, instantly decided to return home, while in Kagoshima, almost at the same time, Hisamitsu rejected the military plans proposed by Ōkubo. On the other hand, we may surmise that after the assassination of the *tairō*, since word was already out that a samurai of Satsuma by the name of Arimura Jizaemon 有村次左衛門 had taken part in

the attack, Satsuma authorities became concerned about 1) possible retaliations from the Hikone domain (the domain of Ii Naosuke), 2) inquisition by the bakufu with regard to the role of the Shimazu in the murder of Ii, and, 3) the activities and movements of the most subversive factions within their own domain. In other words, Hisamitsu rejected the military plans of Ōkubo but he did not put an end to the activities of the *seichūgumi*. We may suppose that in order to deal with these three concerns, it was necessary to try to make sure the Satsuma daimyo and his long escort of samurai and lieges could avoid going on a mission to Edo, given that it was exactly this visit to the shogunal capital that more than everything else risked the realization of the above-mentioned issues. To this end, from that moment on it became necessary to adopt a policy that prevented Tadayoshi from going to Edo.

After officially being nominated daimyo in Edo, the lord of Satsuma could travel to the shogunal capital on two occasions only: 1) for his service of *sankin kōtai*, and 2) accompanying a Ryukyuan embassy. I will now formulate some considerations about the latter occasion.

Given that the embassy planned for 1862 could lead to the realization of the above-mentioned concerns, on 21 June 1860 the Shimazu, in order to prevent their daimyo from going to Edo, indirectly asked the bakufu to postpone that mission. However, instead of stating their real motives, the Satsuma leaders offered reasons that would have likely been understood by the bakufu. That is to say, the fear that Western would send reports of the the Ryukyuan mission to China and that this could expose to the Chinese the true nature of the relationship between Ryukyu and Japan.

At this point we should clarify why the bakufu decided to postpone the mission, giving as a reason “multiple and complex state affairs.” Unsurprisingly, the murder of

the most politically influential person of the time represented a political crisis within the realm for the bakufu. For example, some contemporaneous documents describe the *Sakuradamon gai no hen* as throwing the bakufu and country at large into confusion.⁴⁸⁵ Therefore, we may surmise that in 1860, when the assassination of Ii Naosuke caused a national political crisis, as well as a state of tension between the fiefs of Satsuma and Hikone that would take some time to be resolved, the bakufu decided to give into Satsuma's request and ordered to postpone the embassy. For these reasons, we may surmise that the "multiple and complex state affairs" to which the bakufu appealed in June should be ascribed to the national crisis that arose after the *Sakuradamon gai no hen* incident. From a chronological point of view, too, there can be no doubt that the postponement order issued by the bakufu on 24 June was directly connected to the petition of Tadayoshi which was handed to the shogunate only three days earlier, that is on 21 June. The shogunate, therefore, may have understood that the issue of the presence of the foreigners within Edo was a pretext, but accepted this excuse for the benefit of the country.

In light of what we have said before, it is possible to hypothesize that the leaders of Satsuma, after having asked and obtained from the bakufu permission to defer the dispatch of the Ryukyuan mission in June 1860, succeeded in this way in finding a temporary expedient to prevent their lord from visiting the shogunal capital. However, how much time did they actually succeed in buying themselves? Likely until the next mission of *sankin kōtai* was scheduled. Let us now focus our attention on the "alternate attendance" of Tadayoshi (occasion 1 on the previous page).

From April 1860, after the murder of Ii Naosuke, Satsuma repeatedly requested

⁴⁸⁵ Takahashi, *Korera ga yatte kita!* p.31.

the bakufu to defer Tadayoshi's alternate residence. Here we must consider the *sankin kōtai* service by the Satsuma daimyo from a wider perspective. From 1644, the traditional protocol related to the scheduling of the Ryukyuan missions to Edo dictated that they had to be planned on the occasion of the next alternate residence at Edo of the lord of Satsuma. The bureaucratic procedure, in fact, set that as soon as a new shogun was nominated or a new Ryukyuan king was enthroned, Satsuma would ask the bakufu for authorization to send a Ryukyuan embassy of congratulation or gratitude. Soon after, the Satsuma daimyo would schedule his next *sankin kōtai* to Edo and then, the Shimazu would order Shuri to dispatch an embassy that would coincide with the departure of the lord of Satsuma from Kagoshima. After having left Naha harbor, the embassies from Shuri, in fact, spent a number of months at the *Ryūkyūkan* in Kagoshima before leaving for Edo accompanied by the Satsuma lord's *sankin kōtai* parade. In other words, the *sankin kōtai* of the Shimazu represented an essential condition for the planning and realization of the Ryukyuan missions. It is therefore also believed that during the *bakumatsu* it was considered the *conditio sine qua non* for the realization of delegations from Shuri.

On 24 June 1860, when the bakufu ordered the Shimazu to postpone the Ryukyuan embassy, it also specified that “at a later time we will transmit a [new] schedule for the visit to Edo [of the Ryukyuan mission] to you.”⁴⁸⁶ We may, thus, infer that Edo leaders did not have any intention to put to an end to the dispatch of the embassies from Shuri. In other words, the order of the shogunate concerned a postponement *sine die*, not a definitive abolition. To understand the real motivations for the termination of these diplomatic rituals it is necessary to examine the events that took

⁴⁸⁶ Man'en 1/5/6. *Tadayoshikō shiryō*, vol. 1, n. 184.

place between Kagoshima, Edo and Shuri after 1860. In order to achieve this, I will look at the way in which the schedule set for the accomplishment of the *sankin kōtai* of the Satsuma daimyo, in line with the traditional protocol, should coincide with the agenda of the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo.

As was mentioned before, soon after the murder of Ii Naosuke, it was a priority for Satsuma leaders to prevent their lord from having to go to Edo. In this regard, let us look at a document related to the request for the deferment of the *sankin kōtai* of Tadayoshi issued by Kagoshima officials in September 1860.

Even though the prince is diligently taking medicine [in order to recover] from his illness, he is not in a good condition and he cannot make a long journey yet; for these reasons, he is taking baths in the hot springs on our domain [as well as] having walks and the like. [Considering the fact] that he would like to be under careful medical treatment, on the 13th of last month [7th Month, Solar, 29 August 1860] we delivered to the attending [senior Councilor] Andō Tsushima-no-kami (Nobumasa, Iwakitaira *han*) a request [in which we asked] for the deferment of the *sankin kōtai* for the next three months. [Through this letter] I communicate to you that we are ordered [by the bakufu to go ahead exactly] as we had requested. Transmit this message publicly so that everybody is aware of it.

8th Month [solar, September]

Saemon Shimazu Hisanaru

In the 3rd Month of the current year, on his way to [Edo] for the *sankin kōtai*, near the station of Matsuzaki, [Tadayoshi heard] the urgent message about the assassination suffered by the Ii family, or [perhaps he received] the news [concerning the developments directly] from Arimura

Yūsuke. [Our prince] stayed for one day at that station, [then] he sent to the north-east [Kantō] his retainer, the *kokurō* Kawagami *shikibu* [Kumi], and, publicly announcing the appearance of initial symptoms of a disease, he turned back and returned home [to Kagoshima]. Since then [the course] of the disease has continued. [Thus it was necessary] to [submit] a petition [to the bakufu for obtaining] the deferment of the *sankin kōtai* several times. In the meanwhile, within our domain a temporary new [residence] was built near the hot spring resort of Kirishima in Yamanouchi Enoo, where [our prince] has taken baths over the course of several months. In the meantime, while we were [carefully] observing the situation throughout the whole country and sending our investigators to all [strategic] points [of Japan] and watching [closely] the movements of the Ii family, the situation became extremely tense, and we did not fail to report our plans secretly to the court [of Kyoto]. Consequently, in the public domain (表面ニハ) we asked for temporary postponement of the *sankin kōtai*; with regard to the truth about our waiting for a favorable opportunity and our making every effort in relation to what it was best to do, see the precise accounts of the 2nd Year of the Bunkiyū era.⁴⁸⁷

A clear distinction between the first and the second part of the text can be made. In the first part we see that in August 1860 Satsuma officials requested the bakufu to exempt Tadayoshi from his obligation of alternate residence at Edo for a period of three months, and in September, Shimazu Hisanaru communicated to Kagoshima that the shogunate had accepted their request. The second part, apparently drawn immediately afterwards, represents instead a testimony from the perspective of the Kagoshima officials with regard to the political situation of their fief after the murder of Ii Naosuke in April 1860. First of all, we may infer that the first symptoms of Tadayoshi's disease appeared as

⁴⁸⁷ Man'en 1/8/x. *Tadayoshikō shiryō*, vol. 1, n. 209.

soon as he heard the news about the assassination of the *tairō*. There is thus little ground for believing that the illness of the lord of Satsuma was anything other than a pretext to avoid having to continue to Edo. This hypothesis is confirmed by the notes in a private diary kept by one of the officials of Shuri, in which it is reported that “as soon as Tadayoshi heard about the assassination of Ii Naosuke, carried out by 15 or 16 men of Mito and one samurai of Satsuma, he interrupted his mission to Edo and returned to Kagoshima.”⁴⁸⁸ In this entry, there is no reference to the fact that the suspension of Tadayoshi’s journey to the shogunal capital was due to illness. This is an extremely valuable piece of evidence transmitted through informal channels, in this case likely between the *Ryūkyūkan* in Kagoshima and Shuri castle. As we noted in other chapters of this dissertation, such informal channels often reveal information that had been deliberately veiled, distorted or made ambiguous in official announcements.

Returning to our interpretation of the document above, with the continuation of the illness as a pretext, the Kagoshima authorities made many subsequent requests to have Tadayoshi temporarily exempted from his obligation to go to Edo. While the daimyo was officially receiving medical treatment, Satsuma closely followed the development of Japanese internal policy, as well as the moves of the Ii family, and sent its men throughout the country in order to gather new information. During this time, Kagoshima leaders, while waiting for an occasion to carry out their plans, *hyōmen niwa* 表面ニハ, i.e. in the public domain, repeatedly requested the postponement of the *sankin kōtai* of Tadayoshi. In addition, it is also possible to understand that Satsuma leaders had a close relationship with the court of Kyoto.

We can, therefore, see that Satsuma authorities felt a deep sense of unease

⁴⁸⁸ *Naha-shi shi, shiryō hen*, daiichi kan kyū, kinsei Naha Kankei Shiryō Komjohen, 1998, pp. 99-100.

towards the potential reprisals from the Ii family and also had a profound interest in the evolution of Japanese domestic policy after the murder of the *tairō*. Satsuma officials adopted a policy of requesting exemption from alternate-residence obligations for Tadayoshi as a means of buying time in order to plan the next move. The Shimazu, therefore, saw their request for the postponement of the *sankin kōtai* of their lord as a political measure to prevent their daimyo from having to go to the shogunal capital.

In the summer of 1860, for example, even though the bakufu had granted a three-month respite, Satsuma officials remarked in a domain-government document that “[calculating] three months from the 8th Month [solar, September], it is expected that in the 10th Month [November] it will be necessary to ask [for deferment] once again.”⁴⁸⁹ Satsuma leaders gave as a reason for such requests their lord’s illness. It was, however, essential to somehow make the bakufu believe that Tadayoshi was on the mend and that he would soon recover, since the shogunate had the right to replace a daimyo if it deemed him unfit to carry out his duties.⁴⁹⁰

The following February (1861), the *kokurō* Shimazu Kumi stated that “there is still plenty of time before the next service of *sankin kōtai* planned in two years [1862].”⁴⁹¹ This shows that in the meantime the bakufu leaders had set the new schedule for the next alternate attendance and ordered the Satsuma daimyo to reach Edo in 1862.

On 9 March 1861, Tadayoshi transmitted the following instructions to his retainers:

⁴⁸⁹ *Tadayoshikō shiryō*, vol. 1, n. 210.

⁴⁹⁰ Most likely Satsuma could not declare that Tadayoshi was seriously ill in order to obtain *sankin kōtai* deferment, not only because it was not true, but more importantly because it could have prompted the bakufu to nominate a new healthier daimyo. Therefore, it seems that repeated requests for deferment were necessary arguing that the young prince was still ill but suggesting that he would recover very soon and would be ready to accomplish his service in Edo.

⁴⁹¹ Man’en 2/1/x. *Tadayoshikō shiryō*, vol. 1, n. 310.

[...] The previous year, in the 3rd Month [Solar, April], when on my way to Edo I returned home due to indisposition [...] for exceptional reasons I was ordered [by the bakufu] to defer [my service of] the *sankin kōtai*, [therefore] I feel a deep sense of gratitude. With regard to the next spring [1862, Bunkyo 2], considering the fact that it is [absolutely] necessary that I accomplish [my service] of alternate residence at Edo, I heard that there are people [within Satsuma] who have expressed a different opinion [with respect to the official domain policy] and still, if they were not chosen as attendants [of my *sankin kōtai* to Edo] they would intend to accompany [the parade] by compulsion. I keep thinking that this is a period of unease, and working for the benefit of the domain [Satsuma] is the right thing [to do]. On the contrary, if we arouse the suspicion of the bakufu and also of the other domains, since in the end this can provoke a national crisis, I am very concerned. The men who really aspire to be loyal, even if by some remote possibility a [political] accident [*ihen* 異変] occurred, I would like that they do not [cause] the slightest unrest, obey the orders [issued by their leaders] and commit their energy [to Satsuma].[...]⁴⁹²

Tadayoshi's message was addressed to all the samurai of Satsuma, beginning with the chief retainers of the domain. Approximately one year after the murder of Ii Naosuke, Tadayoshi showed a deep concern for the activities of the more intransigent samurai of Satsuma, especially for those men who were planning to rebel against their superiors and sneak into the procession of the daimyo even though they had not been chosen as official attendants. It is not difficult to surmise that this concern was one of the main reasons that pushed the Kagoshima authorities to repeatedly request the deferment of

⁴⁹² Man'en 2/1/28. *Tadayoshikō shiryō*, vol. 1, 311.

the alternate residence in Edo of their lord. In light of what we have argued so far, after the assassination of Ii Naosuke, the Shimazu not only feared—as argued by Kamiya⁴⁹³—that the more fanatic members of their domain could take advantage of the Ryukyuan parade to covertly reach strategic places in Japan and to commit subversive actions; these same fears were also felt with regard to the alternate residence of Tadayoshi in Edo. In other words, Satsuma’s request for the postponement of the Ryukyuan mission planned for 1862 and the repeated requests for the deferment of the *sankin kōtai* of their lord, rather than being disconnected episodes, were in reality two central elements of the same political design and were both means to the same ultimate goal: making sure that, after the *Sakuradamon gai no hen*, the lord of Satsuma would not have to travel to Edo. This is why we should consider to reconstruct them jointly.

5.3. A bakufu loan for Satsuma

As we have seen, in March 1861, Tadayoshi expressed his commitment to fulfill his duties in Edo, stating, “with regard to the next spring (Bunkyū 2), considering the fact that it is [absolutely] necessary that I accomplish [my service] of alternate residence at Edo.” However, in January 1862, Satsuma pleaded with the bakufu to defer the *sankin kōtai* of Tadayoshi once again. Let us see the content of the following missive, which I will refer to in the future as “document A.”

On the 12th day of the 1st Month [Solar, 10 February 1862] an express message arrived from Edo. According to the message, on the 7th day of last 12th Month (1st Year of the Bunkyū era,

⁴⁹³ Kamiya, “Ryūkyū shisetsu no saigo ni kansuru kōsatsu;” Kamiya, “Ryūkyū shisetsu no kaitai.”

shin'yū,⁴⁹⁴ evening of the 7th day of last 12th Month) [s., 6 January 1862], a fire broke out [in our] residence at Shiba in Edo. The palace and other [buildings] burned down, and [the fire] spread through the neighborhood. It is reported that the fire originated in a toolhouse structure within the inner palace [...]. As a result, today it was ordered through the *kokurō* (国老) that, beginning with the members of the Shimazu family, their relatives of high and low rank [as well as] numerous samurai were to visit the castle of Edo [with the purpose of] paying homage [to the shogun]. Then, we were also told that, due to the family relationship with Tenshōin (wife of Tokugawa Iesada, adopted daughter of Shimazu Nariakira), we are to be granted [by the bakufu] twenty thousand *ryō*⁴⁹⁵ of gold [to cope with] the costs of the reconstruction [of our residence]. In accordance with established protocol, [the alternate residence] in Edo [of our prince] was planned for the 4th Month [May according to the solar calendar] of this year. Even though we have submitted a petition pleading for a postponement due to the outbreak of fire [at the *Shiba yashiki*], the bakufu, in accordance with precedent, did not allow a postponement. (So far [the period of stay in Edo related] to the *sankin kōtai* of the various daimyo has been regulated. As for our domain, it has been decided that [the prince] is to arrive in Edo in the 3rd Month [solar, April] and will be granted furlough in the 4th Month [of the following year] [solar, May]). For this reason, [the shogunate] exceptionally provided [us] with the funds [to cover the costs of] the reconstruction. It seems to us that [the bakufu] is pressing [for the accomplishment] of the *sankin kōtai* [...].⁴⁹⁶

According to this message, information regarding the fire that occurred on 6 January at

⁴⁹⁴ In the Chinese sexagesimal cycle, *shinyū* 辛酉 indicates the combination between the Year of the Cock, *toridoshi* 酉年, which represents one of the 12 Earthly Branches, with *shin* 辛, that is the yin part of the metal element, which constitutes one the 10 Heavenly Stems.

⁴⁹⁵ It is an old Japanese unit of currency. One *ryō* was constituted by 4 *monme* 匁 (one monme corresponded to 75g.) and 4 *bu* 分.

⁴⁹⁶ Bunkyū 2/1/12. *Tadayoshikō shiryō*, vol. 1, n. 505.

the Satsuma residence in Edo (the *Shiba yashiki*) reached Kagoshima on 10 February 1862. “Today” in the document A corresponds to 14 January (lunar, Bunkū 1/12/15). It becomes clear from this document that the bakufu “publicly” granted twenty thousand *ryō* of gold, citing the close blood relations between Iesada’s widow, Tenshōin, and the Satsuma domain. The Satsuma officials based at Edo requested the bakufu to grant their lord permission to defer the service of *sankin kōtai* because of the fire that had destroyed their residence. The shogunate, however, referring to the importance of respecting traditional laws, rejected their petition. In the eyes of the Satsuma officials, one of the bakufu’s motivations for contributing to the cost of the reconstruction of the *Shiba yashiki* was precisely its refusal to grant deferment of Tadayoshi’s duties in Edo. Furthermore, these officials believed that the bakufu wanted the lord of Satsuma to fulfill his duties in Edo as soon as possible. In other words, the huge sum of money bestowed by the shogunate was meant to persuade the prince of Kagoshima to fulfill his duties in honor of the shogun. Because the alternate residence was a system of high symbolic value created to support the Tokugawa bakufu, it seems natural that the shogunate pressed the feudal lords to accomplish their duties to the shogun, especially since in 1861 Tadayoshi had not yet fulfilled even one period of *sankin kōtai*.

It becomes clear from document A that Satsuma authorities asked the bakufu to postpone the *sankin kōtai* of Tadayoshi planned for the spring of 1862 due to the fire that had broken out at their residence. In reality, that incident at the *Shiba yashiki* was not an accident but a case of arson by the Kagoshima leaders in order to secure both postponement of the alternate residence of Tadayoshi and authorization for Hisamitsu to go to the shogunal capital.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁷ According to Sasaki, in December 1861 (lunar, Bunkū 1/11/x) Horii Chūzaemon was sent to

In light of what we have described above, it is clear that Kagoshima and Edo took an opposite position with regard to Tadayoshi's visit to the shogunal capital; however, from document A we may surmise that the *Shiba yashiki* sustained huge damages. It was, therefore, impractical to carry out Tadayoshi's visit to Edo in the spring since the lord of Satsuma and his large retinue would have had to stay in that same residence. Let us now explore the content of another message, which I will refer to as "document B."

In the evening of the 15th day of the 1st Month [solar, 13 February 1862], an express message arrived from Edo (the missive was sent from Edo on [Bunkyū1]/12/25) [solar, 24 January 1862]. According to the message: with regard to the *sankin kōtai* [planned] for this spring, adducing as motivations the fact that the [Shiba] residence was destroyed by fire and it is not possible [for the daimyo and his retainers] to stay [there], we have pleaded [with the shogunate] for a deferment of a period of five months. [The bakufu] listened as we had requested; [thus, our lord] has been ordered to visit Edo [for the alternate residence] without fail in the 9th Month [s., in October 1862].

In addition, with regard to the destruction by fire of the [Shiba] residence, given that we were bestowed [by the bakufu part of the] funds [needed] for the reconstruction, and that we are facing difficult times: you privately told [us] that you would like [the bakufu] to grant [permission] to Izumi *sama* (i.e., the *kokufu* of Satsuma, the prince Hisamitsu) to pay a visit of gratitude to Edo prior to our daimyo [Tadayoshi's] visit to the shogunal capital this autumn. We inform you that we were told [by the shogunate] that [they have no objections to Hisamitsu's] visit to Edo this spring.

Edo by Kagoshima authorities in order to come up with an excuse for obtaining the deferment of the alternate residence of Tadayoshi as well as authorization for a visit by Hisamitsu to the shogunal capital. Sasaki, *Bakumatsu seiji to Satsuma han*, p. 73.

[It is ordered] that this message be transmitted.

16th day of the 1st Month [s., 14 February 1862] Tajima Kawakami (Hisayuki, *karō*)
Shikibu Kawakami (Kumi, *karō*)
Settsu Kiire (Kudaka, *karō*)⁴⁹⁸

Document B left Edo on 24 January and reached Kagoshima on the evening of 13 February; the following day it was recorded by the Satsuma officials. From the document it becomes clear that the Satsuma officials based at Edo requested the deferment of the alternate residence of their lord for a period of five months citing the impossibility of completing the reconstruction work of the *Shiba yashiki* by Spring. The bakufu “reluctantly” accepted the Shimazu’s pleas; however, it issued an order stating that Tadayoshi was required to come to Edo “in October” of that year (1862). Moreover, Edo leaders authorized Hisamitsu to travel to the shougnal capital in order to express his gratitude for donating a large sum to the Shimazu for the repair of their Shiba residence. Because this message was sent on 24 January and because, according to document A, at least until 14 January the bakufu seemed opposed to the request for deferment of the *sankin kōtai* of Tadayoshi, we may assume that the events described in document B concern the ten days that passed between the two dates.

