

The Takenouchi Mission and Western Culture: The Introduction of the Telegraph

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the so-called foreign missions dispatched to various countries by the bakufu government in the Bakumatsu period was mainly diplomatic negotiation.

One such mission was that of Takenouchi Shimotsuke-no-kami, (竹内下野守) known as the Takenouchi Mission. While traveling around western countries with whom Japan had made treaties, in addition to performing negotiations, the mission was ordered to investigate the conditions of each country. The bakufu intended to use this information to strengthen its own political position. Although this point has not received sufficient attention, Takeshi Kurasawa (倉沢 剛) explored it in some detail, positioning the Takenouchi mission as one part of the bakufu's policies to improve its technological knowledge. The sections of the "Zoku-tsushin zenran" (『続通信全覽』) diplomatic documents regarding the Takenouchi mission were almost destroyed by fire; thus, Kurasawa examined the bakufu's orders regarding the mission's investigation using "Takenouchi shimotsuke-no-kami matsudaira iwami-no-kami kyogoku noto-no-kami oukou goyoudome," (『竹内下野守松平石見守京極能登守政行御用留』) which was the basis for the diplomatic documents. Concerning other materials related to the Takenouchi mission, "the Fukuda Sakutarō hikki rokkoku tansaku" (『福田作太郎筆記 六国探索』) offers a concrete summary of the examination based on the bakufu's orders. Based on the reports of the scholars of western culture who led the mission's investigations, Sakutarō Fukuda (福田作太郎) established and summarized items for each country. Additionally, although Yukichi Fukuzawa, (福澤諭吉) Koan Matsuki, (松木弘安) and others played a central role in the mission's investigations, surprisingly few records from these western scholars have survived till date. Only "the Seikouki," (『西航記』) which was created based on Fukuzawa's handbook "Seikou techo," (『西航手帳』) remains. However, one can see how the mission was received in each country through articles in such newspapers as France's "de l'illustration" and England's "The Times," among others. These foreign materials are useful in compensating for areas that lack Japanese materials.

Furthermore, the "Terajima Munenori kankei shiryō-shū," (『寺島宗則関係資料集』) a recent collection of materials related to Koan Matsuki (松木弘安) that helps understand what happened to the Takenouchi mission members after returning to Japan, was published while materials and research concerning Dainoshin Saitō, (齋藤大之進) another member of the mission, were presented.

Furthermore, Zenshichi Takahashi (高橋善七) has conducted research on the telegraph in the Meiji period, focusing on Munenori Terashima. (寺島宗則)

Based on these materials and research, this study focuses on the telegraph as a modern form of communication, in order to better understand what the mission members learned from their encounter with western civilization and how they shared this with Japan.

THE PURPOSE IN DISPATCHING THE TAKENOUCHI MISSION

The purpose in dispatching the Takenouchi mission was to delay the opening of Japan's cities and ports to foreign trade. Why then were these kinds of diplomatic negotiations deemed necessary? Initially, we should observe the conditions at the time. The trade treaties ("Ansei Treaties") (安政条約) made between the bakufu and other nations in 1858 required to open Edo and Osaka on January 1, 1862 and January 1, 1863, respectively. The ports at Hyogo and Niigata were required to open on January 1, 1863 and January 1, 1860, respectively. (Niigata

was not deemed fit to be a port, and as no alternative port could be found, its opening was postponed.) However, the continual outbreak of events to exclude foreigners, such as the Tozenji incident, (東禪寺事件) put the bakufu government in a dilemma: it was impossible to open its cities and ports in these conditions. Thus, the bakufu began to negotiate for a postponement with the resident diplomats from each country with whom Japan had treaties. However, the English diplomat Sir Rutherford Alcock proposed that missions be dispatched to negotiate with each country's government directly. It seems that through this proposal Alcock hoped that the missions would see England's power with their own eyes and that the bakufu would then be obliged to depend on England. It was as a result of these circumstances that in March 1861, the bakufu decided to send the missions.

However, the bakufu intended to use the results obtained in this way for national reform and strengthening its authority. This is clear in a letter from Andou Tsushima-no-kami Nobumasa, (安藤對馬守信正) a member of the shogun's council of elders, to Takenouchi Shimotsuke-no-kami Yasunori, (竹内下野守保徳) commissioner of both finance and foreign affairs who had been unofficially appointed as the head delegate of the mission on April 4, 1861.

Around the same time, Philipp Franz von Siebold, a diplomacy advisor to the bakufu, submitted a sixteen-article opinion on the mission on April 21. In article fifteen of this document, he concretely lists areas to be researched in each country, including military sciences, sailing and navigation, ship-making, mineral sciences, various other studies and technical areas, and agriculture. Finally, in September three delegates were officially appointed: Takenouchi Shimotsuke-no-kami, Matsudaira Iwami-no-kami, and Kyogoku Noto-no-kami. (竹内下野守松平石見守京極能登守) Then, in the same month, the three missions were given orders to investigate the state of other countries, and in October, they were given more detailed instructions.