The following entry regarding a Ryukyuan mission planned for the autumn of 1862 is extremely important in this context; I will refer to it as “document C.”

With regard to accompanying the Ryukyuan envoys to Edo, [as planned for] this autumn, [previously] a loan of gold was requested. I received [information] that we are ordered through

⁴⁹⁸ Bunkyū 2/1/16. *Tadayoshikō shiryō*, vol. 1, n. 510.

the attending [senior Councilor] Kuze Yamato-no-kami (Hirochika, daimyo of Sekiyado) that previous 26th day of the 12th Month a relative [of high rank of the Shimazu family] as a representative of the lord [of Sastuma] was sent for when Tōyama Mino-no-kami (Tomoaki, *wakadoshiyori*) went to Edo castle. [Under such circumstances, the bakufu] bestowed upon us a loan of ten thousand *ryō* of gold.

Concerning this, tomorrow the members of the Shimazu family as well as the ordinary [families] and so on [abbreviated].

14th day of the 1st Month [Solar, 12 February] Noboru (Shimazu Hisakane)

With regard to the visit to Edo of the Ryukyuan envoys, we are granted a loan equal to that [accorded] thus far [on the occasion of the previous missions]; although nominally it is a loan, we do not have to return [such sum]; indeed that is only a nominal [title].⁴⁹⁹

Document C was written by the *kokurō* of Satsuma, Shimazu Noboru, on 12 February, and shows what happened at Edo castle on 25 January. This message has not been taken into account in previous scholarship, and nobody has noted that it concerns a Ryukyuan mission apparently planned after 1860. It is necessary, however, to begin with trying to determine to which year the narrated facts refer, since the document lacks a full dating. Tōyama Mino-no-kami Tomoaki, later called Tomoyoshi, was appointed *wakadoshiyori* in 1861.⁵⁰⁰ On 21 April 1860, Kuze Yamato-no-kami Hirochika was nominated for the position of senior Councilor for a second time. Focusing our attention on the bakufu posts reported in the document, i.e., *wakadoshiyori* and *rōjū*, if we take into account the time in which the two officials mentioned above carried out their duties at the same time, we can state with a significant degree of certainty that “previous 26th day of the 12th

⁴⁹⁹ *Tadayoshikō shiryō*, vol. 1, n. 506.

⁵⁰⁰ Officials who helped the senior Councilors during the Edo period.

Month” reported in the document corresponds to Bunkiyū1/12/26, that is, 25 January 1862 according to solar calendar, and that “this autumn” refers to the autumn of 1862. Such being the case, based on Document C we may infer that since the Satsuma daimyo was going to accompany a Ryukyuan mission to Edo in the autumn of 1862, in response to Satsuma’s request for a loan to cover preparation costs, the bakufu sent for an Edo-based relative of Tadayoshi when the *wakadoshiyori* Tōyama Mino-no-kami Tomoaki visited Edo castle on 25 January. On this occasion it was decided to grant a loan of ten thousand *ryō* of gold to the Shimazu. News of this was transmitted to the Satsuma officials by the senior Councilor Kuze Yamato-no-kami Hirochika. In addition it was specified that the sum received from the shogunate was nominally a loan, but given that repayment was not required, it was for all practical purposes a gift.

At this point I will try to shed light on the significance of the events that took place between Kagoshima and Edo at the beginning of 1862 by reconstructing the events reported in documents A, B, and C.

According to document A, sometime around 14 January 1862 the Kagoshima officials requested the bakufu to postpone the *sankin kōtai* of Tadayoshi due to the huge damage sustained at the Shiba residence. The shogunate bestowed twenty thousand *ryō* of gold to the coffers of Satsuma as a contribution to the reconstruction cost, but at the same time rejected Satsuma’s request and pressured them to send the daimyo to Edo. However, it was not possible to complete the repairs to the *Shiba yashiki* by that spring. Therefore, as reported in document B, sometime between 14 and 24 January the bakufu granted another delay for Tadayoshi’s visit. It did, however, order that the lord of Satsuma reach Edo “in October” 1862. Document C makes it clear that on 25 January the bakufu granted a nominal loan to the Shimazu, ostensibly related to the dispatch of

the Ryukyuan mission projected for “this autumn.” It would seem that the expressions “in October” in document B and “this autumn” in document C refer to the same period, namely the fall of 1862.

In light of what we have seen, it appears that the bakufu, who wanted the Satsuma daimyo to come to Edo and fulfill his duties in honor of the shogun, determined that the next *sankin kōtai* of Tadayoshi should occur in October 1862 (Document B). And that, in line with traditional protocol, the bakufu intended for a Ryukyuan embassy to coincide with the period of alternate residence of the lord of Satsuma (Document C). Even though Edo leaders had already granted the Shimazu a large amount of money for the reconstruction of the Shiba residence, the fact that they bestowed a further ten thousand *ryō* of gold to finance the Ryukyuan delegation—which was a loan in name but in fact a gift—would suggest that the bakufu’s political design aimed at ensuring that one of the bakufu’s vassals would respect a significant symbolic ritual, namely the periodic visit to the shogunal capital. Therefore, it may have been the case that the bakufu, on the one hand, saw the dispatch of the Ryukyuan mission as a possible means to exhort the Satsuma daimyo to travel to Edo and pay his respect to the Tokugawa shogun.

However, the analysis of the above-mentioned Document C raises some problems of interpretation. The expression “[previously] a loan of gold was requested” means that at some earlier time Satsuma had requested a loan from the bakufu in order to finance the dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassy. As we have seen, at that time Kagoshima made every effort to prevent their lord from going to Edo. This would contradict what we have stated so far: if the Shimazu asked the shogunate to finance a mission from Shuri, such a mission would have required the inclusion of a visit to the shogunal capital by

Tadayoshi. In this regard, it may well be that Satsuma, according to traditional protocol, had asked the bakufu for a loan to support the cost of the Ryukyuan embassy in 1859, when the mission was first planned. Then, as we have seen, Kagoshima indirectly requested the postponement of that delegation, and the bakufu granted the deferment in June 1860. However, Edo authorities permitted the postponement of the mission *sine die* and without specifying anything about the funds previously requested by Satsuma. So we may suppose that when the bakufu in 1862 announced its intention to welcome a new Ryukyuan embassy, it referred to the loan requested earlier by Kagoshima, most likely in 1859, so that the project of the new embassy would appear as a plan desired by the Shimazu as well, given that they had demanded funds for the embassy. In this light, the decision to grant a loan to Satsuma on 25 January 1861 was a decision taken *motu proprio* by the bakufu, a “generous” bestowment that, however, could not have been easily refused by the lord of Kagoshima.

On the other hand, it is also important to consider the international state of affairs of Japan at the time. In conjunction with the developments that we have described above, in October 1862 the bakufu revealed to the British government that the Ryukyus were subordinate to Japan. As was explained in chapter three, during this phase the bakufu did not abandon the policy of concealing the true relations between Japan and Ryukyu, but in a formal reply to an English inquiry it chose to reveal the dual subordination of Ryukyu to China and Japan to the British government only.

Here, let us focus our attention to the paper attached to the Japanese formal reply addressed to the British government. In this attachment the political status of Ryukyu vis-à-vis Japan is explained in detail: “in the course of our Bunji era [1185-1190] the Ryukyu islands began [to exchange] gifts [with Japan]. In the first year of the Kakitsu

era [1441], that is, from the times of Shimazu Tadahisa, who is the ancestor of the actual Matsudaira *Shūri daibu* [Tadayoshi], it [began] to pay obeisance to the same family [Shimazu] and every year offered [them] tribute. During our Keichō era [1596-1615], since the lord of the islands disobeyed the orders [of Satsuma], in the 14th Year of that current era the descendant of Tadahisa, the daimyo of Satsuma Matsudaira Iehisa, dispatched a military contingent to that island and, making accusations of [such] crimes [committed], he made the islands surrender. From the time when the founder of His Highness *taikun* [Tokugawa Ieyasu] praised such merit by bestowing those same islands to Iehisa, [anytime] there is a new appointment in His Highness *taikun* [the bakufu] on the occasion of the new bestowing [of Ryukyu] upon the same family [Shimazu] a great ceremony is held within our government [i.e. the reception of a congratulatory mission]. In addition, when there is a new succession in the house of the lord of those islands [i.e., a new enthronement], the envoys, as representatives of their lord, come on a visit to Edo [i.e. missions of gratitude].”⁵⁰¹

This document clarifies that while up to this point the bakufu had been telling Western powers that it maintained diplomatic relationships with the Ryukyus, now upon revealing the dual subordination of Ryukyu to China and Japan, it sought to provide several pieces of evidence to confirm the subordinate status of the islands to Japan. On the one hand, the shogunate appealed to historical fabrications, such as the commencement of gift-giving between Japan and Ryukyu in the Bunji era and the obeisance of Shuri to Satsuma in 1441. The bakufu, following the fictitious theories concocted by the Shimazu earlier, projected into the past the beginning of the relations

⁵⁰¹ *Ihi nyūkōroku daiichi* (Tokyo: Nihon Shiseki Kyōkai, 1930), p. 33.

between Ryukyu and Japan, and invented for the fief of Satsuma and Ryukyu power relations in which the latter began paying tribute to the former in 1441.⁵⁰²

On the other hand, since control over Ryukyu by Satsuma was settled after the invasion of 1609, as proof of its effective hegemony over the islands the shogunate cited the Ryukyuan missions of congratulations, in which the Satsuma daimyo came to Edo on the occasion of the appointment of a new Tokugawa shogun, as well as the dispatch of envoys as representatives of the Ryukyuan lord, in other words, the missions of gratitude. In this way, the bakufu asserted its rights over Ryukyu, emphasizing the fact that Shuri had been dispatching embassies of congratulations and gratitude to Edo. In addition, seen from the Tokugawa shogun's perspective, the Ryukyuan king was considered as a lord, and on the occasion of the appointment of a new shogun, the bakufu reconfirmed Satsuma's control over Ryukyu.

We may surmise that through the formal reply and its attachment addressed to the British government the Edo leaders mainly aimed to prevent the British government from laying any claim on Ryukyu. That is why they revealed that the kingdom was subordinate both to China and Japan, and why they relied on the invasion of Satsuma in 1609, on the fact that a number of Satsuma officials were residing on the islands and on the dispatch of Ryukyuan embassies to Edo for sustaining their claims. In addition, we may observe a close similarity between the content of the formal reply and its attachment addressed to the British government and the content of the reports regarding the relationship between Ryukyu and Japan submitted to the bakufu by a number of Edo

⁵⁰² This is known as the *Kakitsu fuyō* 嘉吉附庸 theory. This theory, elaborated by Kagoshima leaders in 1634, assumes that in 1441, i.e. the first year of the Kakitsu era, the Satsuma daimyo, Shimazu Tadakuni, had the honor to receive an official document from the sixth Ashikaga shogun, Yoshinori, in which it was asserted that the Ryukyu Islands were bestowed to the Shimazu family. Nevertheless, there is no such documentary source that endorses this theory.

officials in 1854 on the occasion of the second visit to Japan by Perry. According to these reports, which include the diplomatic guide drawn up by the senior Councilor Abe Masahiro, investigated in chapter two, the Ryukyus were defined as a kingdom subordinate to Japan, even though they were also considered a tributary state of the Qing. These bakufu officials provided as proof of the subordination of Ryukyu to Japan the invasion of Satsuma of 1609, the fact that the revenue of the kingdom was included in the cadastral register of the Shimazu, the presence of a number of Satsuma officials on the islands, as well as the dispatch of missions of congratulation and gratitude to Edo. We might say that during the *bakumatsu* the shogunate also came to evaluate the missions from Shuri as a practice through which it could demonstrate its control over Ryukyu. However, during the negotiations with the American diplomats, the shogunal representatives confirmed that the shogun had limited authority over the Ryukyu kingdom. In that phase, thus, even though at an official level the bakufu did not publicly claim its rights over the Ryukyus, in its private sphere it was investigating the political status of Ryukyu vis-à-vis China and Japan. We might, therefore, observe that the private content of the reports presented to the shogunate in 1854 found a first explicit and public form in the formal reply submitted by the bakufu to the British government in October 1862.

However, we may also observe another significant intention behind the bakufu's official reply to the British. As we have seen above, despite the fact that foreign legations settled in Edo from 1859, the bakufu announced its intention to welcome a new Ryukyuan embassy at the beginning of 1862. In the light of the examination of the attachment to the reply to the British dated October 1862, we may surmise that one of the political reasons behind the decision of Edo to reveal to the British government the

dual subordination of Ryukyu there was an attempt, even though it was limited to the British government, to lay the foundation for ensuring the coexistence of the opening of Japan by the Ansei Treaties and the traditional dispatch of the Ryukyuan embassies—that is, to begin to dissolve the contradictions implicit in the real nature of the relationship between Japan and Ryukyu (content/truth: Ryukyu is subordinate to Japan; form/mask: Ryukyu appears as an autonomous kingdom), in case in the near future a new Ryukyuan embassy would reach the shogunal capital. In other words, it is possible to understand this document as an attempt by the shogunate to create a precedent that could have been used later to shape a favorable international environment for publicly welcoming the Ryukyuan missions as a means of continuing to enhance the prestige of the shogun in the new multinational scenario. In addition, considering the detailed explanation the shogunate provided to the British with regard to the dispatch of Ryukyuan embassies to Edo, we might also infer that in the Autumn of 1862 the bakufu leaders had no intention to terminate the reception of Ryukyuan missions.

Nishizato Kikō argued that despite the fact that the shogunate had the possibility to receive a Ryukyuan mission that could enhance the prestige of the shogun, not merely in an East Asian context, but also with respect to Western powers, it did not cancel the order of postponement issued in June 1860. Therefore, he stated that from the points of view of both the bakufu and Satsuma the dispatch of Ryukyuan embassies was a domestic practice aimed at increasing the shogun's prestige while continuing to conceal the true relationships between Japan (Edo/Kagoshima) and Ryukyu in foreign relations.⁵⁰³ However, in this chapter we have ascertained that the shogunate did not wish to put an end to the dispatch of missions from Shuri and showed its will to receive

⁵⁰³ Nishizato, “ShōTai sakuhō mondai to sono shūhen,” p. 51.

a Ryukyuan delegation in the fall of 1862 by granting a generous loan to Satsuma. Technically speaking, the shogunate did not cancel its order of postponement issued in 1860. At the beginning of 1862, instead, it ordered the Satsuma daimyo to accompany a Ryukyuan embassy, which “previously” had been planned for the Autumn of that same year. It seems that the shogunate, in its own interest, simply put aside the order of postponement.

With regard to Nishizato’s interpretation, we might ascribe the decision by Edo to submit to the British government an accurate account about the historical evolution of the subordination of Shuri to Kagoshima and Edo, with a specific reference to the Ryukyuan missions to Japan, as a first small step to make the Ryukyuan embassies cross the boundary of a mere domestic practice and become a ritual known internationally.

Let us now look at an interesting passage in a Ryukyuan genealogical record almost contemporaneous with the events explored so far.

1st Year of the Dōchi era, *jinjutsu*⁵⁰⁴ 19th day of the 4th Month [Solar, 17 May 1862]. In

addition to the title of ambassador of the mission to Edo, [from this date prince Ie] added the office of *ōkumi bugyō sōyokome sōbugyō* for a period of eight months.⁵⁰⁵

This entry is part of the documents connected to the Shuri noble family of Ie and, more specifically, to an account concerning the public life of the royal prince Ie Chōchoku 朝直 (1818-1896). The first year of the Dōchi era corresponds to 1862. According to this note, on 17 May 1862 prince Ie Chōchoku, in addition to the post of ambassador of the

⁵⁰⁴ In the Chinese sexagesimal cycle, *jinjutsu* 壬戌 indicates the combination between the Year of the Dog, *inudoshi* 戌年, which represents one of the 12 Earthly Branches, with *jin/mizunoe* 壬, the yang part of the water element, which constitutes one of the 10 Heavenly Stems.

⁵⁰⁵ *Naha-shi shi, shiryō hen*, daiichi kan nana, Kafu shiryō 3, 1982, p. 344.

Ryukyuan mission to Edo, held the office of *ōkumi bugyō sōyokome sōbugyō* 大与奉行惣横目惣奉行 for a period of eight months. *Ōkumi bugyō sōyokome sōbugyō* is an office within the royal government that is affiliated with the Tomari jitō 泊地頭, a very important section of the Mōshikuchihō 申口方, i.e. the department that dealt with Shuri's domestic and foreign affairs. This entry suggests that in the spring of 1862 prince Ie was confirmed once again as ambassador, that is, the *seishi* of the Ryukyuan embassy to Edo.

All this leads one to believe that when the congratulatory embassy in honor of Iemochi was postponed in June 1860, Shuri must have assumed that when in Japan the circumstances that had caused the postponement changed, the royal government, in line with traditional protocol, would have been required to dispatch a congratulatory mission to Edo to celebrate the new shōgun. In fact, in July (6th Month, according to lunar calendar) 1860, Satsuma sent a missive to Shuri that stated that the Ryukyuan mission planned for 1862 was postponed because the bakufu was facing “multiple and complex state affairs” and that at some later point the shōgunate would set a new schedule for the Ryukyuan embassy.⁵⁰⁶

Seen in this light, the confirmation of prince Ie as ambassador is proof of Shuri's conviction that, not only had Ryukyuan embassies to Edo not come to an end, but the shōgunate would also be planning a new mission in the near future.⁵⁰⁷ Therefore, if in 1862 or afterwards, Satsuma had ordered the royal government to dispatch a new Ryukyuan mission, we may surmise that Shuri had already selected the noble who

⁵⁰⁶ *Naha-shi shi, shiryō hen*, daiichi kan nana, Kafu shiryō 3, 1982, p. 344.

⁵⁰⁷ In addition, as we have seen in chapter one, because a large number of envoys were nominated to the service of the ambassador, the appointment of the *seishi* was a prerequisite for the subsequent nomination of the rest of the members of the delegation. In other words, it simultaneously represented an important condition for the nomination of many other officials as envoys.

would have travelled to Edo as representative of the Ryukyuan king.

According to Nishizato Kikō, during the 1850s and '60s, the *Edo dachi* became both risky and financially burdensome for the Ryukyu government. Therefore, Shuri was reluctant to dispatch such embassies.⁵⁰⁸ Following Nishizato's interpretation, we have surmised in chapter four that, because of the permanent presence of Western diplomats in Edo, from 1859 the Shuri government would have preferred to avoid sending its envoys to Japan. These considerations, however, are limited to the true intentions, or *uchi* space, of Shuri. Therefore, if the Tokugawa shogunate had ordered the kingdom to dispatch a new embassy after 1859, we may surmise that in the *omote* sphere Shuri would have had to comply with that order. The confirmation of prince Ie as *seishi* in 1862 might suggest that the royal government was fully aware of this.

At present, there are no other extant documents related to the dispatch of the same Ryukyuan mission. From a macro perspective, the Ryukyuan missions were a diplomatic ritual that survived the opening of Japan to the West brought on by the signing of the Ansei Treaties. The consequences of that opening, however, were an integral part of all the other events occurring in Japan until the end of the Tokugawa hegemony. That is why it is always necessary to keep in mind the larger picture. On the other hand, from a micro viewpoint, the Ryukyuan delegations took place in a three-party relationship. It is important to examine the perspectives of Edo, Kagoshima and Shuri during the *bakumatsu* period in relation to the dispatch of these embassies. In this work I have concentrated the analysis on the period of time between 1860 and the spring of 1862.

⁵⁰⁸ Nishizato, "ShōTai sakuhō mondai to sono shūhen," pp. 50-51.

Satsuma did not wish to terminate the Ryukyuan embassies, but after the murder of Ii Naosuke, from 1860 to the spring of 1862, in order to avoid possible retaliation by the Hikone domain as well as subversive military actions of extremists among its own law-ranking samurai, it requested the postponement of the Ryukyuan embassy planned for 1862 and on many occasions the deferment of the *sankin kōtai* of Tadayoshi, all for the purpose of preventing its lord from having to go to Edo. So far these two strategies have been interpreted as unconnected episodes. Here, however, I have tried to demonstrate that they must be reconstructed together, since they were two integral parts of the same political design. In addition, it is also important to underline the fact that Kagoshima leaders made use of the presence of foreign diplomatic legations within Edo in order to obtain the postponement of the Ryukyuan congratulatory mission from the bakufu. In other words, Satsuma tried to use the first article of the Ansei Treaties for its own interests. However, as I have observed, this was only a façade. We cannot, in fact, ascribe the postponement of June 1860 to the presence of Westerners in Japan. As I have already pointed out in this dissertation, from the Tenpō era, Satsuma made an effort to come up with a pretext to mask from the shogunate its real reasons to require a deferment of the Ryukyuan embassy when it did not concern natural disasters. This was also the case for the 1860 deferment. And as it emerged from this chapter, we might add that this masking of the real reasons can be also ascribed to the deferment of Tadayoshi's *sankin kōtai* duty.

Behind the “multiple and complex state affairs” cited by the bakufu in June 1860 there was in reality the concern of the shogunate about the domestic political crisis instigated by the assassination of *tairō* Ii Naosuke. Nonetheless, as we have seen, the bakufu later announced its intention to welcome another Ryukyuan embassy. In January

1862, the shogunate granted ten thousand *ryō* of gold to Satsuma to help finance the mission planned for the fall of 1862. In line with this, the shogunate informed the British government in October that the Ryukyus were subordinate to both China and Japan. I pointed out that the bakufu might have done this to prevent the British from claiming Ryukyu and to create conditions such that it could publically welcome Ryukyuan missions to Edo in the near future. Correlating the reports of the bakufu officials submitted in 1854 to the attachment to the reply handed to the British government in 1862 I have also suggested that during the *bakumatsu* the bakufu began to consider the Ryukyuan embassies as a practice through which it could demonstrate that Ryukyu was subordinate to Japan.

In the spring of 1862 the royal government of Shuri confirmed prince Ie as ambassador of the missions to Edo. From Shuri's perspective, thus, Ryukyuan embassies would, or at least could, be dispatched after 1860.

This being the case, it seems appropriate to move the date of the termination of the Edo-bound Ryukyuan embassies from 1860 to at least the second half of 1862. As we have seen, the bakufu authorized Shimazu Hisamitsu to visit Edo in the spring of 1862 before Tadayoshi required visit to the shogunal capital in October. As we will see, it was precisely Hisamitsu's entrance onto the stage that decisively affected the termination of the Ryukyuan embassies.

Overview of the main events in Kagoshima and Edo between 1858 and the first half of 1862

Kagoshima	Edo
	Summer 1858: The shogunate signed the Ansei Treaties.
	4 January 1859: Tokugawa Iemochi succeeded at the head of the shogunate.
	31 January 1859: Shimazu Tadayoshi was appointed the new Satsuma daimyo. Summer 1859: Foreign diplomatic legations took up residence in Edo.
	24 March 1860: <i>Tairō</i> Ii Naosuke was murdered (the so-called <i>Sakuradamon gai no hen</i>)
4 April 1860: Tadayoshi left Kagoshima for Edo with the purpose of fulfilling his duties related to the <i>sankin kōtai</i> .	
13 April 1860: At Matsuzaki Tadayoshi adducing illness, suspended his mission and returned to Kagoshima. 14 April 1860: Shimazu Hisamitsu rejected Ōkubo Toshimichi's requests to mobilize Satsuma's army.	
	21 June 1860: Tadayoshi indirectly asked the bakufu to postpone the Ryukyuan mission planned for 1862 citing the Westerners' presence within Edo.
	24 June 1860: The shogunate ordered Satsuma to defer the Ryukyuan embassy citing "multiple and complex state affairs."
August 1860: Satsuma asked the bakufu to postpone Tadayoshi's <i>sankin kōtai</i> duty by 3 months. September 1860: Edo leaders granted the request for postponement.	
9 March 1861: Tadayoshi feared that Satsuma's low-ranking samurai would infiltrate the <i>sankin kōtai</i> parade planned for 1862.	
	Doc. A⇒6 January 1862: A fire broke out in the <i>Shiba yashiki</i> . 14 Jan: The bakufu gave Satsuma 20000 <i>ryō</i> for reconstruction, but it did not grant the postponement of Tadayoshi's <i>sankin kōtai</i> . Doc. B⇒14~24 January: The bakufu ordered Tadayoshi to reach Edo in October [1862] for his <i>sankin kōtai</i> . Doc. C⇒25 January: The shogunate gave Satsuma 10000 <i>ryō</i> to finance a Ryukyuan mission planned for this autumn [1862]

Chapter 6

The end of the Ryukyuan missions to Edo

In chapter five I have tried to demonstrate that it is necessary to revise the dating of the termination of the Edo-bound Ryukyuan embassies to the second half of 1862. Consequently, I need to clarify first of all why the Ryukyuan embassy planned for the fall of 1862 was ultimately not realized.

As a matter of fact, it seems that the suspension of the 1862 mission brought a definitive end to the Ryukyuan missions to Edo. In fact, at present, there are no other extant sources that testify to the planning of later Edo-bound Ryukyuan delegations; however, if the Ryukyuan embassies no longer appear in written sources, we may try to use those same documents to investigate the reasons why no more missions were planned after 1862. The *bakumatsu* period is certainly one of the most complicated ages in Japanese history to investigate. We have, in fact, multiple and intricate domestic as well as international circumstances that jointly affected the transition of the feudal Tokugawa regime to the pro-modernization Meiji government. In a complex situation such as that depicted above, we may easily surmise that we can find a range of viewpoints from which to investigate our topic. Here, however, against the background of such an intricate state of affairs, I will try to look at my subject through one specific perspective and adopt it as a lens through which to try to explore, from the standpoints of Edo, Kagoshima and Shuri, respectively, why the embassies to the shogunal capital came to an end. In chapter five I have observed that according to traditional protocol the *sankin kōtai* of the Satsuma daimyo represented a *conditio sine qua non* for the realization of a Ryukyuan mission. Thus, we may surmise that if for some reason the

Satsuma lord's alternate residence in Edo had become difficult to realize, not only the dispatch of a Ryukyuan mission would have become impossible, but also the very first schedule of an embassy would have been impossible to set up. In what follows, I will thus consider the alternate residence of the Satsuma daimyo as an important lens through which to investigate the termination of the *Edo dachi* during the last phase of government by the Tokugawa shogunate.

6.1. The suspension of the Ryukyuan mission planned for the fall of 1862

Let us first focus our attention on one aspect of the Satsuma government that could be considered essential for a proper understanding of the issue I am trying to shed light on. The rise of Shimazu Hisamitsu within Kagoshima politics is, in fact, worth emphasizing. On 28 March 1861, senior Councilor Kuze Hirochika delivered to the Satsuma *karō*, Shimazu Hisanaru, who was stationed at Edo, a letter addressed to Tadayoshi. This missive ordered Hisamitsu, i.e. Tadayoshi's father, to be extremely attentive to assuming the reins of the Kagoshima government when the daimyo would reach Edo for his *sankin kōtai* duty the following year (1862).⁵⁰⁹ In other words, the shogunate formally considered Hisamitsu a tutor of daimyo Tadayoshi. Soon afterwards, on 31 May to be precise, Kagoshima authorities ordered their retainers that from then on Hisamitsu should be called *Satsuma kokufu* 国父, i.e. the father of Satsuma.⁵¹⁰ As we shall see, not only was the rank of Hisamitsu raised to one close to that of the Satsuma daimyo, but Satsuma found in him a charismatic leader who was feared and respected throughout the country. From then on Hisamitsu would take upon himself the task of

⁵⁰⁹ Man'en 2/2/18. *Tadayoshikō shiryō*, vol. 1, n. 313.

⁵¹⁰ Bunkyū 1/4/22. *Ibid.*, n. 327.

repeatedly leaving his domain with the purpose of bringing reforms to the shogunate and defending the court of Kyoto in the pursuit of the union of the court and the shogunate (*kōbugattai* movement). We may even assume that Hisamitsu's entry on the national stage relegated the Satsuma daimyo, Tadayoshi, to the background.

As we have seen in chapter five, early in 1862 the bakufu granted Satsuma two thousand *ryō* of gold with the purpose of defraying the cost for reconstruction of the *Shiba yashiki*. However, this sign of generosity displayed by the shogunate gave Hisamitsu a good reason to advance with his troops to Edo without arousing any suspicion. The bakufu, in fact, authorized Hisamitsu to travel to the shogunal capital to thank Edo leaders for granting such a large sum.⁵¹¹

It is well known that in 1862 the Kyoto court, a number of powerful daimyo and samurai activists, or *shishi* 志士, jointly pressed the shogunate to undertake political changes and reforms; one of the most active lords was the Fukui daimyo, Matsudaira Yoshinaga (Shungaku).⁵¹² Let us take a closer look at the role played by Satsuma in this scenario.

On 14 May 1862, Hisamitsu, carrying out the dying wishes of Nariakira, reached Kyoto escorted by a large contingent of the Satsuma army. Hisamitsu aimed at enticing the shogunate to carry out political reforms in his pursuit of the union of the court, i.e. the emperor and his nobles, and the military leaders, i.e. the bakufu officials and powerful domains. Thus, on 20 May, Hisamitsu, following the order of emperor Kōmei to suppress Kyoto's problems with master-less samurai, dispatched a number of his retainers to Teradaya, in Fushimi, with the purpose of crushing the pro-imperial

⁵¹¹ Iwata Masakazu, *Ōkubo Toshimichi: the Bismarck of Japan* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1964), p. 52.

⁵¹² Conrad D. Totman, *The Collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu: 1862-1868* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1980), p. 3.

loyalists from Satsuma who were plotting to seize control of the imperial palace. Hisamitsu's samurai fought with their disobedient brothers and in the end an emotional appeal persuaded the rebels to obey Hisamitsu's orders and to return to Kyoto. This episode is known as Teradaya Jiken (Incident) 寺田屋事件. It is important to underline the fact that in his research, Sasaki Suguru surmised that this incident most likely put an end to the dissident activities of the *seichūgumi*, the low-ranking samurai from Kagoshima.⁵¹³

On 19 June, Hisamitsu, escorting the official imperial envoy, Ōhara Shigetomi, left Kyoto for Edo and on 3 July he arrived in the shogunal capital. The most important reforms pursued by Hisamitsu included the political reorganization of the bakufu, the request for a visit to Kyoto by the shogun, the appointment of Matsudaira Yoshinaga as supreme shogunal political director (*seiji sōsai shoku* 政治総裁職), and the appointment of Hitotsubashi Yoshinobu (Keiki) as guardian (J. *kōken shoku* 後見職) of shogun Iemochi. Let us here focus our attention on the proposals Hisamitsu sent to the shogunate on 12 September:

With regard to the *sankin* [*kōtai* duties] of the several daimyo, since if [they are accomplished] as they have been so far, it turns out to be extremely complicated to adequately complete the coast defense [of our country], I would like that [these duties] are set a different number of years [i.e. schedule] based on the [distance from the shogunal capital of their domains calculated in] far (more than 300 *ri*⁵¹⁴), middle (more than 200 *ri*) and close (more than 100 *ri*). If [for the bakufu the above reform] is problematic [to concede], I would like [that the daimyo are granted authorization] to send their families [stationed at Edo] back to their fiefs.

⁵¹³ Sasaki, *Bakumatsu seiji to Satsuma han*, pp. 78-82.

⁵¹⁴ Old Japanese unit of distance, one *ri* is approx. 3,927 km.

With regard to the numerous [kinds of] aid [required by the shogunate from the daimyo], I would like that [burdens] that require disbursement of expenses [by the feudal lords] are no longer ordered. If we do not act like that, it is needless to say that we will not be able to defend [ourselves] from foreigners, but I think it will [also] be complicated for us to be able to suppress domestic rebellions. However, [because] the repairs and [other works] of the imperial court are a special matter, it is necessary [that the daimyo contribute to the cost of such works].

Concerning the coastal defense, [it is necessary to issue] an order so that the [defense] of Edo bay will certainly be completed but also [the defense] of all several daimyo [domains should be completed] within a fixed period of time. After having ordered this, if there is a domain that was not careful [in realizing such fortifications], I wish the infliction of a severe punishment is certainly ordered. However, with regard to [a reform] of the *sankin kōtai* [argued above], it is necessary to implement it after having issued the above order [related to the coastal defense].⁵¹⁵

According to this document, Hisamitsu pointed out that if the system of alternate residence was carried out in accordance to traditional protocol, the daimyo could not adequately realize the coastal defense of their domains. It is well known that, as a consequence of his request, the daimyo were required to visit Edo only once every three years and reside in the shogunal capital for 100 days. As a matter of fact, within six months after the implementation of the reform nearly half the population of the shogunal capital returned to their respective fiefs. There can be no doubt that this reform brought a great change in the appearance of Edo.

From the document we may conclude that Hisamitsu aimed at relaxing the *sankin kōtai* system, impeding the bakufu from frequently requiring huge financial

⁵¹⁵ Bunkyū 2/8/19. Kagoshimaken Rekishi Shiryō Sentā Reimeikan, ed., *Tamazato Shimazuke shiryō* (hereafter *Tamazato Shimazuke shiryō*), vol. 1 (Kagoshima: Kagoshimaken, 1992), p. 518.

contributions from the feudal lords, and soliciting the shogunate to order all daimyo to complete the reinforcement of their military apparatus as soon as possible. On the one hand, we might say that Hisamitsu desired that all domains' resources would be devoted to the strengthening of the coastal defense; while, on the other hand, we may assume that such reforms dealt a severe blow to the authority and prestige of the bakufu.

In light of what we have ascertained above, if we try to broaden our horizon to the scope of this research, we may surmise that, from an economic viewpoint, after these so-called Bunkyū reforms were pressed on the shogunate by Hisamitsu in the summer of 1862, it would have been difficult to continue the dispatch of Ryukyuan embassies while at the same time pursuing the military reinforcement of the entire country. The *Edo dachi*, indeed, required the disbursement of huge capitals by all partners involved. As earlier research has shown, the reinforcement of the country's military apparatus also required vast expenditure, therefore, it became necessary to economize in other aspects of government such as through the elimination of luxury, expensive customs and unnecessary offices.⁵¹⁶ In addition, another important outcome of the Bunkyū reforms was that the bakufu approved a formal visit to Kyoto by the shogun in the spring of 1863. This mission not only implied the submission of the shogunate to the court but from the beginning it was clear that its accomplishment would have required huge expenses. Some contemporaneous estimates, in fact, predicted that the expenses for having the shogun and his retainers travel to Kyoto and back by land in an appropriate manner would cost more than the total regular annual income of the shogunate.⁵¹⁷ From this, it seems reasonable to assume that for financial reasons, at least for a while, even a Ryukyuan embassy would be prioritized by Satsuma or the bakufu.

⁵¹⁶ Totman, *The Collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu*, p. 21, p. 60.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

From a political perspective, I have observed that until the spring of 1862 Satsuma leaders aimed at preventing their lord from needing to visit Edo because they feared that the most radical samurai of their domain would be able to infiltrate in the daimyo's parade and reach crucial strategic points. However, during the Teradaya Incident a number of extremist Satsuma samurai were killed, while the remaining loyalists took a step back and rejoined the Satsuma leadership. We may, therefore, surmise that after this key episode within the fief of Satsuma the discrepancy between moderate and radical factions became increasingly smaller and that, as a consequence, the Kagoshima authorities once again acquired strong leadership over their retainers. In addition, the Satsuma leaders gradually promoted a number of low-ranking samurai who advocated reforms within the domain to influential positions with the purpose of containing unrest among their retainers. As a matter of fact, it was precisely from this period that a low-ranking samurai such as ŌkuboToshimichi began to rise within the Kagoshima government and eventually became one of the three top planners of the Meiji Restoration, together with Saigō Takamori, another man from Satsuma, and Kido Takayoshi from Chōshū. Without any doubt, Ōkubo played an essential role in maintaining a certain degree of discipline among his own loyal companions. This cooperation was highly appreciated by Hisamitsu, who gradually permitted Ōkubo to have a voice in decision-making.⁵¹⁸

On the other hand, it is also important to consider the changes that the Bunkyū reforms brought to those associated with the regimes of Ii Naosuke and, later, of Andō Nobuyuki. The bakufu pressed the Hikone domain to imprison or put under house arrest hundreds of samurai who had worked closely with Ii. Of Ii's most reliable vassals,

⁵¹⁸ William G. Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1972), p. 247.

Nagano Shuzen committed suicide, while Utsuki Rokunojō was confined and then put to death.⁵¹⁹ We may surmise that one of the effects of this purge within the Hikone domain was that of reducing the anxiety felt by Kagoshima leaders for a possible retaliation against their daimyo by the closest men of Ii after the *Sakuradamon gai no hen*.

From the spring of 1862, Satsuma enjoyed internal political stability, its leaders were working on a program of political reconciliation between the court, the shogunate and the powerful daimyo, and the possibility of a retaliation by Hikone samurai was greatly reduced by the large-scale purge ordered by the bakufu. Therefore, we may surmise that the apprehension of Satsuma leaders about sending their lord to Edo gradually waned.

As we have seen in Hisamitsu's proposals to the bakufu, Satsuma leaders desired their daimyo to remain in Kagoshima as long as possible, but at the same time they also showed their commitment to having their lord stay in Edo for a short time (100 days) for his alternate residence in the honor of the shogun. From a political perspective we may, therefore, assume that if from then on the *sankin kōtai* of the Satsuma daimyo was planned again, a Ryukyuan embassy—we may consider a mission that was less elaborate for economic reasons—could have been planned as well, especially since the shogunate in January 1862 manifested its willingness for welcoming a mission in the fall of the same year. It is, therefore, important to investigate the evolution of Tadayoshi's alternate residence after the Bunkyo reforms. The following document is useful in this respect:

⁵¹⁹ Totman, *The Collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu*, p. 12.

A notification issued on the 21st day of the 9th Month of the 2nd Year of Bunkiyū era [Solar, 12 November 1862] states as follows: with regard to the recent political reforms of the shogunate, since the schedule of the [next] *sankin kōtai* of our prince has been changed [i.e. postponed] [so that he is required to reside] in the shogunal capital from the 1st day of the 1st Month of the next Year of the Boar (Bunkiyū 3) [solar, 18 February 1863] until the end of the 6th Month [s., middle August], it is notified that he must reach the shogunal capital by the end of this year [Bunkiyū 2].⁵²⁰

The above document was written on 12 November 1862 and states that, as a consequence of the recent political reforms brought by Hisamitsu to the shogunate, the alternate residence of Tadayoshi was postponed until 1863. From this document, we may infer that one of the consequences of the Bunkiyū reforms was that Tadayoshi's *sankin kōtai* which had been planned for “in October” (1862) and the Ryukyuan embassy scheduled for “this autumn” (1862) were both suspended.

6.2. The evolution of Tadayoshi's *sankin kōtai* schedule during the *bakumatsu*

As we have ascertained above, the bakufu ordered the Satsuma daimyo to accomplish his duty of alternate residence in the first half of 1863. However, as soon as this order was issued, Hisamitsu wrote the following to Tadayoshi:

My first intention was that on this occasion after returning [to Kagoshima from my mission in Kyoto and Edo] the daimyo would go on a visit to the shogunal capital without any delay. He

⁵²⁰ *Tadayoshikō shiryō*, vol. 1, n. 150, p. 217.

would attend [the ceremonies necessary for being] advanced in rank, however, with respect to the regular [protocol] concerning his stay [in Edo] he would return [to Satsuma] quickly. Within our domain we are fully devoting [ourselves to the] *fukoku kyōhei* [富国強兵, “rich country, strong army”] policy. Even though I frequently persuaded the daimyo [to accomplish] his visit to Edo keeping in mind to send our loyal troops promptly in case we face a [serious political] event, the prince and his party [其方達] are in no way in the spirit to agree [to do it]. Anyhow in the meantime, the inner palace of Edo’s [Satsuma residence] has been vacated, and then [our retainer] Fujii returned to our domain. Even though I acknowledged the secret orders [in which I was required to go to] Kyoto, anyway if our daimyo goes on a visit to Edo and [at the same time] I [and my retainers] also reach Kyoto, because [the two missions] would imply a huge burden [大糺], I pleaded with the Kantō [i.e. the bakufu] for the visit to Edo [of the daimyo] to be postponed.⁵²¹

According to this document, Hisamitsu, as soon as he returned from his mission in Kyoto and Edo (i.e. Hisamitsu’s first mission), wanted Tadayoshi to travel to Edo for his *sankin kōtai* duty. We may, thus, surmise that from his perspective all the risks which earlier precluded the daimyo from going to the shogunal capital had almost vanished. However, because of the Bunkyū reforms the Satsuma daimyo was allowed to return to his domain earlier than dictated by traditional protocol. It is also interesting to note that from the document it appears as if Hisamitsu on more than one occasion tried to sound out if the daimyo was inclined to accomplish his alternate residence duty, given that Hisamitsu wanted to rely on such a procession to mobilize his troops in case of a political incident. However, *sono hō tachi* (其方達)—we may surmise that this

⁵²¹ *Tamazato Shimazuke shiryō*, vol. 2, n. 501, p. 205.

expression refers to Tadayoshi and his faction—firmly rejected these proposals. In other words, we may infer that after the shogunal reforms, some disagreements existed among the Satsuma leaders with regard to the daimyo’s visit to Edo. There was, in fact, a faction that still opposed the accomplishment of Tadayoshi’s *sankin kōtai*. It is worthy to point out that the daimyo himself was one of these opponents. In addition, the above passage informs us that this is a context in which Kagoshima leaders had already ordered their entourage to leave the shogunal capital, and that Hisamitsu had received an order from the Kyoto court to come to the imperial capital the following year on the occasion of the visit to Kyoto by shogun Iemochi. Because Tadayoshi’s *sankin kōtai* coincided with his mission to the imperial capital and this overlap would have implied huge expenditures, Hisamitsu had already begun consultations with Edo for the duty of the Satsuma daimyo to be postponed. Earlier research has already clarified that the imperial letter by which emperor Kōmei ordered Hisamitsu to come to Kyoto was delivered to Konoe *kampaku* (the Chief adviser of the emperor) around 20 November, and a transcript of that missive was brought from Kyoto to Kagoshima by the Satsuma samurai, Fujii Ryōsetsu, on 7 December.⁵²² Because we can ascertain from the document that Hisamitsu had already received the imperial order as well as that Fujii had already returned to Kagoshima, it must have been composed after 7 December 1862. Then, in the last part of the manuscript—which I have omitted in my translation above—Hisamitsu wrote that “if by any chance the order of postponement of Tadayoshi’s *sankin kōtai* should be issued [too] late, Satsuma leaders had no other option but to declare that their daimyo was ill.”⁵²³

From this, we may infer that in the fall of 1862 Kagoshima authorities wished to

⁵²² Sasaki, *Bakumatsu seiji to Satsuma han*, p. 105.

⁵²³ *Tamazato Shimazuke shiryō*, vol. 2, n. 501, p. 205.

defer the alternate residence duty of Tadayoshi for practical and economic reasons. However, if the bakufu was late in complying with their request, they intended to appeal once again, as they had done several times between March 1860 and January 1862, to an ostensible illness of Tadayoshi. We may, thus, conclude that during the *bakumatsu* the fictitious illness of their daimyo was a tried-and-tested political measure through which Satsuma leaders obtained temporary exemption from the requirement of their lord to travel to Edo.