The content above suggests that Siebold's opinions were taken into account, as they cover trade, educational systems, production, and machinery, with a focus on the military; special attention should be given to his role in the history of *Bakumatsu* diplomacy. On December 13, the advisors from each country residing in Japan were informed by the shogun's council of elders of the 36 mission members who had been ordered to visit other countries. Their investigations would be headed by Koan Matsuki, (松木弘安) Yukichi Fukuzawa, (福澤諭吉) and other scholars of western culture. The role of summarizing their findings into a report was given to Sakutaro Fukuda, (福田作太郎) a *kachi-metsuke* (徒目付) (a low-ranking post in the bakufu government).

Thus, on January 21, 1862, they set out on from Shinagawa aboard the British warship "Odin."

THE TAKENOUCHI MISSION AND THE TELEGRAPH

The results of the Takenouchi mission's investigations are revealed in "*Fukuda sakutaro hikki rokkoku tansaku*" (『福田作太郎筆記 六国探索』) [Fukuda Sakutaro's transcript: "exploring six countries"].

According to this text, there were several items for investigation related to England, followed by Russia, Holland, Prussia, France and Portugal, in that order. It also shows that the telegraph system was investigated in all of the countries except Prussia and Portugal. Here, I aim to focus on the state of the telegraph in each of the countries visited.

The mission first went to France and visited a telegraph station on April 25, 1862; the visit was covered by the French newspaper "*Le Moniteur Universel*." The newspaper reports that they came to see the telegraph machines and received explanations of the various tools for communication used in the French Ministry of Interior Affairs, later sending messages to their compatriots staying in Bordeaux, London, and a hotel ("Hotel du Louvre"). In a letter addressed to Takichirou Moriyama, (森山多吉郎) who departed Japan two months after the others together with Alcock (who was himself returning to his own country on leave), Matsuki describes how messages could be sent between Russia and Turkey in one or two minutes, frankly expressing his surprise at French telegraph technology. Matsuki himself had been engaged in Dutch studies with Genboku Ito (伊東玄朴) and others, and in the spring of

1857, he and Komin Kawamoto (川本幸民) conducted experiments with telegrams under the orders of Nariakira Shimizu (島津斉彬) in Kagoshima. From this we can see that he had more knowledge of telegrams than any other member of the mission; however, upon actually seeing messages delivered between distant countries, such as Russia and Turkey, with such speed, he was still struck with admiration.

In addition, Matsuki would later become a member of the French Societe d'Ethnographie, reflecting his active interest in western culture and studies as a western scholar.

Next, let us focus on their visit to England “*Seikoki*,” (『西航記』) Fukuzawa’s travel journal, vividly describes their visit to the London Telegraph Company on May 9.

Compared with the earlier account by Matsuki, there is none of the surprise and deep emotion in Fukuzawa’s description; rather, it is very practical. Perhaps he had already seen the telegraph equipment when he was sent as part of a delegation to America in 1860. In any case, we can see that he took it quite calmly. Furthermore, Fukuzawa’s writing and the portion of Sakutaro Fukuda’s (福田作太郎) account about the British telegraph system offer similar descriptions. From this we can assume that Fukuda’s report was based on what Fukuzawa wrote.

Matsuki also visited a telegraph company in London, though the date of the visit is unknown, and he mentions it along with the rest of the description of England in his letter to Takichiro Moriyama (森山多吉郎) mentioned earlier. He writes that England is impossible to describe in a single word. We can gather that for Matsuki, his experiences of western culture in England, including and beyond the telegraph, were a major event. This can also be seen as closely connected with his later studying abroad in England. Furthermore, the fact that passages about England are very common and the most detailed in Sakutaro Fukuda’ (福田作太郎) journal shows the honest impressions given by the investigation team, particularly the scholars on western studies.

Here, I would like to briefly mention another member, Dainoshin Saitou, (斎藤大之進) who would later become involved with the telegraph. He was born the fourth son of Saito Yasuhachi (斎藤八十八) in Kouzuke-no-kuni Tano-gun Hirai-mura Yasuno. (上野国多野郡平井村保野) He came from a wealthy farming family and seemingly worked as *daikan* [prefectural governor] of a shogunate vassal territory. It is unclear through what turn of events he became a shogunate vassal; however, during the Ansei era, he joined the *Gaikoku gata* (外国方) [foreign affairs department]. At the Tozenji incident (東禅寺事件) in May 1861, it is known as that as the *gaikoku bugyo shihai doshin* (外国奉行支配同心) he acted as a guard. Later, in 1862, he was ordered to become part of the Takenouchi mission. It seems that he wrote an account of his travels called “*Bunkyuu nenkan oshu rokkokuiki*,” (『文久年間欧州六国行』) however, as with Matsuki’s “*Oko nikki*,” (『歐行日記』) it has not survived to the present day. Hence, we are unable to know how he reacted to the telegraph.