On 22 December, Fujii again reached Kyoto and the following day he handed a reply of Hisamitsu to the *kampaku* Konoe, Ōgimachisanjō and Nakayama Chūzaemon. He described this encounter as follows:

[...] [After] every [lord] opened the letter, they were satisfied [about the content, therefore,] I felt relieved. First of all with regard to the matter of the postponement of [our] daimyo's visit to Edo, when I earnestly pleaded with them so that they by all means endeavor to make it happen, they [assured me to] take on the task. [I think] this is especially good [news]. [According to them], even though at first [the daimyo] was requested to [travel] to Edo [for the *sankin kōtai*] by the Kantō [i.e. the bakufu], in the end [it is up to] the court [of Kyoto] to [issue] the final instructions. Therefore, [with regard to the postponement of the alternate residence duty of our daimyo] since they ordered to immediately discuss [such matter within the court], I think that this matter will be resolved shortly. [...]⁵²⁴

One of the most important things we may surmise based on this document is that the court of Kyoto held considerable influence with regard to the accomplishment of the

⁵²⁴ Bunkyū 2/11/3. *Tamazato Shimazuke shiryō*, vol. 1, n. 363, p. 640.

daimyo's alternate residence duty in the shogunal capital.⁵²⁵ In other words, we may surmise that the court had significant authority with regard to one of those highly symbolic ceremonies that had been a prerogative of the shogunate's sovereignty since the beginning of the seventeenth century. However, from the above document we cannot grasp with certainty when the court came to acquire such influence. As is well known, the Kyoto court "re-entered" the political stage when *rōjū* Hotta Masayoshi requested emperor Kōmei for authorization to sign the commercial treaty with the United States in 1858. Thereafter, the Kyoto court gradually came to play a key function in politics. While it is beyond the scope of this study, it would be interesting to clarify if the court's authority over the alternate residence system was acquired before or after the stipulation of the Ansei Treaties. In addition, we may also surmise that not only did Hisamitsu try to exert influence with the bakufu for obtaining the deferment of Tadayoshi's *sankin kōtai*, as we have seen in his missive addressed to the Satsuma daimyo, he also required the intercession of the court. In fact, it was precisely the emperor who had ordered him to be in Kyoto during the imminent visit of Iemochi in the imperial capital.

The official order regarding the postponement of Tadayoshi's visit to Edo was issued on 3 March 1863:

With regard to the visit to Edo of the *Shūri daibu* [i.e. Shimazu Tadayoshi], even though recently [informal instructions about it] were communicated, on this occasion, since Saburō [i.e. Hisamitsu] was ordered to visit Kyoto, be aware of the fact that the *Shūri daibu* [is formally required] to reach Edo after [Hisamitsu] will have accomplished the above-mentioned official duty. [It must, however, be added that] this order was issued by the undersigned [when] he was

⁵²⁵ Sasaki Suguru has already pointed out this significant change on note 7 of p. 121 of his *Bakumatsu seiji to Satsuma han*.

in Edo. 1st Month [Bunkyū 3/1/14, solar, 3 March 1863]⁵²⁶

The “undersigned” mentioned in the document is Hitotsubashi Yoshinobu. After the Bunkyū reforms, Yoshinobu was appointed guardian of the shogun, and at that time he had gone to Kyoto before Iemochi would arrive for his official visit. We may, thus, surmise that it was the bakufu—i.e. Yoshinobu before leaving for Kyoto—who officially ordered Tadayoshi to postpone his *sankin kōtai* duty. However, it is possible that the court exerted its influence on the shogunate for deferring the Satsuma daimyo’s duty and, then, the bakufu issued the formal order.

In the autumn of 1862, the postponement of the alternate residence of Tadayoshi was, thus, requested by Kagoshima leaders because at the same time Hisamitsu was required by emperor Kōmei to go to Kyoto. Two simultaneous missions, in truth, would have constituted a burden too heavy to sustain by Satsuma. The official order decreeing the deferment was issued by the shogunate in March 1863. However, as we have seen, Hisamitsu pleaded with both the bakufu and the court for obtaining the postponement of Tadayoshi’s mission. From the documents explored so far, we may surmise that on this occasion the court played a significant role in the deferment.

It is well known that, on 1 May 1863 Hisamitsu arrived in Kyoto for his second visit and that he, after a mere 4 days, left the imperial capital on 5 May and returned to Kagoshima. Hisamitsu aimed at implementing political reforms at the imperial court. During meetings with Takatsukasa (the *kampaku*), Matsudaira Yoshinaga, Hitotsubashi Yoshinobu, Yamanouchi Toyoshige and others, he pressed for strong actions against the *sonnō-jōi* loyalists. However, he did not find any support for his proposals so we may

⁵²⁶ Bunkyū 3/1/14. *Tamazato Shimazuke shiryō*, vol. 2, n. 465, p. 149.

assume he felt a deep sense of disappointment with regard to these developments.⁵²⁷

Soon afterwards emperor Kōmei began to play a significant part in national policy and on 11 March he issued the “order to expel the barbarians (*jōijikkō no chokurei* 攘夷実行の勅命)” from Japan, an order that was to put in effect two months later. In connection with this, the shogun was pushed to issue a declaration in June in which the termination of relationships with foreigners was decreed, while in Kyoto the arrogance of the loyalists was growing. Within this complex domestic and international scenario, several missives requiring Hisamitsu to travel to Kyoto were one more time sent from the imperial capital to Kagoshima. Then, on 25 August the court issued the official order that commanded Hisamitsu to come to Kyoto. Hisamitsu was required to reestablish political equilibrium in the imperial capital and restore the authority of the *kōbu-gattai* party.

In line with these events, Satsuma leaders once again asked the shogunate to postpone Tadayoshi’s *sankin kōtai*. This time, they cited the difficult situation in which their domain found itself as reason for the delay. In this respect, it is worth to focus our attention on a missive drafted by the Satsuma samurai, Komatsu Tatewaki (Kiyokado), in June 1863:

With regard to our prince’s *sankin kōtai* [planned for] this spring [1863], since Saburō [i.e. Hisamitsu] was ordered to go to Kyoto, [Tadayoshi] was ordered [by the bakufu] to visit Edo after the above-mentioned [Hisamitsu’s] official duty was accomplished. Even though [after completing his mission] Saburō has returned to [Kagoshima], the present condition is a serious matter. Because we are [experiencing] a situation in which it is [absolutely] necessary to give

⁵²⁷ This thesis is suggested by Sasaki Suguro in his *Bakumatsu seiji to Satsuma han*, p. 127.

orders directly [to our retainers] with regard to the preparations [to undertake], a written notification, in which [it was requested that our daimyo would be allowed] to not accomplish his visit to Edo this time only, was handed to the senior Councilor, Mizuno Izumi no kami, in Osaka. [I acknowledge that Mizuno] received [the notification]. Transmit this information to all those [our retainers] to whom it may concern.

5th Month [Bunkyū 3, Solar, June 1863] Tatewaki Komatsu⁵²⁸

As we have mentioned before, at the beginning of 1863 the bakufu (Hitotsubashi Yoshinobu) granted Tadayoshi permission to postpone his duty in Edo until Hisamitsu had completed his formal service in Kyoto. However, according to the document cited above, once Hisamitsu had returned to Kagoshima, conditions in the fief were such that the Satsuma leaders were pushed to ask the shogunate once more to defer their daimyo's alternate residence duty. It is, however, impossible to ascertain from the document of what nature exactly the hard times to which Komatsu referred were. Komatsu employed expressions such as 方今不容易世態 *hōkon yōi naranu setai* which indicates a grave condition at the present time, and 御手当向旁御直ニ御下知不被遊候テハ、不被為濟折柄ニ付 *goteate muki katagata ojiki ni gogechi asobararezu sōraite ha, sumaserarezaru origara ni tsuki* which suggests a situation in which it was necessary for Satsuma leaders to give orders directly to their samurai in relation to what Komatsu referred as *goteate*, i.e. preparations.⁵²⁹ The real motivation, thus, can be interpreted as a grave situation for which it was necessary to undertake some kind of preparations in order to face the problem in the near future. Mark Ravina has argued that in this phase the fief of

⁵²⁸ Bunkyū 3/5/x. *Tadayoshikō shiryō*, vol. 2, n. 308, p. 394.

⁵²⁹ The term “*goteate*” has a number of meanings such as 1. an allowance, a benefit, a salary, 2. a (medical) treatment, (medical) care, 3. preparation, provisions. In the above document we might interpret the expression “*goteate*” in its third connotation.

Chōshū had gained a strong influence at court and was using this power to exclude Satsuma from imperial politics. On 14 July, in fact, Satsuma samurai were prohibited from entering the imperial court.⁵³⁰ From a domestic viewpoint, we may surmise that Satsuma leaders were furious at Chōshū's great influence over the Kyoto court and needed their lord to stay in Kagoshima before deciding on their next move.

If we consider the events from a broader perspective, however, we may ascribe the serious condition afflicting the Satsuma domain to the crisis between Kagoshima and Great Britain after one of Hisamitsu's retainers had killed a British merchant by the name of Charles Lennox Richardson near the village of Namamugi on 14 September 1862. Soon after this so-called Namamugi Incident, Great Britain began to demand an apology and considerable reparations from the bakufu; it also demanded the arrest and trial of the perpetrators of the crime as well as indemnity from the Satsuma domain. The refusal to give into the British requests caused a state of tension between the two parties.

After his arrival in Kyoto at the beginning of 1863, Ōkubo Toshimichi presented a memorial from Hisamitsu to Konoe, the *kampaku*. In this memorial, Hisamitsu asked permission to postpone his mission to the imperial capital because his presence in Kagoshima was necessary since Satsuma leaders were fearing an attack from British gunboats in retaliation of the Namamugi Incident.⁵³¹ From a document included in Robert Hellyer's *Defining Engagement: Japan and Global Context: 1640-1868*, we can ascertain that from the 4th Month of 1863 Satsuma requested financial aid from the bakufu citing possible British aggression. In fact, according to this source a number of

⁵³⁰ Mark Ravina, *The Last Samurai: the Life and Battles of Saigo Takamori* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2004), p. 113.

⁵³¹ Iwata, *Ōkubo Toshimichi*, p. 70.

British vessels had come to Yokohama at that time which were repeatedly threatening to sail to Satsuma.⁵³² As is well known, the Bombardment of Kagoshima in which a large portion of the city was destroyed took place on 15-17 August 1863. However, as has been ascertained in earlier research, Great Britain already began to threaten the Satsuma domain from the spring of 1863. Seen in this light, we may conclude that one of the reasons that prompted Satsuma to ask the bakufu to postpone Tadayoshi's alternate residence duty in June 1863 was the fear of an imminent military expedition by the British Royal Navy. The conflict between Great Britain and Satsuma turned out to be a crucial moment in Kagoshima's foreign policy. In fact, for the first time Satsuma leaders came into direct contact with British diplomats and these interactions facilitated the purchase of Western modern weapons as well as the expansion of Kagoshima's trade network with Europe.

Soon afterwards, on 30 September 1863 Satsuma and Aizu troops with the secret support of moderate members of the court planned a coup and drove the Chōshū loyalists from the imperial court. A few days earlier, on 25 September, Hisamitsu announced to his retainers that he had received the imperial order to travel to Kyoto the following month.⁵³³ On 24 October, Hisamitsu left Kagoshima and on 13 November he reached Kyoto for his third visit. However, as we have noted before, if Hisamitsu was required to go to the imperial capital with his retainers, the Satsuma daimyo could not easily leave Kagoshima for his *sankin kōtai* duty because two simultaneous missions would imply a huge burden for the Shimazu. This is why we might consider the possibility that on this occasion as well the Satsuma leaders tried to ensure that the two

⁵³² Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, p. 193.

⁵³³ Hisamitsu confirmed that he would leave Kagoshima by the middle of the lunar 9th Month. *Tadayoshikō shiryō*, vol. 2, n. 521.

lords would not leave the domain at the same time. The following document might serve us to confirm this assumption; it is an imperial decree (*osatagaki* 御沙汰書) which the court sent to the shogunate in December 1863:

With regard to [the directive] that was ordered as you can see in the attached paper, because Shimazu Saburō was required to reach Kyoto immediately and given that the simultaneous departure of father and son would become a burden [for Sastuma], with regard to the visit to Edo of the *Shūri daibu* [Tadayoshi], for the time being [the emperor] wishes that it will be postponed.⁵³⁴

As has already been mentioned, the court held a great influence with regard to the accomplishment of the daimyo's alternate residence service. We may, therefore, surmise that this time also the shogunate gave into the court's requests and once again postponed the duty of the Satsuma daimyo. In addition, we may surmise that the hand of the Satsuma leaders was behind the court's request. It is tempting to suppose, in fact, that on this occasion too the Satsuma leaders had total trust in the power of the imperial court to get their lord's duty suspended temporarily.

In December 1863, the court established an Extraordinary Council, or *chōgi sanyo* 朝議参与, composed of a number of advisory lords such as Matsudaira Yoshinaga of Fukui, Shimazu Hisamitsu, Date Munenari of Uwajima, Yamauchi Yōdō of Tosa and Matsudaria Katamori of Aizu. Hitotsubashi Yoshinobu was the representative of the shogunate. Then in March 1864, the bakufu following the imperial court's example, permitted the external lords to take part in shogunal councils. This unprecedented union between the court, the shogunate and the external lords could be

⁵³⁴ Bunkyū 3/11/x. *Tamazato Shimazuke shiryō*, vol. 2, n. 788, p. 609.

interpreted as the accomplishment of the *kōbugattai* movement, but in reality, this union turned out to be a complete failure and after a few months it was dissolved. It was especially the political disagreement between Hisamitsu and Yoshinobu that marked the failure of the new imperial council. Hisamitsu pursued to concentrate political power in the hands of the powerful feudal lords under the aegis of the emperor and the court of Kyoto. In terms of foreign policy, based on Ōkubo's advice, he called for a realistic strategy centered on the reinforcement of the country's defenses and the opening of the treaty ports.⁵³⁵ Yoshinobu, on the other hand, was extremely suspicious of Satsuma's influence at court and aspired to return the reins of government in the shogun's hand. He sought to restore the former unquestionable authority of the shogunate. After having dissolved the council, the various members left Kyoto on 25 April 1864 and returned to their domains.⁵³⁶

On 20 August, the Satsuma and Aizu armies defeated Chōshū's troops in Kyoto in what it is commonly referred to as the Forbidden Gate Incident (*Kinmon no hen* 禁門の変). Four days later, the emperor declared the domain of Chōshū a rebel and ordered the bakufu to chastise it. As a consequence, numerous daimyo were called up to provide troops for a punitive expedition.⁵³⁷

As Conrad D. Totman has pointed out, in 1863-1864 the shogunate made an effort to regain part of the political power it had lost with the implementation of the Bunkiyū reforms through the revitalization of a number of practices. The key element of this plan

⁵³⁵ Ravina, *The Last Samurai*, p. 114.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁵³⁷ In October the troops gathered in Osaka under the command of Tokugawa Yoshikatsu of Owari. Even though the bakufu aimed at reducing Chōshū territory and punish the samurai who had attacked the imperial palace, Saigō Takamori convinced Yoshikatsu to not proceed against Chōshū and was authorized to mediate between the two parties. As a result of Saigō's efforts, an agreement was reached: Chōshū was required to make a formal apology, it was to stop protecting *kuge* refugees from Kyoto, and had to suppress the irregular companies. Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration*, p. 231.

was the reestablishment of daimyo's alternate residence system as it had existed before 1862.⁵³⁸ Let us take a closer look at these changes based on documentary sources from Satsuma. On 1 October the bakufu ordered the daimyo as follows:

Memorandum

With regard to the next *sankin kōtai* [service], since it is ordered to [accomplish it] in accordance with former times [i.e. like it had been before 1862], every [daimyo who will carry out] his *sankin* [*kōtai*] this year, is expected to visit Edo without delay in conformity with his earlier *sankin* [*kōtai*] schedule. In addition, when [those daimyo who were commanded] to chastise the Chōshū rebels have returned to their domains, they are required to [accomplish] their *sankin* [*kōtai*] in the 4th Month or in the 6th Month [Solar, May or July] according to the schedule [decided on] earlier. The above order must immediately be transmitted and is addressed to all the daimyo [who possess a revenue] of more than 10000 *koku* [to achieve daimyo status, a feudal lord had to own land capable of producing more than 10000 *koku* of rice per year].⁵³⁹

This political measure was certainly an attempt by Edo leaders to regain their authority and prestige in the domestic arena. With regard to these developments, it is important to investigate how Satsuma authorities reacted to the revival of the traditional *sankin kōtai* agenda. Let us focus our attention on the content of a missive to the shogunate dated 20 February 1865 and signed by Hisamitsu. Even though it seems that this letter was never delivered to the bakufu, it is an important document as it clarifies Hisamitsu's honest opinion regarding the daimyo's alterante residence service at this time. The passage below is part of a longer document; here I select a number of elements salient to this

⁵³⁸ Totman, *The Collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu*, p. 139.

⁵³⁹ Genji 1/9/1. *Tadayoshikō shiryō*, vol. 3, n. 610, p. 697.

dissertation.

According to Hisamitsu, “the bakufu had decreed in to relax the daimyo’s traditional *sankin kōtai* duty and had permitted their entourage to return to their fiefs with the purpose of completing the military reinforcement of the realm’s coast to counter foreign pressure.” With regard to the recent order by the shogunate to return to the pre-1862 alternate residence duty, he argued that “at that time there was still a serious risk that, other domains would, like Chōshū, rebel against the government and commit subservise actions that would require suppression.” He stated that, “in such a case, it was Satsuma’s intention that their lord would immediately leave for Edo.” However, he argued “he had been trying to realize the *kōbugattai* project since 1862.” He also wrote that “the previous year (i.e. in 1863) Satsuma fought against Great Britain and that in 1864 Kagoshima had sent its army against Chōshū. All these events required the disbursement of huge capitals. Because the fief of Satsuma was surrounded by the sea on three sides, he confessed that he was very concerned as Kagoshima had not yet fully completed the strenghtening of its armaments.” Furthermore, he pointed out that “if the daimyo now obeyed the bakufu’s order to revive the *sankin kōtai*, various domains would be impoverished, they would stop the reinforcement of their military apparatus and, therefore, they would not be able to defend their fiefs. If it was ordered that the daimyo, like before 1862, were to visit Edo every other year and to leave their entourage behind in the shoguanl capital, it would be an effective means to domestic control; however, with regard to coastal defense, this measure would prevent the daimyo from realizing the armament and strenghtening of their domains.” Therefore, Hisamitsu thought “they would not be able to preserve the national prestige in the international framework. If in this complicated situation, the bakufu held on to the

traditional agenda, there would only be prosperity within the city of Edo and the Edo leaders would falsely believe that the revival of *sankin kōtai* was a good measure. However, the cost of living would rise and several domains would be impoverished. In addition, because works on the fortification of the most strategic ports in the vicinity of Osaka Bay had yet to start, this measure could be interpreted as a slight to the emperor.⁵⁴⁰

According to Hisamitsu, the reestablishment of pre-1862 *sankin kōtai* system was a measure that did not match the political needs of the time. Every domain needed to use all its available resources in order to complete the reinforcement of the coastal defense and this was not compatible with a daimyo's visit to Edo every other year, because those journeys required vast capitals. In other words, the *sankin kōtai* duty would have detracted important resources from the realization of the Japanese coastal defense. Hisamitsu, thus, showed strong opposition against the shogunate's decision to reestablish the pre-1862 *sankin kōtai* formula. With regard to the matter of the revival of the alternate residence system, Hisamitsu also wrote a missive to senior Councilor Mizuno Tadakiyo⁵⁴¹ and to the court of Kyoto (addressed to Nijō *Kampaku*).⁵⁴² Even though it seems that these two letters were also never delivered, they might be considered a further testimony to Hisamitsu's disagreement with the bakufu's order.

According to Maruyama Yasunari, the *sankin kōtai* system was created to support the shogunate, however, in 1865 the prestige of the bakufu was already severely compromised. In truth, the military expedition against Chōshū, that is, against one of its vassals, had already caused the shogunate to lose support from the general public

⁵⁴⁰ Genji 2/1/25. *Tamazato Shimazuke shiryō*, vol. 4, n. 1270, pp. 50-52.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, n. 1268, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, n. 1269, pp. 48-50.

because the majority of the feudal lords did not obey the bakufu's order to re-instate the pre-1862 alternate residence system.⁵⁴³

In addition, it is also important to underline the role Ōkubo played in his dealings with the court in order to prevent the bakufu from punishing Chōshū as well as to have the alternate-residence system reverted to the post-1862 schedule. In February 1865, in fact, Ōkubo arrived in Kyoto and on 28 March he secured an imperial decree in which the bakufu was ordered to await the arrival of the shogun in Osaka before taking any decision regarding the punishment of Chōshū. On that occasion, Ōkubo also pleaded with the court for the *sankin kōtai* system to be reverted to the schedule implemented during the Bunkyū reforms.⁵⁴⁴ As a matter of fact, this complicated domestic situation brought about the termination of the *sankin kōtai* system. In other words, what we have depicted as the *conditio sine qua non* for the planning of a Ryukyuan mission, i.e. the Satsuma daimyo's alternate residence duty, came to an end.

If we retrace the history of Tadayoshi's *sankin kōtai* projects from the second half of 1862, we see that, as a direct result of the Bunkyū reforms, the duty planned for October 1862 was postponed until 18 February 1863; however, because simultaneously Hisamitsu had been ordered by the court to travel to Kyoto on the occasion of the visit of Iemochi, Tadayoshi's alternate residence duty was deferred. Satsuma, in fact, exerted its influence with the court and argued that the simultaneous missions of Tadayoshi and Hisamitsu would have imposed a huge burden on Kagoshima. As a consequence of the court's pressure, Hitotsubashi Yoshinobu ordered the Satsuma daimyo to come to Edo for his *sankin kōtai* service after Hisamitsu had accomplished his mission. When Hisamitsu later returned to Kagoshima, circumstances in the fief situation were depicted

⁵⁴³ Maruyama, *Sankin kōtai*, p. 261.

⁵⁴⁴ Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration*, p. 250.

as being “serious.” In truth, the attack of the British naval forces on Kagoshima was imminent, and, therefore, it was necessary for Tadayoshi to stay in his domain in order to deal with the crisis directly. Komatsu Tatewaki’s letter which was handed to the senior Councilor, Mizuno Tadakiyo, in Osaka in June 1863, testifies to all this. Soon after, the court ordered Hisamitsu to travel to Kyoto once more and, therefore, required the bakufu to postpone the *sankin kōtai* of Tadayoshi arguing that the two simultaneous missions of father and son were a huge burden for the fief of Satsuma. In October 1864, the shogunate reestablished the pre-1862 alternate residence system. However, at that time the bakufu had already lost most of its authority, therefore, it did not have sufficient power to force the daimyo to obey to its anachronistic command.

As we have seen above, from the second half of 1862 the *sankin kōtai* service of Tadayoshi was repeatedly postponed for different reasons. By the end of 1864 and the beginning of 1865, the *sankin kōtai* system came to a definite end since most daimyo did not obey the shogunal order to reestablish the pre-1862 alternate residence practice. Tadayoshi, thus, was one of the rare daimyo who did not accomplish a single period of alternate residence in Edo. What we have explored so far might allow us to conclude that, because we did not find other traces of new *Edo dachi* projects after 1862, the Ryukyuan embassies no longer fit into Kagoshima, Edo and Shuri’s agendas after the Bunkyū reforms.

It is now necessary to try to clarify further why they did not so. First of all, I have observed that from an economic viewpoint, the reinforcement of the realm’s military apparatus pursued by Hisamitsu was not compatible with an expensive event such as that of a Ryukyuan mission. Therefore, we might consider this incompatibility as one of the main reasons for the halting of the *Edo dachi*. In addition, even though the

Ryukyuan embassies had not lost their political significance, I could, however, ascertain that whenever the Satsuma daimyo's *sankin kōtai* service was rescheduled, Kagoshima leaders soon exerted their influence with both Edo and Kyoto for the duty to be deferred for several reasons. As we have already pointed out in this dissertation, the alternate residence of Tadayoshi was a prerequisite for launching a Ryukyuan embassy. However, whenever the Satsuma daimyo's *sankin kōtai* duty was rescheduled, the conditions for accomplishing such service soon fade away. It is, therefore, reasonable to surmise that under such circumstances the Ryukyuan missions were placed on the back burner until 1872, when the last Ryukyuan embassy ever was sent in honor of the Meiji emperor. As we have observed, Shimazu Hisamitsu, in pursuit of the union between the court and the shogunate took it upon himself to repeatedly leave his domain in order to bring reforms to the shogunate and defend the court of Kyoto. Hisamitsu's entry on a national stage relegated the Satsuma daimyo, Tadayoshi, to the background. We might say that Hisamitsu's missions to Kyoto facilitated Satsuma leaders to repeatedly obtain the postponement of Tadayoshi's alternate residence period from the shogunate. We might also surmise that, because Satsuma authorities repeatedly tried to prevent their daimyo from needing to go to Edo, they were also not keen on realizing a new Ryukyuan embassy since it would have implied a visit by Tadayoshi to the shogunal capital. Therefore, we might conclude that Satsuma policy strongly affected the termination of the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo during the last phase of the Tokugawa regime.

Among the wide range of possible perspectives I have taken the Satsuma daimyo's *sankin kōtai* service as the lens through which to investigate my topic. In conclusion, this viewpoint allowed me to verify that after the Bunkū reforms the "in-executable" state in which Tadayoshi's alternate residence duty was staying afloat,

might be considered as a good reason why the partners involved (Satsuma and the bakufu) were too preoccupied to glance once again at the traditional missions from Shuri. In addition, we might also use this same lens as a barometer through which it is possible to investigate how political power gradually passed from the shogunate to the court and the powerful daimyo during the *bakumatsu*. As a matter of fact, the bakufu was not able to fully exert its power over one of its vassals to make him come to Edo to pay his respect to the shogun. As we have seen, the shogunate announced its intention to welcome a Ryukyuan mission in January 1862; however, from then on Edo leaders were not even able to make the Satsuma daimyo accomplish his visit to Edo in honor of the shogun. Needless to say, therefore, that they were not in a position to require Tadayoshi to escort a Ryukyuan embassy to the shogunal capital. In addition, the bakufu gave into the court's request and in two occasions postponed Tadayoshi's *sankin kōtai* because of the simultaneous mission to Kyoto of Hisamitsu. In other words, because of the multiple and intricate domestic as well as international circumstances that jointly affected Japan during the *bakumatsu*, the shogunate prioritized the visits of the Satsuma daimyo's tutor to the imperial capital for the benefit of the realm.

On the other hand, I have observed that the court held considerable influence over the daimyo's alternate residence system to the extent that on several occasions Satsuma pleaded with the Kyoto nobles to have Tadayoshi's visit to the shogunal capital deferred. By the fall of 1865, the bakufu had already lost a significant portion of the power of the once mighty Tokugawa shogunate, this was reflected by the fact that powerful lords did not comply with the shogunal order to revive the pre-1862 *sankin kōtai* practice.

From 1865 the discord between the shogunate and Satsuma increased significantly. On 15 June 1865, the shogun, escorted by a large contingent of troops,

arrived in Osaka for a second punitive expedition against Chōshū. Satsuma leaders, however, openly opposed the shogunate's punitive campaign and ordered their men to withdraw from Edo and Kyoto.⁵⁴⁵ In November 1865, the gap between the two sides became even greater when the bakufu, pressed by Western powers, requested the imperial sanction of the international treaties. It was during these turbulent months that Satsuma moved away from the pursuing of the *kōbu-gattai* formula and started to formulate its future policy on independently, that is, to develop the idea of a self-sufficient (*kakkyō* 割拠) policy for strengthening and defending its own domain.⁵⁴⁶ In addition, it is well known that, through the mediation of Tosa master-less samurai, such as Sakamoto Ryōma and Nakaoka Shintarō, there was a growing rapprochement between Satsuma and Chōshū by the autumn of 1865. This reconciliation was finally sanctioned by a secret agreement to overthrow the shogunate which was concluded in Osaka by the two domains (Saigō Takamori representing Satsuma and Kido Kōin representing Chōshū) on 7 March 1866. This reconciliation between the most powerful external domains resulted in the downfall of the Tokugawa regime and the establishment of the new Meiji government in 1868.

We might say that the decision by Kagoshima leaders to not obey the bakufu's order to revive the pre-1862 alternate residence practice as well as the alliance between Satsuma and Chōshū brought an end to the political significance of the *Edo dachi* from Kagoshima's perspective. In fact, since the most important role of the Edo-bound embassies was that of enhancing the prestige and authority of the Tokugawa shogun, by refusing to go to Edo Tadayoshi was questioning such authority. After Satsuma samurai had signed a secret agreement that included the removal from power of the shogun, it is

⁵⁴⁵ Iwata, *Ōkubo Toshimichi*, p. 87.

⁵⁴⁶ Sasaki, *Bakumatsu seiji to Satsuma han*, p. 315.

reasonable to think that the Ryukyuan missions lost their primary meaning.

Chapter 7

Epilogue and Conclusions

This concluding part will be dedicated to an exploration of how Edo/Tokyo, Kagoshima and Shuri each viewed the termination of the Ryukyuan embassies to Japan. With regard to the perspective of Edo/Tokyo, I will try to relate the Ryukyuan mission sent to Tokyo in 1872 to the earlier *Edo dachi*. Regarding the Satsuma domain, I will focus my attention on the last phase of the rule by the Tokugawa bakufu and explore the relationships that Kagoshima tried to establish with European countries after the conflict with Great Britain because after the restoration Kagoshima leaders supported the central government in the annexation of the Ryukyu kingdom to Japan. Next, I will investigate the pressing matters the Shuri government was required to deal with during the *bakumatsu* as well as how it assessed the 1872 mission to the new imperial capital. Finally, I will try to clarify the most important points that I have raised in this dissertation.

7.1. The *Ryūkyū shobun* seen from the Ryukyuan embassies to Japan

As is known, between 1872 and 1879 Tokyo leaders resorted to a number of political and diplomatic maneuvers that aimed at formally incorporating the Ryukyu kingdom into the new Meiji government. This process, which terminated with the establishment of Okinawa prefecture in 1879, is generally referred to by historians as *Ryūkyū shobun*, the “disposition of Ryukyu.” In short, during this phase the central government ordered Shuri to dispatch a Ryukyuan embassy to Tokyo, sent a punitive mission to Taiwan with

the purpose of avenging a group of Miyako fishermen defined as “Japanese subjects,” succeeded through British mediation in stipulating an international treaty with the Qing court in which it was stated that Ryukyans were legally Japanese, imposed on Shuri the cessation of tributary relations with China, and eventually incorporated the Ryukyus into the new Meiji state.

As earlier studies have already pointed out the *Ryūkyū shobun* was an international event that included complex and multi-faceted diplomatic negotiations involving Japan; Ryukyuan officials in Okinawa, Beijing and Tokyo; the Qing court; the United States; Great Britain; and France.⁵⁴⁷ Narrowly speaking, the *shobun* began with the appointment of Shō Tai as king of the *Ryūkyū han* 琉球藩 in 1872 and terminated with the institution of Okinawa prefecture in 1879. An examination of the significance of the *shobun*, however, has to take into account a number of elements that cover a temporal and spatial frame that is wider than 1872 to 1879 timeframe. In fact, while the tension between Japan and China over the possession of Ryukyu was not fully concluded until shortly after the first Sino-Japanese war and the subsequent victory of Japan, the cultural assimilation of the Ryukyuan population by the Meiji government continued well into the twentieth century.⁵⁴⁸

As it is beyond the scope of this study to explore in detail all the phases of the *shobun*, I here follow Nishizato Kikō’s interpretation according to which the preconditions for the realization of the *Ryūkyū shobun* were created in the 1850s and ’60s,⁵⁴⁹ and will focus my attention on the very beginning of the *shobun*, in particular on exploring the discussion within the central government with regard to the

⁵⁴⁷ Smits, “The Ryūkyū Shobun,” p. 279.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 280.

⁵⁴⁹ Nishizato, “Ryūkyū mondai wo chūshin ni,” p. 205.

dispatch of a Ryukyuan embassy to Tokyo in 1872. I will try to shed light on those elements of continuity that can be traced between the decision of the Meiji leaders to incorporate Ryukyu into the Japanese state and the problem of the ambiguous political status of Ryukyu faced by Edo authorities during the last phase of the Tokugawa regime.

Earlier research has demonstrated that the intervention of the Meiji government in Ryukyu occurred in a phase during which Japan acted ambiguously with regard to its relationships with the outside world. It maintained the dual attitude of the Asiatic system and Western international law, that is, of tradition and modernity.⁵⁵⁰ In fact, when dealing with the Qing court the Meiji leaders utilized concepts learned from international law, such as the assertion that the land occupied by the indigenous people on Taiwan was *terra nullius* under international law in order to legitimate its punitive expedition against them, imitating Western foreign policy.⁵⁵¹ On the other hand, even though the central government needed to clarify Japan's boundaries in line with Western notions of sovereignty, its claim of suzerainty over Ryukyu was based on hierarchical principles inherited from the traditional East Asian world.⁵⁵² Tokyo leaders based their assertions on the lord-vassal relationship that existed between Japan and Ryukyu since 1609, when the kingdom was invaded by Satsuma.⁵⁵³

The changes that occurred in Japan after 1868 came to involve Ryukyu very soon. The status of dual subordination of Ryukyu to China and Japan was in clear contradiction with the system and ideology brought by Western powers. Because of its ambiguous political status, Ryukyu tended to gravitate outside the orbit of the political

⁵⁵⁰ Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, p. 334 Cf. Caroli, *Storia di Okinawa*, p.80.

⁵⁵¹ Uemura, "The Formation of an "Indigenous People" in East Asia," p. 111.

⁵⁵² Caroli, *Storia di Okinawa*, p. 81.

⁵⁵³ Smits, "The Ryūkyū Shobun," p. 282.

and cultural authority of Japan. This situation created an incompatibility between the political status of Ryukyu and the Japanese *kokutai*, or “national essence.”⁵⁵⁴

As soon as the new Meiji government was established, the Japanese authorities understood that in a context of strong Western nation-states and imperialism it was imperative for Japan to settle its sovereign boundaries, which is why Ryukyu became an urgent matter to resolve. In 1871 the Meiji government officially put an end to the Edo-period domains and established a new system of prefectures (*ken* 県). The former daimyo were appointed governors of the new local administrations under the direct control of the central government. The old territories of the Shimazu were divided; Satsuma and Ōsumi were included in the new Kagoshima prefecture, whose governor was the earlier Satsuma daimyo, Shimazu Tadayoshi; Hyūga, instead, was incorporated in the prefecture of Miyazaki. These reforms also implied the redefinition of the relationship between the Ryukyus and Kagoshima. The Meiji government provisionally assigned control over the Ryukyu kingdom to Kagoshima prefecture, maintaining in this way a status quo with respect to the Edo period. In line with these changes, Ijichi Sadaka and Narahara Kōgorō, two former Satsuma officials, went to Shuri early in 1872 to inform the royal government about the reforms implemented by the central government. They explained to Shuri authorities that for administrative reasons the kingdom was now part of Kagoshima prefecture.⁵⁵⁵ At the same time, a report of the Foreign Ministry informed that a group of fishermen from Miyako Island had been shipwrecked on an isolated coast of Taiwan and that the indigenous population, the Botan, had killed 54 of the 69 castaways.⁵⁵⁶ After this incident, the Japanese leaders

⁵⁵⁴ Caroli, *Storia di Okinawa*, pp. 82-83.

⁵⁵⁵ Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, p. 237.

⁵⁵⁶ For a detailed account on the incident of Taiwan, the punitive expedition and the resulting negotiations between China and Japan, see Kerr, *Okinawa: the History of an Island People*.

realized that it was imperative to resolve the ambiguous political status of dual subordination of the Ryukyu kingdom to China and Japan and made the island group part of the new Meiji state.⁵⁵⁷

In the spring of 1872, the Meiji leaders began to discuss the question of the political status of Ryukyu. From the debates three main possible courses of action emerged. One resolution was proposed by the Minister of Finance, Inoue Kaoru, and was supported by Ōkubo Toshimichi. It advocated the abolition of the dual subordination of Ryukyu to China and Japan in favor of the exclusive annexation of the kingdom by Japan. According to Inoue, historical events demonstrated that since the Keichō era (1596-1615) the Ryukyus had been governed by Satsuma domain. The kingdom, however, continued to pay tribute to the Qing court. It was, thus, now necessary to establish a single system for the homeland.⁵⁵⁸ Another proposal was advanced by the Foreign Minister, Soejima Taneomi, who shared the desire of incorporating Ryukyu in Japan with Inoue; however, he was convinced it was necessary to realize this goal gradually. He proposed to first ensure that the Ryukyuan king, Shō Tai, would receive the investiture from the Meiji emperor. The third proposal came from the members of the *sain* 左院 or Ministry of the Left who submitted a detailed, nine-point account that suggested to maintain the status quo by declaring publicly that the Ryukyus were subordinate to both China and Japan.⁵⁵⁹

Despite the fact that, in the end, the Meiji leaders adopted Soejima's proposal, let us focus our attention on the nine-point proposal of the *sain*.

The first article stated that they had ascertained that thus far the Ryukyus

⁵⁵⁷ Smits, "The Ryūkyū Shobun," p. 281.

⁵⁵⁸ Uemura, "The Formation of an "Indigenous People" in East Asia," p. 113.

⁵⁵⁹ Nishizato, "ShōTai sakuhō mondai to sono shūhen," pp. 698-699.

belonged to both China and Japan. The second article clarified that the subordination of Ryukyu to China was merely nominal, while the subordination of Ryukyu to Japan was real. Even though the Ryukyuan kings nominally receive the investiture from the Chinese emperor and even though the Ryukyu kingdom followed the Chinese calendar, in reality the Shimazu family had been governing the Ryukyus for generations: not only had they sent their military officers, i.e. the *zaiban bugyō* and a number of other officials, to keep the peace and maintain order on the islands but they had accompanied the Ryukyuan ambassadors to pay tribute to Japan. From the perspective of the political system of Tokugawa bakufu Ryukyu was dependent on Japan. The third point suggested to allow China to maintain nominal control while assuring for Japan real control over the Ryukyus, in case the Chinese would take issue with Japan's trying to assert its exclusive rights over the kingdom. It was specified that the dispatch of Shimazu's military officers to maintain peace on the islands was proof that Japan held substantive control over Ryukyu. Conform to the proposal of the Minister of Finance, the fourth article suggested to not receive the Ryukyuan envoys in the same fashion Japan formally received the embassies from Western countries. Nevertheless, they were also not to be mentioned in the same breath as the visits to the court of the new local governors. Because this was the first time after the restoration of imperial authority that Ryukyuan envoys would present tribute and because this mission was considered more important than the visits by the local governors, the document, however, urged to treat the Ryukyuan envoys with the same care accorded to Western envoys. It was, thus, suggested to temporarily entrust the Foreign Ministry with the organization of receiving the embassy. The fifth point reconfirmed that the embassy should be received by the Foreign Ministry and that it should be treated as if it was a mission from a subordinate

country. The sixth article proposed to put to an end to the interactions between Ryukyu and foreign countries. Then, the fact that the Ryukyuan people were different from the Japanese was underlined, and that, therefore, the nobility of the kingdom should not be accorded the same status in the Meiji state. The seventh point stated that the existence of a kingdom within the Meiji state was not considered a problem and that it was conceivable to grant investiture to their king. The eighth point recommended allowing the Ryukyuan king to receive investiture from the Qing court and publicly announcing that Ryukyu was subordinate to China and Japan. The ninth point suggested, as had been the case in the past, to send a Japanese garrison from Kyūshū to the islands to maintain the peace.⁵⁶⁰

These nine points described in detail above are extremely important because they allow us to explore how a group of Meiji leaders saw the political status of the Ryukyu kingdom early in 1872. We have already mentioned that for the authors of these articles the best policy to adopt was that of maintaining the status quo, i.e. to preserve the dual subordination of Ryukyu to China and Japan, and to make it publicly known. It is worthy to note that these officials considered Ryukyu's subordination to China to be merely nominal, while the subordination to Japan real. As evidence of the subordinate status of Ryukyu to the Tokugawa bakufu they cited the fact that the Shimazu had been governing the kingdom for generations, that they sent their officials to the islands to maintain order, and that they accompanied the Ryukyuan ambassadors when those paid tribute to the shogun. In other words, the members of the *sain* deemed the Ryukyuan missions to Edo to be evidence of the subordination of Ryukyu to Japan. It is also interesting to observe that the fourth article makes it all too clear that the Ryukyuan

⁵⁶⁰ *Ryūkyū shozoku mondai kankei shiryō*, vol. 1, Yokoyama Manabu, ed., (Tokyo: Honpō shoseki, 1980), pp. 2-12.

embassy to Tokyo they were planning to receive was the first mission to pay tribute to Japan after the Meiji Restoration. This terminology probably allows us to assume that the Meiji leaders claimed to have inherited all those feudal rights over Ryukyu enjoyed by the Tokugawa, including the dispatch of Ryukyuan missions. In fact, from the nine-point document we may surmise that the *sain* considered the Ryukyuan embassies to be a practice that had been carried out during the Edo period, and that now, after the restoration, was rightfully inherited by the central government. It is important to point out, however, that these government officials did not consider the Ryukyuan missions to Edo to be diplomatic embassies; they deemed them tributary missions. In addition, even though they suggested to not receive the Ryukyuan mission in the same fashion accorded to Western embassies, they desired to treat the Ryukyuan envoys with great respect since it was the first time after the restoration that a Ryukyuan embassy would visit Tokyo, and, therefore, they urged to welcome them with the same care accorded to foreign delegations.

Then, we might also add that their suggestion to declare publicly the subordination of Ryukyu to both China and Japan can be considered evidence for the fact that, even though the bakufu had informed the British government in 1862 of the dual subordination of Ryukyu, the *sain* members were convinced that the true nature of the relationship between the Ryukyus and Japan had remained unknown abroad. Therefore, it was now imperative to make the dual obligation of Ryukyu to China and Japan publicly known.

As a result of the discussions about the political status of Ryukyu within the central government, Shuri was required to dispatch an embassy to Tokyo to celebrate the restoration of imperial authority and to pay respect to the Meiji emperor. Yokoyama

Manabu and Tamai Tatsuya deemed the 1872 Tokyo mission the last Ryukyuan embassy to Japan; however, they did not provide substantial reasons for claiming a connection with the missions sent during the Edo period.⁵⁶¹ Here, based on an accurate re-reading of primary sources I hope to have shown why from a political viewpoint the Tokyo delegation should be linked to earlier *Edo dachi*.

On 15 August 1872, the royal government received the formal order to send the mission to Tokyo from Kagoshima and on 19 August it appointed prince Ie Chōchoku as ambassador and Ginowan Uekata as vice ambassador. In addition, thirty-five other members were nominated. The mission left Naha on 28 August and arrived in Tokyo on 5 October. On 16 October the Japanese Foreign Ministry transmitted to the Ryukyuan ambassadors the following imperial decree:

We, by the grace of Heaven, having succeeded to the Imperial Throne occupied by one line for ten thousand years, possess the four seas and rule as sovereign over the eight islands. Ryukyu is now our southern border, its territory is the same as ours and its language differs not. For generations it has served Satsuma and now you, Shō Tai, have acted with reverential sincerity of heart. We will confer on you a signal honor by raising you to be king of the Ryukyu domain and appointing you a noble. You, Shō Tai, attaching proper weight to duties of the domain, shall rule over your people, and obey the imperial will while supporting the Imperial House.⁵⁶²

The request from the Meiji government to dispatch an embassy was aimed at publicly showing the subordination of the Ryukyuan king to the Japanese emperor. In light of the

⁵⁶¹ Yokoyama, *Ryūkyū koku shisetsu*; Tamai, “Saigo no Ryūkyū shisetsu wo tsūjite.”

⁵⁶² Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, p. 238. Translation of *Daijōkan nisshi*, 16 October 1872, in *The Japan Weekly Mail*, 16 November 1872.

nine-point report submitted by the *sain*, we may surmise that the decision to rely on the reception of an embassy to achieve such a goal was reached keeping in mind that the Ryukyu kingdom had been sending missions to Japan for centuries. On the one hand, thus, we can distinguish elements of continuity with the former *Edo dachi*. On the other, however, considering the purpose of this embassy, it was completely different from those dispatched to Edo. In a way similar to that of the Chinese emperor according the investiture to the Ryukyuan kings, the Meiji emperor appointed the king of Ryukyu, Shō Tai, as king of the *Ryūkyū han*. The new title granted to Shō Tai implied that the *Ryūkyū han* already existed as a dependency of Japan and now it was symbolically incorporated into the Meiji state.⁵⁶³ The Meiji leaders used this embassy to transfer all feudal rights over Ryukyu that the Shimazu had enjoyed for centuries and that the central government had inherited from the Tokugawa regime to the emperor. It was the first political measure adopted by the Meiji leaders to incorporate the Ryukyus into the central government. It also marked the termination of the Ryukyuan embassies to Japan.⁵⁶⁴

Thereafter, during the Ryukyuan embassy's stay in Tokyo, the Meiji government formally informed foreign governments that Japan took responsibility of the Ryukyus. On 20 November, the American Consul Charles E. DeLong asked the central government clarification with regard to the establishment of the Ryukyu domain and reminded the government that Shuri had signed international treaties with foreign governments. The Japanese Foreign Minister, Soejima, asserted that the Ryukyu Islands

⁵⁶³ Nishizato, "ShōTai sakuhō mondai to sono shūhen," p. 698.

⁵⁶⁴ It is worthy to note that the imperial edit declared that Ryukyu and Japan had the same territory (or climate, the term used in the original text is *kirui* 気類, which can refer to both), that their language did not differ, and that Shō Tai was appointed a noble. It did not mention, however, that the Japanese and Ryukyuan people were the same. Even though Ōkubo Toshimichi will succeed in 1874 in stipulating an international treaty with the Qing court through British mediation in which the Ryukyuan are referred to as Japanese subjects, the central government in 1872 manifestly showed its reluctance to formally consider the Japanese and the Ryukyuan to be the same people.

were part of the Japanese state and assured the United States and other foreign governments that Japan would take full responsibility for the treaties concluded by the Ryukyu kingdom. The central government, thus, did not state that such treaties were invalid, but it claimed to have inherited them from the kingdom.⁵⁶⁵ On 18 December, 1872, Washington ordered DeLong to recognize the Japanese claim.⁵⁶⁶

As was mentioned earlier, the events of 1872 marked the beginning of the *Ryūkyū shobun* and from then on the central government made every effort to assert the legitimacy of its claim over Ryukyu. As Yokoyama Manabu has argued, the Meiji leaders used the results of research conducted by Japanese scholars and officials throughout the Edo period to support their claim. Ijichi Sadaka, member of the family traditionally responsible for administering Satsuma's affairs in the Ryukyus and who after the restoration strongly advocated the annexation of Ryukyu into the new Meiji state, collected a large part of this previous research and drafted a comprehensive report on the relationship between Ryukyu and Japan from antiquity to 1873, the year in which he completed his work. This detailed account is known as *Ryūkyū hōhan jiryaku* 琉球封藩事略. In line with the topic of this dissertation, it is interesting to observe that several pages of the report were dedicated to recording the dispatch of Ryukyuan embassies to Edo. According to the *Ryūkyū hōhan jiryaku*, after the invasion of Satsuma and the consolidation of control by the Shimazu family over the Ryukyus, “[Satsuma and Ryukyu] took great care of their faithful relationship from that time. [The Ryukyu kingdom] was not neglectful to bring tribute [to Satsuma and Edo]. It was called *gakeishi* [賀慶使 = *keigashi*], [missions sent] to celebrate the appointment of a new shogun or the birth of a new shogunal heir. It was called *onshashi* [恩謝使 = *shaonshi*],

⁵⁶⁵ Uemura, “The Formation of an “Indigenous People” in East Asia,” p. 115.

⁵⁶⁶ Kerr, *Okinawa: the History of an Island People*, p. 364.

[embassies dispatched] to thank [the shogunate] on the occasion of the enthronement [of a new Ryukyuan king].”⁵⁶⁷ Then, Ijichi provided a detailed account of the tributary relationship between the Qing court and Ryukyu on the one hand and between Shuri and Edo on the other. With regard to the latter, despite some mistakes such as the failure to record the embassy sent to Edo in 1649 and dating the beginning of the Ueno Tōshōgū’s pilgrimage to 1710 instead of 1671, Ijichi wrote an accurate record of all the Ryukyuan missions to Edo. He depicts them as tributary missions, divides them based on their purposes in *gakeishi* and *onshashi* and lists the names of every *seishi* or ambassador.⁵⁶⁸ The year of every mission was noted according to the Japanese imperial line calendar, as well as the Chinese and Western calendars. There was no reference to Tokugawa era names. In other words, Ijichi was reinventing the Ryukyuan embassies’ past in order to serve the Meiji government’s intentions with regard to Ryukyu.

We might conclude that the reports submitted by the *sain* and Ijichi in the early years of the Meiji era transformed the diplomatic embassies from the king of Ryukyu to the Tokugawa shogun into tributary missions from a vassal to its lord, or a change from *Edo dachi* to *Edo nobori*. In other words, from the Meiji state’s point of view the Ryukyuan missions dispatched during the Edo period were seen as one element of proof for the subordinate status of Ryukyu to Japan.

At this point it is important to discuss the dispatch of the 1872 Ryukyuan mission to Tokyo and the incorporation of the *Ryūkyū han* into the Meiji state in a broader context. In the official reply sent by the *rōjū* to the Dutch government in 1845, the bakufu declared to the Western world that Ryukyu was a kingdom with which it maintained

⁵⁶⁷ *Ryukyu hōhan jiryaku*, vol. 1, Hōsei Daigaku Okinawa Kenkyūjo: Private Publication, p. 103.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 103-117; vol. 2, pp. 2-4.

diplomatic, or *tsūshin*-type, relations, implying that the archipelago was not under the jurisdiction of Japan.⁵⁶⁹ A year earlier, Western powers had arrived in Ryukyu and had begun to ask the royal government to establish diplomatic and trade relations. These requests caused deep concern to Satsuma and the bakufu, and in 1846 the *rōjū* Abe Masahiro tacitly consented to Satsuma's request to establish trade between the Ryukyuan and the French in order to defend the Japanese *kokutai*.⁵⁷⁰ In line with these events, Mito Nariaki suggested to annex Ryukyu in a proposal sent to the bakufu that same year.⁵⁷¹

In 1854, on the occasion of the stipulation of the Treaty of Amity of Kanagawa between Japan and the United States, the bakufu renounced to officially assert any claim over the small archipelago and decided to conceal to the West the true power relations between Edo, Kagoshima and Shuri, fearing that Westerners could inform the Chinese of the subordination of the kingdom to Japan. When Perry arrived in Japan, however, the members of the shogunate began to seriously—but privately—investigate the relationship between the Ryukyu kingdom and Japan as well as if it would be appropriate to publicly reveal those relations. The shogunate considered the kingdom as a realm traditionally subordinate both to China and Japan. However, the intrusion of the Americans in Japan caused a breach in the existing state of affairs and the bakufu started to fear that the Americans would take control over Ryukyu. Therefore, it became necessary to prove—and, sooner or later, to publicly assert—that Ryukyu was under

⁵⁶⁹ Fujita, *Kinsei kōki seijishi to taigai kankei*, pp. 23-24.

⁵⁷⁰ *DNIS*, vol. 1-2, p. 38.

⁵⁷¹ In addition, in a missive sent to Abe Masahiro in 1846, Mito Nariaki mentioned that before Japan could be robbed of Ryukyu by the barbarians (*iteki* 夷狄 = Westerners), Satsuma should dispatch a large military contingent to the kingdom. On Ryukyuan territory the Japanese troops should challenge and defeat the Westerners in a decisive battle that would prevent them from approaching Japan. Nishizato, "Naisei mondai to taigai kankei," p. 625.

Japanese control. I was able to ascertain that some members of the bakufu, such as Hayashi Daigaku-no-kami, Tsutsui Hizen-no-kami, the *kaibō gakari* and Abe Masahiro, saw the dispatch of missions of congratulation and gratitude to Edo as tangible evidence of the subordinate status of Ryukyu to Japan. In this phase, however, as was already mentioned, Edo leaders renounced to advance any claim over Ryukyu and preferred to define the kingdom as a distant territory over which the shogun had limited authority. Almost a decade later, in 1862, given that the situation had changed after the stipulation of the Ansei Treaties, the shogunate declared to the British government in a formal reply to an inquiry—in which the British openly stated that there were contradictions in what the bakufu had publicly declared so far with regard to its relationship with Ryukyu—that Ryukyu was subordinate both to China and Japan. We may surmise that Edo leaders aimed at containing any claim of Great Britain upon Ryukyu, in the same way as before they feared American encroachment on the small archipelago. In this way, the bakufu asserted its rights over Ryukyu, even though this assertion was limited to the British, and as proof of its effective hegemony over the islands it cited the fictitious *Kakitsu fuyō* theory, the invasion of Satsuma of 1609, the fact that since then the Shimazu had been conducting numerous affairs on the islands, and the Ryukyuan missions of congratulation and gratitude sent from Shuri to Edo. We might observe a close similarity between the content of the formal reply and its attachment, both presented to the British government in October 1862, and the content of the reports with regard to the relationship between Ryukyu and Japan submitted to the bakufu by a number of Edo officials in 1854, i.e. after the stipulation of the Treaty of Kanagawa. In 1854 and 1862, Edo leaders considered Ryukyu as a kingdom that had obligations both to China and Japan, and interpreted the Ryukyuan embassies to the shogunal capital as

evidence of the subordinate status of Ryukyu to Japan. From all this, we may deduce that after the intrusion of Western powers in Ryukyu and Japan, from the shogunate's perspective the Ryukyuan missions to Edo became to acquire a new political meaning. Rather than enhancing the prestige of the Tokugawa shogun, the missions came to be seen as tangible proof of Shuri's obligation toward Japan. We may surmise that Meiji leaders inherited this perspective. As we have seen, the last Ryukyuan embassy ever reached Japan in 1872. Even though we have observed that its main objective was entirely different from that of the former *Edo dachi*, the terminology used by Meiji leaders revealed that they decided to require Shuri to dispatch a mission to Tokyo with the practice of Ryukyuan embassies during the Edo period in mind. In other words, although the mission of 1872 was treated as an embassy from a subordinate state and was received by Japan's Foreign Minister, it reflected elements of continuity with earlier practice, too. We might say that the dispatch of a Ryukyuan mission to Tokyo in 1872 also represented the translation into reality of the new meaning accorded by the bakufu leaders to the missions from Shuri, since its main objective was that of publicly showing the subordination of the Ryukyuan king to the Japanese emperor as well as that of symbolically incorporating the Ryukyu kingdom into Japan.

We might also observe that when the bakufu leaders dealt with the political status of Ryukyu in 1844-1846, 1854 and 1862, they faced a difficult problem that, although they did not have the key to resolving it, they managed to handle in line with their understanding of the outside world. In 1846, Abe Masahiro tacitly consented to establish trade between the Ryukyuan and the French with the purpose of defending the Japanese *kokutai*. In 1854, the bakufu leaders were negotiating the signing of their first international treaty ever. Their main objective being to reduce to a minimum the

concessions to accord the Americans, they were not prepared to deal with matters of international law such as publicly defining the sovereign boundaries of Japan. In this phase, therefore, they opted for defining the kingdom as a foreign country. It is worthy to mention, however, that in that same year Abe Masahiro proposed to Shimazu Nariakira to abandon the policy of masking the true nature of the relationship between Ryukyu and Japan to the Chinese and make the subordination of the Ryukyus to the Tokugawa bakufu publicly known abroad. Even though Nariakira immediately agreed to Abe's suggestion, the plan was put aside later.

In 1862, the shogunate leaders did not fully abandon their policy of concealing the true nature of the relationship between Ryukyu and Japan to the Chinese, but they did choose to formally reply to the British government that Ryukyu had obligations both to China and Japan. Finally, in 1872, the Meiji authorities arbitrarily decided to appoint the Ryukyuan monarch as king of the *Ryūkyū han* and they declared to the American government that Ryukyu was part of Japan.

In light of these events, we might trace a trajectory connecting the above-mentioned episodes in which Japanese leaders had to deal with the political status of Ryukyu during their negotiations with Westerners. As Nishizato has pointed out, the preconditions for the realization of the *Ryūkyū shobun* in the Meiji era were created in the 1850s and '60s.⁵⁷² Here, we might say that we were able to explore in concrete terms how these preconditions took form. From the period when the Western powers arrived in East Asia until the collapse of the Tokugawa regime and especially at the time of the afore-mentioned events of 1854 and 1862 we might distinguish a gray zone in which some Japanese leaders seriously began to investigate how to settle the

⁵⁷² Nishizato, "Ryūkyū mondai wo chūshin ni," p. 205.

question of the political status of Ryukyu vis-à-vis Japan. They considered Ryukyu as a kingdom subordinate both to China and Japan; however, after the intrusion of Westerners in East Asia it became necessary to prove and assert Japan's claims over the small archipelago in order to prevent foreigners from taking control over the Ryukyus. We, thus, might say that their strategy was mainly defensive. This gradually growing of interest toward the Ryukyus had its epilogue after the restoration when the Meiji leaders had become more experienced in Western international law and realized the urgency of defining their sovereign boundaries in an age of imperialism. The *Ryūkyū shobun*, which brought the demise of the Ryukyu kingdom and the annexation of its territory to Japan, may, thus, be reexamined starting from the intrusion of Western powers in East Asia. That is why such intrusion in the 1840s was inexorably destined to involve the future of the Ryukyus. This study, thus, sheds light to the changing nature of Japanese diplomacy from the early modern era into the modern era.

Hobsbawm has described the years 1848-1875 as the period characterized by the rise of capitalism and the consolidation of European bourgeois culture. It was an age in which capitalism extended throughout the world and a remarkable minority of “underdeveloped” countries became a mosaic of industrial economies.⁵⁷³

As earlier studies have pointed out, the intrusion of the Western powers should be considered as a constant and decisive element in the fall of the Tokugawa regime.⁵⁷⁴ In line with this, we might also consider the demise of the Ryukyu kingdom and its incorporation into the Meiji state as inescapably linked to the intrusion of the foreigners in East Asia. That is why from the moment when foreign vessels began to appear along Ryukyuan coasts in the 1840s, sooner or later the question of the Ryukyuan relationship

⁵⁷³ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Il Trionfo della Borghesia 1848-1875* (Bari: Editori Laterza, 2006), p. 38.

⁵⁷⁴ Totman, *The Collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu*, p. 459.

with Japan would have to be resolved by the bakufu. The Tokugawa leaders tried to deal with this problem in a realistic and rational way conform to their understanding of the outside world. After the arrival of Perry, they understood that it became necessary to assert their claims over Ryukyu from a defensive perspective .

Thereafter, as is known, the Ryukyu kingdom was the first state forced to separate from the Chinese tribute system because of the pressure exerted by the Meiji government. We may, thus, consider the *Ryūkyū shobun* as a reflection of a wider process which had begun with the intrusion of Western powers in East Asia in the 1840s and which culminated in the dismantling of the Chinese tributary system. In concomitance with these facts, the dismantling of the Chinese world order, as well as that of the Japan-centered *taikun gaikō*, and the *Ryūkyū shobun* might also be understood as reflections of an even more global process which extended from Europe to North America taking the form of a world system, in which center and periphery became connected by interdependent but unequal relations. The *Ryūkyū shobun* is, therefore, an integral part both of East Asia and world history.

7.2. The Satsuma domain during the final years of the Tokugawa shogunate

In chapter six I have tried to demonstrate that from the autumn of 1862 until 1865 the Satsuma authorities, on several occasions and for different reasons, asked the bakufu to postpone the *sankin kōtai* duty of Shimazu Tadayoshi. In line with this, I have pointed out that Tadayoshi was one of the rare daimyo who did not accomplish even one period of alternate residence during his term. The matter of the Satsuma daimyo's alternate residence was not, however, a problem involving only a shogunate that wished that one

of its vassals paid respect to the shogun, and a group of Satsuma leaders who made every effort so that their lord would avoid the bakufu's orders. It was a matter that regarded factions within the Satsuma authorities as well. I have already observed that after Hisamitsu had returned to Kagoshima after his first mission in Kyoto and Edo in 1862, he showed his intention that the daimyo would accomplish his duty in Edo. On the other hand, Tadayoshi and his party manifested reluctance with regard to Hisamitsu's suggestion. Here, from a highly confidential account written by an anonymous Satsuma official in 1864, we may deduce that within the Satsuma domain the question of the non-accomplishment of Tadayoshi's *sankin kōtai* was a problem that would continue to divide opinions. With all due respect, this devoted retainer wrote to his superiors that his primary concern was the fact that his daimyo had not visited Edo for his *sankin kōtai* duty. He stated that this non-accomplishment could arouse suspicion since it seemed that his lord did not respect the bakufu's authority any longer or was plotting the seizure of the realm's power. If Tadayoshi were to visit to Edo, however, he would remove those suspicions and their whole domain would feel greatly relieved. He wrote that he personally believed that the shogun, too, would be truly delighted to see their daimyo accomplish his mission. Then, in a new, more peaceful scenario, he thought that Tadayoshi could work more profitably for the benefit of the realm. Otherwise, if their lord's attitude raised some sort of false suspicion, he thought it would hinder all subsequent political moves of Satsuma. This would, first of all, be undesirable for their fief, and, second, it would cause inconvenience to the realm. That is why he pleaded with his lord to visit Edo for a little while.⁵⁷⁵

From this interesting confidential petition we may infer that within the

⁵⁷⁵ *Tamazato Shimazuke shiryō*, vol. 4, n. 1244, p. 1.

government of Kagoshima there were different opinions with regard to the *sankin kōtai* of Tadayoshi, and at least one official even pleaded with his superiors so that his lord would accomplish his duty in the shogunal capital. From the message transpires the sense of unease felt by Satsuma samurai with respect to the shogunate due to the long non-accomplishment of their daimyo's visit to Edo. We might say that in 1864, despite the fact that a rupture emerged within the *kōbu-gattai* movement, the domain of Satsuma was still loyal to the bakufu and it was still far-away from signing a secret agreement with its former rival Chōshū with the purpose of overthrowing shogunal authority. Therefore, it seems reasonable that within the government of Kagoshima some voices invoking the accomplishment of their lord's duty in Edo made themselves heard. However, it is important to emphasize the fact that these people did not speak out merely out of their sense of loyalty for the shogun. We may surmise that their main purpose was to avoid suspicion regarding their daimyo and that they were moved by the strong conviction that a visit to Edo would benefit their domain in the first place.

As has been mentioned earlier, from 1865 the relationship between the bakufu and Satsuma inevitably became incongruous and one of the consequences was that Kagoshima leaders started to articulate their future policy based on the idea of self-sufficiency. In addition, after the bombardment of Kagoshima, Satsuma leaders chose to increase their interactions with the British as well as to open their domain to foreign influences. It was in line with this new political course of action that in the spring of 1865 Satsuma dispatched its first mission to Europe with the purpose of purchasing modern weapons and expanding its commercial connections overseas. The mission, whose members included Godai Tomoatsu, Niuro Gyōbu, Machida Minbu, and Matsuki Kōan, visited Great Britain, Belgium, Prussia and France where it engaged in

buying industrial machinery and visiting modern factories.⁵⁷⁶

It is interesting to note that while in London, during an interview with the British author and diplomat, Laurence Oliphant, the Kagoshima envoys dissociated themselves from Edo's foreign policy and mentioned to the British government the fact that, even though the powerful domains desired to expand their business networks with Western countries, the shogunate was reluctant since it possessed the monopoly over international trade and did not wish to share it with them.⁵⁷⁷

In Brussels, the Satsuma officials encountered the arms-dealer Count Charles de Montblanc, who was known for his trade contacts with the shogunate. On 15 October 1865, Godai and Niuro signed with Montblanc a provisional commercial agreement creating a joint company that was to provide technical assistance and materials to Kagoshima's mining and manufacturing industry in exchange for a monopoly over the commercial transactions carried out with the Ryukyus.⁵⁷⁸ The seventh article of the contract, in fact, stipulated that "business should begin with the opening of the two ports of Naha and Uten within the Ryukyu kingdom and that of Naze in Amami Ōshima. Then, it should also provide means in order to expand the transactions as new trading companies are gradually established."⁵⁷⁹

It was during the meetings with Montblanc that the possibility of dispatching a Satsuma delegation to the Paris Universal Exposition which was going to be held in 1867 took shape. After a close examination of the details, Kagoshima gave its official authorization and Montblanc took the delicate role of acting as intermediary upon

⁵⁷⁶ Patrick Beillevaire "Wavering Attention: French Governmental Policy towards the Ryūkyū Kingdom," Josef Kreiner, ed., *Ryūkyū in World History* (Bonn: Bier'sche Verlagsanstalt, 2001), pp. 230-231. Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, p. 201.

⁵⁷⁷ Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration*, p. 248.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

⁵⁷⁹ *Tadayoshikō shiryō*, vol. 3, n. 669, pp. 761-763.

himself in order to assist the exhibiting of Kagoshima products at the Exposition. As a result, two Japanese delegations, one representing the shogunate and the other Satsuma, participated in the Paris Exposition. As earlier studies have argued, the presence of the Satsuma delegates embarrassed and troubled both the organizers and the official bakufu envoys.⁵⁸⁰ The bakufu delegation was led by Yoshinobu's younger brother, Tokugawa Akitake, while the Satsuma delegates were headed by the Kagoshima senior Councilor Iwashita Masahira. After complicated and tiring negotiations with the shogunal representative in Paris, the Satsuma delegation succeeded in obtaining permission to display its products separately under the Japanese flag and the inscription *Nihon Satsuma taishu seifu* "Government of the Viceroy of Satsuma of Japan." At the same time, however, the Satsuma mission also showed off striking medals upon which *Satsuma Ryūkyū koku* "Country of Satsuma and Ryūkyū" was written.⁵⁸¹

The Satsuma envoys cited as main reason for their claim to have a separate exhibition area the fact that their lord had been exerting suzerainty over the Ryūkyū kingdom for centuries. A possession over the kingdom that through an *ad hoc* adjustment was transformed into full sovereignty and elevated Shimazu Tadayoshi to the title of king, manifesting in this way his independent status from the Tokugawa shogunate.⁵⁸² In other words, Satsuma succeeded in challenging the status of Japan's central authority which, at that time, the shogunate was desperately trying and retrying to assert in the domestic and international arena.⁵⁸³

Let us now turn our attention to an interesting document kept by the French

⁵⁸⁰ For a detailed account of the participation of the Satsuma delegation in the Paris Exposition as well as of the problems arising from the presence of rival Japanese delegations in Paris, see Beillevaire "French Governmental Policy towards the Ryūkyū Kingdom," pp. 230-235; and Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, pp. 201-204.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² Beillevaire "French Governmental Policy towards the Ryūkyū Kingdom," pp. 233.

⁵⁸³ Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, p. 204.

Foreign Ministry that reveals an attempt made by Iwashita Sajiemon (Masahira), the leader of the Satsuma delegation, to have an appointment with the French Foreign Minister in 1867.⁵⁸⁴ Iwashita introduced himself to the French authorities as “Envoy of the Ryūkyū Sovereign” and asked to be received by the Minister by presenting the following letter:

Covered by the order of the King-Prince of the Ryūkyū kingdom who sent me to visit all the European governments with intent to form friendly relationships, especially with the Emperor of France, I am carrying out a letter and various objects, and I have authority of an Envoy. Having undergone a safe journey, I wish to confer immediately about the different aims of my mission and to commend them to the proper person. This is the reason why I am asking to meet with the Foreign Minister.

With respect, Iwashita Sajiemon

9 February 1867

As Patrick Beillevaire has pointed out, the reference to Ryukyu in the above letter of introduction was in reality a cover, namely a stratagem of Satsuma for expanding its trade networks in Europe.⁵⁸⁵ If the 1865 embassy was designed to tie Satsuma’s commercial expansion to its military reforms, the 1867 delegation was intended to show Kagoshima’s autonomy from Edo on a world stage. In Paris, Satsuma used its control over Ryukyu to be taken seriously and at the same time to appeal to the French authorities. The title “Envoy of the Ryūkyū Sovereign” used by Iwashita was without any doubt a fictitious designation. It is interesting to note, however, that at a time when from Kagoshima’s perspective the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo had lost their political

⁵⁸⁴ We owe Patrick Beillevaire who introduced this precious document to us.

⁵⁸⁵ Beillevaire, “French Governmental Policy towards the Ryūkyū Kingdom,” p. 235.

significance by virtue of the secret understanding signed by Chōshū and Satsuma that aimed at overthrowing the shogun, a new type of Ryukyuan envoy made his entrance on the European stage. The former was the so-called *Edo dachi*, dispatched from the king of Ryukyu to the Tokugawa shogun, which began at the urging of the Shimazu in 1634, and which had been used by the same family to boost its prestige within the domestic arena for more than two hundred years. The latter, however, was a Ryukyuan ambassador in name only, since the man who claimed to be an envoy of the Ryukyuan sovereign was not Ryukyuan, and the lord who sent him overseas was the daimyo of Satsuma, Shimazu Tadayoshi, not the real Ryukyuan king, Shō Tai. Apart from these technical differences, we might observe that just like in the past Satsuma had used Ryukyuan missions to enhance its prestige as a feudal domain domestically, it relied on inventing a brand-new Ryukyuan envoy to introduce itself as an autonomous government in order to facilitate its interactions with Western governments in a phase in which it was trying to find a place for itself on the world stage.

After the collapse of the Tokugawa bakufu and the establishment of the new Meiji government, however, Satsuma leaders overturned their domestic and foreign policy completely and almost without resistance assisted the new rulers to eliminate their old feudal privileges over Ryukyu and place the kingdom under firm Tokyo control. As was mentioned earlier, the abolition of the Satsuma domain and the institution of Okinawa prefecture implied the transfer of rights held previously by the Shimazu over the Ryukyus to the emperor. Behind these changes, there was the necessity to overcome local specifics in favor of the centralization of power in the hands of the new central government. As Hellyer has pointed out, “commercial opportunism energized the domain and led Godai Tomoatsu and others to create a burgeoning domestic and foreign

trade network that helped make the established system of trade through Ryukyu obsolete.”⁵⁸⁶ As a consequence, Ōkubo Toshimichi and other important Kagoshima leaders helped the Meiji government revise traditional practices and include the Ryukyus into the new Japanese state.

The 1872 Ryukyuan mission seen from Shuri’s perspective

Following Nishizato Kikō’s interpretation, I have surmised in this dissertation that because of the permanent presence of Western diplomats in Edo from 1859, the Shuri government would have preferred to avoid sending envoys to Japan. However, if the bakufu were to order the dispatch of a new embassy after 1859, the Ryukyu kingdom could not disregard such order. The confirmation of prince Ie as *seishi* in 1862 may, thus, suggest that from Shuri’s perspective Ryukyuan embassies would, or at least could, also be dispatched in the near future. Here I will try to focus my attention on those urgent political problems that the royal government had to face during the *bakumatsu*. Next, I will try to clarify how Shuri evaluated the mission dispatched to Tokyo in 1872.

In chapter six I have observed that after the Bunkiyū reforms, the strengthening of the Japanese coastal military pursued by Hisamitsu was financially not compatible with an expensive undertaking such as that of a Ryukyuan mission to Edo. We might, thus, consider this incompatibility as one of the main reasons why the *Edo dachi* no longer fit Satsuma’s and the bakufu’s agendas. Moreover, even though in 1862 the Ryukyuan embassies had not yet lost their political significance, thereafter anytime the Satsuma daimyo’s *sankin kōtai* duty was rescheduled, Kagoshima leaders soon exerted their

⁵⁸⁶ Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, p. 246.

influence both with Edo and Kyoto for such duty to be deferred once again. This viewpoint allowed me to verify that after the Bunkiyū reforms the “un-executable” state in which Tadayoshi’s alternate residence duty was staying afloat could also be considered as a valid reason that did not grant the partners involved (Satsuma and the bakufu) the necessary time to even glance once again to the traditional Ryukyuan missions to Edo.

Here, let us examine an interesting missive through which in the fall of 1863 the Satsuma daimyo informed the king of Ryukyu about the postponement of his *sankin kōtai* duties of 1862 and 1863.

I have read your letter. When [before] I was ordered [by the bakufu] to reach Edo during the previous autumn [1842, for the *sankin kōtai*], for inevitable reasons I asked [the shogunate to postpone such duty] because the *Shiba yashiki* burned down [and, therefore,] it was not possible to reside there, and at the same time [this caused great impediments] especially to [the conduct of] our domainal politics [in Edo]. As a result, I was ordered [by the shogunate] to defer my visit to Edo [for the alternate residence service] until last winter. Ujibaru Ueekata, who came [to Satsuma] for celebration, knows the details [of the above fact]. Very truly yours.

15th day of the 12th Month [Bunkiyū 2, solar, 23 January 1863] *Shōshō* Mochihisa [Tadayoshi]

Respectfully to *Chūzan ō*

I have read your letter. We received an order [from the court] [to accomplish] an official mission. When I was required to visit Edo [for the *sankin kōtai* duty], I made a request [to the shogunate]: I was ordered to reach Edo within this spring, however, because lord Saburō [Hisamitsu] [was required] to reach Kyoto, I was [then] ordered [by the bakufu] to visit Edo after

the above [i.e., Hisamitsu's] official mission had been accomplished. Ujibaru Uekata, who came [to Satsuma] for celebration, knows the details [of the above fact]. Very truly yours.

15th day of the 12th Month [Bunkyū 2, solar, 23 January 1863] *Shōshō* Mochihisa [Tadayoshi]

Respectfully to *Chūzan ō*⁵⁸⁷

From the document above, the *Shōke Monjo* n. 331 to be precise, which belongs to the *Shōke Monjo* Collection, i.e. the official documents related to the Shō royal family, we may infer that the Satsuma daimyo informed the king of Ryukyu about the repeated postponement of his alternate residence duty in 1862 and 1863. In 1862, he was expected to reach Edo; however, a fire caused huge damage to the *Shiba yashiki*, so the prince and his retainers could not reside there. Furthermore, it becomes clear that this situation caused significant problems to the conduct of Satsuma political affairs in the shogunal capital. For these reasons, the Shimazu asked the bakufu to postpone their daimyo's *sankin kōtai* duty and the shogunate agreed to defer it until the fall of 1862. As we have seen in chapter five, the bakufu commanded Satsuma to postpone Tadayoshi's visit to Edo to "October" 1862, which corresponds to "until last winter" in the missive above. Thereafter, the Satsuma daimyo's obligation was postponed until the beginning of 1863 as a result of the Bunkyū reforms. However, in the fall of 1862, the court required Shimazu Hisamitsu to reach Kyoto on the occasion of the imminent visit to the imperial capital of the shogun Iemochi. As we can see in the document above, Satsuma asked the shogunate to postpone Tadayoshi's duty in Edo once again, and the bakufu ordered the Satsuma daimyo to reach the shogunal capital after Hisamitsu had accomplished his official mission in Kyoto.

⁵⁸⁷ *Shōke monjo*, n. 331, *Shita gojō narabini onkakitsuke utsushi* (Naha: Rekishi Hakubutsukan Etsuranshitsu), pp. 17-18.

From the above, it is clear that the Shuri government was informed about Tadayoshi's *sankin kōtai* postponements in 1862 and 1863. Shuri, therefore, knew that the Satsuma daimyo had not visited Edo for his duty in honor of the shogun for a number of years, and that Hisamitsu was required to go to Kyoto for an official mission early in 1863. In other passages of the same *Shōke Monjo* n. 331, we can observe that Kagoshima informed Shuri about Hisamitsu's appointment as tutor to Tadayoshi and that the Satsuma daimyo's entourage had already left Edo and had returned to the domain because of the 1862 reforms. In addition, from the missive above, we can also surmise that Ujibaru Uekata, who went to Kagoshima as *nentōshi* and was appointed *zaiban uekata* at the *Ryūkyūkan*, was expected to inform his government in detail about all the details that Tadayoshi did not mention in his missive addressed to the Ryukyuan king. From this, we may surmise that the royal government was kept informed by Satsuma about the changes in domainal policy during the turbulent years of the *bakumatsu*.

However, the Shuri government was not a simple spectator of what was happening in Japan at that time. In the fall of 1863, Ujibaru Uekata wrote to his government that Hisamitsu had been selected for an official mission and had gone to Kyoto. He described the Japanese domestic situation as a state of affairs so complicated that it was impossible to foresee when a political incident might occur. He stated that if by any chance an incident would happen and its turmoil would extend to Satsuma, he would be unable to carry out the preparations for the Chinese investiture mission in the *Ryūkyūkan*. He also confirmed that he had handed the formal letter for celebrating the New Year to the Satsuma leaders and that he had begun to deal with his formal duty of asking Satsuma for a loan of silver to defray the costs of the Chinese mission. He stated

that if tension lessened in the Kyoto-Osaka area, he would carry out his duty without delay. With regard to the Chinese investiture mission, he said that so far this embassy had been postponed several times, but that at present it was impossible to postpone it any longer. It was, thus, opportune to realize it the next Tiger Year, i.e. in 1866, as had been decided previously by the royal government.⁵⁸⁸

According to Ujibaru Uekata, Ryukyuan officials in Kagoshima were watching Japanese political affairs with extreme interest. These officials, in fact, were very concerned that there would be an incident and that Kagoshima could become entangled. That is why Shuri had required its officials in Kagoshima to ask the Shimazu for a loan of silver to finance a large portion of the cost of receiving a Chinese mission. In addition, because so far this embassy had been postponed a number of times, it was absolutely necessary to not defer it any longer and welcome it in 1866.

The Chinese mission referred to by Ujibaru Uekata is the embassy of investiture for Shō Tai's succession. Despite the fact that Shō Tai had been enthroned in 1848, he had not received yet the investiture from the Chinese emperor by 1863. The matter of Shō Tai's investiture was an extremely urgent problem for Shuri.

Nishizato explains that in 1851 the royal government began internal consultations and discussions with regard to the investiture mission for Shō Tai. In 1856, Shuri decided to welcome the embassy in 1860. However, the Qing had been fighting a violent civil war against the Taiping since the early 1850s and in 1856 the second Opium War against the British and French governments began. Because of this complicated situation in China, the Ryukyuan missions sent to the Qing court in 1856 and 1858 with the purpose of asking to dispatch the investiture embassy did not reach

⁵⁸⁸ Bunkyū 3/10/20, 30 November 1863. *Shōke monjo*, n. 331, Shita gojō narabini onkakitsuke utsushi (Naha: Rekishi Hakubutsukan Etsuranshitsu), p. 123.

Beijing. As a result, Shō Tai did not receive the investiture in 1860. That same year, the Shuri government decided to welcome the investiture embassy in 1864 and soon began the preparations. However, the situation in China had not improved and the Ryukyuan missions dispatched in 1860 and 1862 also did not arrive in Beijing. In order to receive an investiture mission in 1864, it was necessary that a Ryukyuan mission requesting such investiture mission reached Beijing at least two years earlier, therefore, the following year another Ryukyuan mission sailed from Naha to Fujian with the purpose of welcoming and escorting the Chinese celestial envoys to Naha. In 1863, Shuri dispatched a mission of congratulation in honor of the new Chinese emperor. However, because of strong political and military tensions within the Chinese empire this embassy also was unable to go to Beijing. In the fall of 1864, yet another Ryukyuan tributary mission charged with requesting a mission of investiture was sent to China. The mission stayed several months in Fuzhou where it repeatedly pressed the Chinese authorities to accept the Ryukyuan request. In the spring of 1865 the Chinese authorities eventually announced to the Ryukyuan envoys that the Beijing court had ordered to send an investiture mission to Ryukyu the following year. Thus, Shō Tai finally received his investiture in 1866, 19 years after his enthronement.⁵⁸⁹

According to Nishizato, it was absolutely necessary for the Shuri government that Shō Tai received investiture from the Chinese emperor for the following reasons. Firstly, after the arrival of Westerners in the 1840s, the Ryukyus had rejected their diplomatic and commercial requests citing that the kingdom was a tributary state of China and could not start a relationship with another country without asking permission from the Beijing court. In order to be able to support this claim, Shuri strongly desired that Shō

⁵⁸⁹ Nishizato, “ShōTai sakuhō mondai to sono shūhen,” pp. 690-693.

Tai received the Chinese investiture. Second, the kingdom also rejected Satsuma pressure for opening trade with Westerners citing that those relations could compromise its tributary relationship with China. Therefore, the Chinese investiture embassy could also serve to contain Kagoshima's requests. Third, after the death of Nariakira in the summer of 1858, the royal officials who had supported Nariakira's international trade plan were purged by those who had opposed such cooperation. This episode is known as the *Makishi Onga jiken* 牧志恩河事件. Nariakira's plan, in fact, required the active collaboration of high-ranking Ryukyuan officials. Shuri leaders split into two factions, one that supported cooperation with Kagoshima and another that strongly opposed it. When Nariakira suddenly died in August 1858, Hisamitsu abandoned his elder brother's international trade plan in Kagoshima while in Ryukyu the faction that opposed to collaboration with Satsuma regained power and strongly attacked its rivals. The collaborators included Makishi Peechin, Onga Ueekata and Oroku Ueekata, who were severely punished and eventually paid for their cooperation with Satsuma with their lives.⁵⁹⁰ According to Nishizato, the king lost a big share of its power after this grave Ryukyuan domestic incident, and, therefore, needed to receive the Chinese investiture in order to regain his prestige and authority.⁵⁹¹

From what we have ascertained above, we may deduce that from Shuri's perspective the mission of investiture for celebrating Shō Tai was a state event that could not be renounced. We may thus surmise that from the early 1860s the royal government began its preparations for welcoming the mission and from then on the entire Ryukyu kingdom devoted all its energy to prepare for such an important event. In line with this, as we have seen in the *Shōke Monjo*, Shuri required its officials in

⁵⁹⁰ Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, p. 144.

⁵⁹¹ Nishizato, "ShōTai sakuhō mondai to sono shūhen," p. 696.

Kagoshima to ask the Shimazu for a loan in order to finance the Chinese embassy. We might say that after the Ryukyuan embassy in honor of Iemochi was deferred in 1860, Shuri thought that in the near future a new mission could be planned even though it wanted to stop dispatching envoys to Japan because of the presence of Western diplomats in Edo. That is why prince Ie was confirmed as the *Edo dachi's* ambassador in 1862; however, then Shuri received from the Satsuma daimyo information about the repeated postponement of his alternate residence. From a broader angle, we may observe that information of these deferments also confirmed to Shuri that in that phase both the shogunate and the Satsuma domain were not planning any new Ryukyuan embassies. In fact, we have already pointed out that the *sankin kōtai* of the Satsuma daimyo was an essential condition for planning a Ryukyuan embassy to Edo. It seems that Shuri did not plead with Satsuma for planning a new *Edo dachi* in the final years of rule by the Tokugawa shoguns. Thereafter, the Ryukyu kingdom invested all its energy in the reception of the Chinese investiture mission to celebrate Shō Tai. We may conclude that from Shuri's perspective the *Edo dachi* ended with the postponement of 1860.

Let us now examine the 1872 mission from Shuri's perspective.

Between August and September 1871, the *Ryūkyūkan* informed Shuri that the new central government had decided to abolish the earlier Edo-period domains and establish a new system of prefectures. Soon afterwards, the royal government discussed how to deal with these changes that were taking place in Japan. As a result of these discussions, the Shuri government emphasized the following five points:

- 1) If the new government was determined to put Ryukyu under its direct control, the royal government would reject it and request to continue to be a dependent territory of

Satsuma.

2) Even if Ryukyu were to be put under the direct control of the Meiji government, Shuri would plead to be at least put under Satsuma jurisdiction.

3) Following the example of the Edo bakufu, Shuri would desire to continue dispatching *nentōshi* to Satsuma, as well as sending its envoys to the capital, Tokyo, accompanied by Satsuma officials. She would also follow the practice of dispatching special envoys.

4) Shuri would make arrangements regarding control over the five islands with Satsuma beforehand.

5) If control over the five islands were to be transferred to the court, the royal government would assert that originally those islands belonged to Ryukyu.⁵⁹²

As we can see in the fourth and fifth points, the Shuri government saw the great changes occurring in Japan as an opportunity to regain possession of the five islands, i.e. the Amami Ōshima Archipelago that was put under Satsuma control in 1611. As earlier research has pointed out, the Ryukyus did not fully understand the meaning of the abolition of domains and the establishment of prefectures in Japan.⁵⁹³ Here, however, let us focus our attention on the first three points. As we may infer from these proposals, the Shuri government wanted to be put under control of the Meiji government in the same way as it had been put under the control of the Satsuma domain and the Tokugawa bakufu previously. Shuri, in fact, aimed at maintaining the status quo and wished to continue with the practice of dispatching envoys to Satsuma and Tokyo, like in the former system it had sent missions to Edo. On the one hand, we may thus infer that, even though the royal government since 1859 wished to avoid dispatching its envoys to

⁵⁹² Yokoyama, *Ryūkyū koku shisetsu*, p. 307.

⁵⁹³ Ibid.

Edo because of the presence of foreigners in Japan, after the restoration it thought that the best policy to adopt in the new Japanese scenario was that of maintaining the status quo and continuing to send missions to the Japanese capital. It seems that Shuri chose the lesser of two evils. On the other hand, however, as Nishizato has observed, Shuri did not consider abandoning the policy of concealing to the Qing its true relationship with Japan, but by keeping those relations concealed from Beijing it also intended to maintain its dual obligation to China and Japan.⁵⁹⁴

However, if Shuri dispatched its envoys to Tokyo, they could have been seen by Western diplomats and, thus, information about the true relationship between Ryukyu and Japan could have been transmitted to the Qing. With regard to this possibility, it is interesting to note that when Kagoshima officials transmitted to Shuri the order to dispatch a mission to Tokyo in 1872, they specified that numerous foreigners and Chinese were residing in Tokyo, and that, therefore, they surmised that this would certainly worry the royal government. However, they stated that because a big city is a crowded place, they were planning to arrange the reception of the Ryukyuan mission so that no information about it would leak to the outside. For this reason, the Shuri leaders should feel relieved about this issue. As we can see from the passage above, the Kagoshima officials reassured the royal government in order to preventing Shuri from using the presence of Western diplomats as a pretext to delay the dispatch of the mission to Tokyo.⁵⁹⁵

We have already mentioned that the Meiji government's request for an embassy from the Ryukyu kingdom was aimed at publicly showing the subordination of the Ryukyu king to the Japanese emperor. To this end, the mission from Shuri was treated

⁵⁹⁴ Nishizato, "ShōTai sakuhō mondai to sono shūhen," p. 697.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

as an embassy that came from a subordinate state. However, the royal government interpreted this mission in a very different way.

Based on the preparations, the composition of the envoys, the gifts brought to the imperial family and to the highest officials of the Meiji government, as well as the original version of Shō Tai's official letter to the court, i.e., before the Kagoshima officials changed it so that all claims of independence from Japan would disappear, it is not difficult to see that from the perspective of the Shuri government the 1872 mission to Tokyo was considered a diplomatic embassy in the same fashion as the earlier *Edo dachi*.

Even though the restoration of imperial power in Japan marked the transition from the feudal Tokugawa regime to the pro-modernization Meiji government, there was not any significant political change with respect to the past within the Ryukyu kingdom at that time. This is why the Shuri government thought to dispatch an embassy in honor of the new Meiji emperor, as it had been sending missions in honor of the new Tokugawa shogun in the past. In other words, for Shuri the political changes in Japan concerned the mere replacement of the Tokugawa bakufu by the new Meiji government. Therefore, as in the past, it interpreted the dispatch of a Ryukyuan embassy to the capital to pay homage to the emperor as an important event necessary to maintain its independence.

In conclusion, it may be worth noting that the Shuri government appointed prince Ie Chōhoku as the ambassador of the 1872 mission. A close relative of the Ryukyuan king, prince Ie was the same noble who had been nominated *seishi* on the occasion of the 1855 and 1858 Ryukyuan embassies, which did not reach Edo for reasons that I have already discussed. In addition, as we have seen, despite the fact that in June 1860

the bakufu ordered to postpone the *Edo dachi* planned for 1862, prince Ie was confirmed one more time as ambassador of the Ryukyuan mission to Edo by the royal government in the spring of 1862. We may thus surmise that from Shuri's viewpoint, the 1872 mission was an extension of the former *Edo dachi*; however, prince Ie was not merely the noble who was appointed ambassador for the last Ryukyuan embassies planned during the Edo period. He was also one of the most important Ryukyuan leaders who strongly opposed the supporters of Nariakira's trade plan during the so-called Makishi Onga Incident. According to Kinjō Seitoku, those who were charged with investigating the incident had different opinions on which type of inquiry to conduct on the traitors. One group was convinced that a thorough investigation of the case was necessary. While another group intended to reach a peaceable settlement of the case. Prince Ie Chōchoku was one of the leaders of the faction that demanded a thorough investigation of the secret plotting of Ryukyuan officials with the Satsuma daimyo.⁵⁹⁶ We may thus surmise that even though Shuri did not fully comprehend the changes that were taking place in Japan at that time, it was watching them with great interest and decided to dispatch one of the most incorruptible and loyalist noble of the kingdom—one who did not show any hesitation to attack those officials who had in the past plotted with Satsuma—as ambassador to Tokyo.

7.4. Conclusions

Through the philological analysis of a considerable number of documentary sources of the bakufu, the Satsuma domain, and the Ryukyu kingdom, I have tried to present a

⁵⁹⁶ Kinjō Seitoku, "Ie ōji monjo: Makishi-Onga jiken no kiroku nit suite," *Rekidai Hōan Kenkyū*, vol. 2 (Naha: Okinawa Kenritsu Toshokan, 1991), pp. 16-20.

study of early modern diplomacy through the lens of the Ryukyuan missions and their world. The main argument that ties the entire work together is the endeavor to demonstrate that the kingdom of Ryukyu played a significant and hitherto unacknowledged role in Japanese politics of the *bakumatsu* era. One of the main objects of this study was to arrive at a new interpretation of the termination of the Ryukyuan embassies with respect to earlier research by using documentary sources that can be easily accessed through the libraries of Japanese universities. Only the *Shōke Monjo* n. 331, which was used in “The 1872 Ryukyuan mission seen from Shuri’s perspective” is a document in *kuzushiji* くずし字, i.e. cursive script, and was copied at the Naha City Museum of History. In other words, I have not based this study on the interpretation of unpublished or new materials, but on the re-examination and re-interpretation of documents that have already been explored by other scholars. Below I will try to summarize the significant points I made in this research.

In chapter one I have described the Ryukyuan missions to Edo as being the result of a tripartite power relationship, from which the bakufu, the Satsuma domain, and the Shuri government each tried to obtain maximum benefit. I have adopted a multiple perspective in order to explain how these embassies were perceived by the three parties when they started in the early 1630s, on the occasion of the reforms of the 1710 and 1714 missions, as well as during the first half of the nineteenth century. In particular, I have argued that the Shuri government showed great diplomatic ability to adapt to the orders of Kagoshima, and was able to re-think the directives it received in its own terms, i.e. Shuri considered the Ryukyuan missions to be an opportunity by which it could maintain its independence from Japan, sustain the bureaucratic apparatus of its own realm, and boast about the refinement of its culture. In this chapter, I mainly followed

the results of earlier studies.

In chapters two and three I have tried to explore my topic from a macro perspective, namely the opening of Ryukyu and Japan to the West. In chapter two I have examined the arrival of the French and the British in Ryukyu in 1844-46, as well as the arrival of Commodore Perry in 1853-1854. In chapter three I have explored the signing of the Ansei Treaties by the bakufu in 1858, as well as the stipulation of international agreements by the Shuri government and their relation to the dispatch of Ryukyuan missions to Edo.

In chapter two I have pointed out that since the arrival of the Westerners the royal government relied on the practice of having them shadowed by its officials in order to protect the Ryukyuan population, to prevent the spreading of Christianity, and, from a political point of view, to hide the private affairs of the kingdom from the foreigners. I identified the place where these officials-followers shadowed the foreigners as an “open/public space.” The true relationship between Ryukyu and Japan was one of utmost secrecy that needed to be concealed from the Westerners. Shuri, in fact, made an effort to fully hide its dealings with Japan both from the Chinese and from the Western powers under the veil of purely commercial relations with the Tokara Islands. The bakufu, on the other hand, defined its relationship with Ryukyu as diplomatic, or *tsūshin*, during its dealings with the Western powers from the beginning of the nineteenth century. After the arrival of Perry, however, the shogunate began to fear that if Japan did not assert any claim over Ryukyu the Americans might plan to take possession of the kingdom. Even though at an official level, the bakufu confirmed to Perry that the shogun had limited authority over the kingdom, in its private sphere the shogunal officials involved in decision-making started to investigate closely the nature of the

relations between Ryukyu and Japan. In other words, the issue of the political status of Ryukyu vis-à-vis Japan became the object of serious policy debate. As a result, the bakufu identified Ryukyu as a kingdom subordinate both to China and Japan. The bakufu officials provided as proof of the subordination of Ryukyu to Japan the invasion by Satsuma in 1609, the fact that the revenue of the kingdom was included in the cadastral register of the Shimazu, as well as the presence of a number of Kagoshima officials on the islands with a duty of supervising and managing various affairs. Moreover, I underlined the fact that some members of the shogunate came to consider the dispatch of missions of congratulation and gratitude to Edo as tangible evidence of the subordinate status of Ryukyu.

In chapter three I have demonstrated that despite the opening of Japan through the signing of the Ansei Treaties the shogunate did not intend to put an end to the Ryukyuan and Korean missions. Although the international treaties signed by Shuri prescribed the abrogation of the practice of the official-followers, I have tried to demonstrate that the Shuri government had no intention to eliminate this practice and that this violation represented one of the most serious forms of resistance that the Ryukyus were able to use to counter Western pressure. Most of all, I have tried to prove that the establishment of such a practice was Shuri's attempt to prevent foreigners from being witness to procedures linked to the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo. Thus, the royal government found a way to dispatch the missions despite the opening of the kingdom and the presence of Western missionaries in Ryukyu.

In the following chapters, I have tried to explore the postponement of the 1856, the 1858, and the 1860 missions as well as the termination of the *Edo dachi* from a micro perspective, i.e. I investigated the relations between Kagoshima and Edo, and

those between Satsuma and Ryukyu against the background of the epochal changes taking place in Japan and Ryukyu after their opening to the West.

In chapter four, focusing on the planned—but later halted—mission of 1858, I provided a close examination of the official communications transmitted from the bakufu to Kagoshima (through the mediation of the Satsuma Edo residence), and from Kagoshima castle to the *Ryūkyūkan* by Niino Hisanori, the chief retainer of Satsuma. In addition, I integrated the content of these formal messages with the records in Hisanori's diary. Based on the missives sent from the Edo-based Satsuma officials to their superiors in Kagoshima I tried to demonstrate that the demise of both Tokugawa Iesada in Edo (14 August) and Shimazu Nariakira in Kagoshima (24 August) was the reason behind the bakufu's postponement of the Ryukyuan embassy. I described the meaning of the expression "*kokujitatan*," i.e. the ostensible reason for which the bakufu deferred this embassy, as a situation of national emergency which was purposely ambiguous and behind which were concealed several circumstances that played a role in aggravating the political crisis. I considered it as a political expression behind which, in the *omote* sphere, the shogunate veiled the factual truth in order to defend its own ideological/symbolic sphere. In order to try to elucidate the real reasons behind the "multiple and complex state affairs" related to the postponement of the 1858 mission, I have argued that the deaths of Iesada and Nariakira should be considered as direct reasons, while the arrival of foreign vessels, the military plan of Nariakira and the spread of cholera in Japan were indirect circumstances that jointly affected the suspension of the project. This chapter can be taken as a reference point for understanding how Edo-Kagoshima-Shuri's early modern diplomacy worked.

In chapter five, I have tried to clarify that despite the fact that earlier research

postulated that after the June 1860 postponement there was no intention to send another Edo-bound Ryukyuan embassy, it is necessary to investigate the events taking place between Satsuma, Edo, and Shuri during the months immediately after the deferment in order to determine whether or not additional Edo missions were planned after 1860, and, if not, to clarify why no missions were planned. To this end, the so-called *Sakuradamon gai no hen* was interpreted from a wider perspective, focusing attention on the practice of the *sankin kōtai* to Edo by the Satsuma daimyo during the last phase of the Tokugawa period. In this respect, I have argued that Satsuma did not wish to terminate the Ryukyuan embassies, but that after the murder of Ii Naosuke, from 1860 to the spring of 1862, in order to avoid possible retaliation by the Hikone domain as well as subversive military actions of its own extremists, Satsuma asked the bakufu not only to postpone the Ryukyuan embassy planned for 1862 but on many occasions to defer Tadayoshi's *sankin kōtai* duty, all for the purpose of preventing the Satsuma lord from having to go to Edo. So far these two strategies have been interpreted as unconnected episodes. Here, however, I have tried to demonstrate that they must be reconstructed together, since they were two integral parts of the same political design. I have pointed out that behind the "multiple and complex state affairs" cited by the bakufu in June 1860, there was in reality the concern of the shogunate about the domestic political crisis instigated by the assassination of *tairō* Ii Naosuke. The bakufu later announced its intention to welcome another Ryukyuan embassy. In January 1862, in fact, the shogunate granted ten thousand *ryō* of gold to Satsuma to help finance the mission planned for the fall of 1862. On the one hand, I have surmised that this project was an attempt by the bakufu to exhort the Satsuma daimyo to travel to Edo and pay his respect to the Tokugawa shogun. On the other hand, I have connected this plan to the international state of affairs of

Japan at the time. In October 1862, in an official reply to a British inquiry, the shogunate informed the British government that the Ryukyus were subordinate to both China and Japan. I pointed out that the bakufu might have done this to prevent the British from claiming Ryukyu and to create conditions such that it could publically welcome Ryukyuan missions to Edo in the near future. Correlating the reports of the bakufu officials submitted in 1854 to the attachment to the reply handed to the British government in 1862 I have also suggested that during the *bakumatsu* the shogunate began to consider the *Edo dachi* as a tool through which it could demonstrate that Ryukyu was subordinate to Japan. Through an analysis of Ryukyuan genealogical records related to the royal Ie family, I have observed that in the spring of 1862 the Shuri government confirmed prince Ie Chōchoku as ambassador of the missions to Edo. In this respect, I have surmised that from Shuri's perspective Ryukyuan embassies would, or at least could, be dispatched after 1860. Based on the above, I have suggested that it seems appropriate to move the date of the termination of the Edo-bound Ryukyuan embassies from 1860 to at least the second half of 1862.

In chapter six, I have underlined that from an economic viewpoint, the reinforcement of the realm's military apparatus pursued by Shimazu Hisamitsu through the implementation of the Bunkyū reforms (September 1862) was not compatible with an expensive event such as that of a Ryukyuan mission. Therefore, we might consider this incompatibility as one of the main reasons for the halting of the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo. On the other hand, after the implementation of the Bunkyū reforms, I have observed that Sastuma leaders desired their daimyo to remain in Kagoshima as long as possible, but at the same time they also showed their commitment to having their lord stay in Edo for a short time (100 days) for his alternate residence in honor of

the shogun. From a political perspective I have assumed that, if from then on the *sankin kōtai* of the Satsuma daimyo was planned again, a Ryukyuan embassy—we may consider a mission that was less elaborate for economic reasons—could have been planned as well, especially since the shogunate in January 1862 manifested its willingness to welcome a mission in the fall of the same year. From the fall of 1862, I could, however, ascertain that whenever the Satsuma daimyo's *sankin kōtai* service—which I took as a lens through which to try to investigate my topic—was rescheduled, Kagoshima leaders soon exerted their influence with both Edo and Kyoto for the duty to be deferred for several reasons. In this dissertation I have considered the alternate residence of Tadayoshi as a prerequisite for launching a Ryukyuan embassy. However, whenever the Satsuma daimyo's *sankin kōtai* duty was rescheduled, the conditions for accomplishing such service soon faded away. In this respect, I have surmised that under such circumstances the Ryukyuan missions were placed on the back burner until 1872, when the last Ryukyuan embassy ever was sent in honor of the Meiji emperor. In addition, I have emphasized the rise of Hisamitsu within Kagoshima politics. Hisamitsu, in pursuit of the union between the court and the shogunate, took it upon himself to repeatedly leave his domain in order to bring reforms to the shogunate and defend the Kyoto court. Hisamitsu's entry on a national stage relegated the Satsuma daimyo, Tadayoshi, to the background. I have suggested that Hisamitsu's missions to Kyoto enabled Satsuma leaders to repeatedly obtain the postponement of Tadayoshi's alternate residence duty from the shogunate. I have surmised that the Satsuma domain's policy during the *bakumatsu* strongly affected the termination of the Ryukyuan missions.

As we have seen, the shogunate announced its intention to welcome a Ryukyuan

mission in January 1862; however, from then on Edo leaders were not even able to make the Satsuma daimyo accomplish his visit to Edo in honor of the shogun. Needless to say, therefore, that they were not in a position to require Tadayoshi to escort a Ryukyuan embassy to the shogunal capital. In addition, the bakufu gave into the court's request and on two occasions (in 1862 and 1863 to be precise) postponed Tadayoshi's *sankin kōtai* because of the simultaneous mission to Kyoto of Hisamitsu. In other words, because of multiple and intricate domestic as well as international circumstances that jointly affected Japan during the *bakumatsu*, the shogunate prioritized, or had no choice but to prioritize, the visits to Kyoto of Hisamitsu instead of those of the Satsuma daimyo to Edo for the benefit of the realm. As a result, Tadayoshi did not accomplish even one period of alternate residence in Edo. In a situation like this, it is implicit that the bakufu was not in a position to turn once again to the Ryukyuan embassies. In addition, I have also observed that the Kyoto court held considerable influence over the daimyo's alternate residence system and gradually acquired considerable political power to the extent that on several occasions Satsuma pleaded with the Kyoto nobles to have Tadayoshi's visit to the shogunal capital postponed. Then, I have surmised that after Satsuma samurai had signed a secret agreement with Chōshū early in 1866 that included the removal from power of the shogun, it is reasonable to think that, from the point of view of the Satsuma domain, the *Edo dachi* lost their primary meaning.

In the epilogue, I have argued that even though the main objective of the 1872 mission—which was the last Ryukyuan embassy ever to reach Japan—was entirely different from that of the earlier *Edo dachi*, the terminology used by Meiji leaders revealed that they decided to require Shuri to dispatch a mission to Tokyo having in mind the practice of Ryukyuan embassies during the Edo period. Although the mission

of 1872 was treated as an embassy from a subordinate state and was received by Japan's Foreign Minister, it reflected elements of continuity with earlier practice. I have also suggested that the Ryukyuan mission to Tokyo in 1872 represented the translation into reality of the new meaning accorded by the bakufu leaders to the missions from Shuri during the *bakumatsu*, since its main objective was to publicly show the subordination of the Ryukyuan king to the Japanese emperor as well as to symbolically incorporate the Ryukyu kingdom into Japan. In other words, the 1872 Tokyo embassy can also be seen as the culmination of a policy which had its origins in the final years of the Tokugawa bakufu. From the period when the Western powers arrived in East Asia until the collapse of the Tokugawa regime, especially at the time of the events of 1854, i.e. the arrival of Perry, and of 1862, i.e. the official reply and its attachment to the British government, I have underlined that certain Japanese leaders began to investigate seriously how to settle the question of the political status of Ryukyu vis-à-vis Japan. While they considered Ryukyu to be a kingdom subordinate both to China and Japan, after the intrusion of Westerners in East Asia it became necessary to prove and assert their claims over the small archipelago in order to prevent foreigners from taking control over the Ryukyus. I have suggested that their strategy was mainly defensive. It was, however, in this final phase of rule of the Tokugawa shoguns that many Japanese leaders formed their basic political understanding of the outside world through which they began to formulate their proposals and policies with regard to the relations between Japan and Ryukyu. This gradual growth of interest toward the Ryukyus had its epilogue after the restoration when the Meiji leaders had become more experienced in Western international law and, in an age of imperialism, from an increasingly aggressive stance, became fully aware of the urgency to define their sovereign boundaries. This study, thus,

sheds light to the changing nature of Japanese diplomacy from the early modern era into the modern era. With respect to this issue, the new meaning accorded by the bakufu to the Ryukyuan embassies in the *bakumatsu* period is crucial. In conclusion, I have considered the *Ryūkyū shobun* as an integral part both of East Asian and world history.

As for Satsuma's policy, I have underlined that at a time when from Kagoshima's perspective the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo had lost their political significance because of the secret agreement signed with Chōshū and aimed at overthrowing shogunal power, a new type of Ryukyuan envoy entered on the European stage. On the one hand, we have the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo, sent from the king of Ryukyu to the Tokugawa shogun, which began as the result of Shimazu pressure in 1634, and which had been used by the same family to boost its prestige within the domestic arena for more than two hundred years. On the other hand, the Ryukyuan ambassador of the new type of mission was only nominal, because the man who claimed to be an envoy of the Ryukyuan sovereign was not Ryukyuan, and the lord who sent him to Europe was the Satsuma daimyo, not the Ryukyuan king. As in the past, Satsuma had used the Ryukyuan missions to enhance its prestige as a feudal domain within Japan, at a time when it was trying to find a place for itself on the global stage it relied once again on a Ryukyuan envoy, a brand-new one, to introduce itself as an autonomous government with the intention of facilitating its interactions with Western governments.

I have surmised that the confirmation of prince Ie as *seishi* in 1862 may suggest that from Shuri's perspective Ryukyuan embassies would, or at least could, also be dispatched in the near future. Thereafter, the entire Ryukyu kingdom devoted all its energy to prepare for the reception of the Chinese investiture mission for the enthronement of Shō Tai. In line with this, I have pointed out that Shuri was watching

the developments taking place in Japan with great interest because it had required its officials based in Kagoshima to ask the Shimazu for a loan to finance the welcoming of the Chinese mission. On the one hand, I have ascertained that the Ryukyuan king was kept informed about the fact that Tadayoshi had repeatedly asked the shogunate to postpone his alternate residence duty in Edo. I have surmised that an implicit result of this type of information might be that the Shuri government was aware of the fact that at that time both Satsuma and the shogunate were not planning new *Edo dachi*. On the other hand, I did not find any evidence that testifies to the fact that Shuri asked Satsuma authorization for sending a new Ryukyuan embassy during the last years of Tokugawa rule. Based on the discussions within the Shuri government after the establishment of the system of prefectures in Japan, I have surmised that, even though the royal government since 1859 wished to avoid dispatching its envoys to Edo because of the presence of foreigners, after the restoration it thought that the best policy to adopt in the new Japanese frame was that of maintaining the status quo and continuing to send missions to the new Japanese capital. In the end, judging from the preparations, the composition of the envoys, the gifts brought to the imperial family, and the way in which Shō Tai drafted his official letter to the court—before the Shimazu changed it so that any claim of independence from Japan disappeared—I have argued that from the perspective of the Shuri government the 1872 mission to Tokyo was considered a diplomatic embassy in the same fashion as the earlier *Edo dachi*.

In conclusion, this dissertation is a study of Japanese-Ryukyuan relations, with a focus on the turbulent *bakumatsu* era of the middle and late nineteenth century. This topic is not only important for our understanding of Japanese history, but it is also timely in light of recent territorial disputes. Today Ryukyu/Okinawa is still a site of

multiple and intertwined contestations among Japanese, Chinese, and United States governments. An accurate re-reading and re-viewing of our knowledge of the past from new perspectives is thus necessary to fully understand present political disputes.

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List of Abbreviations

BGKM *Dai Nihon komonjo: Bakumatsu gaikoku kankei monjo*

DNIS *Dai Nihon ishin shiryō*

ROHM *Ryūkyū ōkoku hyōjōsho monjo*

TI *Tsūkō ichiran*

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Estratto per riassunto della tesi di dottorato

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Dottorato: Lingue Culture e Società. Indirizzo in Studi Orientali (Giappone)

Ciclo: 26°

Titolo della tesi : The termination of the Ryukyuan embassies to Edo: an investigation of the *bakumatsu* period through the lens of a tripartite power relationship and its world.

Abstract:

Through the philological analysis of a considerable number of documentary sources at the hand of representatives of the bakufu, the Satsuma domain, and the Ryukyu kingdom, I have tried to present a study of early modern diplomacy through the lens of the Ryukyuan missions and their world. The main argument that ties the entire work together is the endeavor to demonstrate that the kingdom of Ryukyu played a significant and hitherto unacknowledged role in Japanese politics of the *bakumatsu* era. In this study I examined multiple perspectives, i.e. those of the bakufu, the Satsuma domain, and the Ryukyuan government on macro-micro levels of analysis, namely the opening of Japan and Ryukyu to the West and the relations between the shogunate and Satsuma, as well as of those between Kagoshima and Shuri against the background of the epochal changes taking place in Japan after the appearance of the Western powers in East Asia.

Attraverso l'analisi filologica di una considerevole quantità di fonti primarie redatte dalle autorità del *bakufu*, del feudo di Satsuma e del regno ryukyuan, ho presentato uno studio sulla diplomazia del Giappone Tokugawa attraverso la lente delle missioni ryukyuan e del loro mondo. L'argomento principale che lega insieme tutti i capitoli di questa ricerca è il tentativo di dimostrare come il regno delle Ryūkyū avesse avuto una funzione assai importante, e ancora assai poco nota, nella politica del Giappone nel corso degli ultimi anni di governo degli *shōgun* Tokugawa. In questo studio ho esaminato multiple prospettive, vale a dire quelle del *bakufu*, di Satsuma e del governo ryukyuan, su macro-micro livelli di analisi, ovvero le relazioni tra Edo e Kagoshima e quelle tra Satsuma e le Ryūkyū sullo sfondo dei grandi cambiamenti avvenuti in Giappone e nel regno ryukyuan dopo l'intrusione delle potenze occidentali in Asia Orientale.

Firma dello studente