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE TAKENOUCHI MISSION AFTER RETURNING TO JAPAN

Next, I will discuss the activities of Takenouchi mission members after returning to Japan; however, I first aim to describe the events that took place in Japan in their absence. On January 15, 1862, immediately after they departed, the Sakashita Mongai incident (坂下門外の変) occurred, where Mito roshi attacked and injured Andou Tsushima-no-kami, (安藤对馬守) a member of the shogun’s council of elders. In the end, Andou was dismissed. Then, in August, the Namamugi Incident (生麦事件) occurred, in which Hisamitsu Shimazu’s (島津久光) party was on its way back to Kyoto earlier than the imperial envoy Shigenori Ohara. (大原重徳) Samurai of the Satsuma Domain that were escorting the party killed a British national named Charles Richardson, increasing tensions between Japan and England. Thus, in the course of a year, imperial power had expanded while the bakufu’s authority had considerably contracted. The mission returned during this period, and the report prepared by Fukuda based on what they had observed in Europe did not serve to strengthen the bakufu as originally planned. However, Fukuda himself served as *Kanagawa bugyo-sho shihai kumi gashira* (神奈川奉行所支配組頭) [assistant commissioner], eventually becoming the newly established *bugyo* of gun manufacturers and contributing to the

creation of the Takinogawa reverberatory furnace (瀧野川反射炉) (1864). In addition, he became *hohei gashira* (歩兵頭) (1866); Fukuda was thus able to put his experiences in Europe to good use.

Matsuki, on the other hand, who had been part of the western scholars group directly responsible for the mission's investigation, became a prisoner of war after returning to Japan during the Anglo-Satsuma War. (薩英戦争) However, he contributed to the creation of the peace treaty with England. Thereafter, he was restored to his teaching position at the *Kaiseijo* (開成所) (a school of western studies) and in 1865, led a group of exchange students from the Satsuma Domain on a secret trip to England. Fukuzawa became a shogunate vassal and worked as *gaikoku bugyo shihai honyaku goyo* (外国奉行支配翻訳御用) [foreign translation commissioner]. In 1867, he accompanied the delegation to receive the warship "Stonewall" and traveled to the United States once again. Thus, each of the western studies scholars remained involved in diplomacy and traveled again outside Japan. Saito, the final member who wrote the "*Bunkyu nenkan oshu rokkoku iki*," (『文久年間欧州六国行』) was employed at the *Gaikoku gata* (外国方) [foreign affairs department]. In 1867, he became *Kanagawa bugyo-sho shirabeyaku* (神奈川奉行所調役) [investigator].

However, they would soon face a major historical change. In January 1868, the Battle of Toba–Fushimi (鳥羽・伏見の戦い) led to calls to return to the imperial system, and the new Meiji government came to power, replacing the bakufu. Around this time, Matsuki appeared on the public stage as a restoration bureaucrat with modern knowledge. When he returned from England in July 1866 he changed his name to Tozo Terajima (寺島陶藏) and distinguished himself in diplomacy for the new government. In particular, immediately after the Battle of Toba–Fushimi (鳥羽・伏見の戦い) in January 1868, he drafted letters to other countries to inform them of the establishment of the new Meiji government and to request their acknowledgement. Then, in the same month, he became an advisor to the Meiji government and was appointed *gaikoku jimū gakari* (外国事務掛) [head of the foreign affairs office] in Kobe. In April, he took over the responsibilities of the diplomacy office at the former *Kanagawa bugyo-sho* (神奈川奉行所) and became judge at the *Kanagawa saiban-sho* (神奈川裁判所) [office]. In June, in accordance with the *Kanagawa saiban-sho*'s (神奈川裁判所) being renamed as *Kanagawa-fu*, (神奈川府) he became a governor at *Kanagawa-fu*. (神奈川府) Thereafter, on September 7, he proposed the establishment of a telegraph line between Tokyo and Yokohama.

In the proposal, Terajima writes that a sudden increase in communication could be expected between Tokyo and Yokohama due to the opening of the cities, but that letters were too costly, while boats would be unusable in cases of stormy weather. Thus, the telegraph was necessary as a new method. Having already performed experiments with telegrams and personally seen the use of telegrams in Europe as part of the Takenouchi mission, Terajima, as a Meiji government official, attempted to implement it as a national project. Based on his proposal, in December, the Meiji government decided on a plan for a government-managed telegraph system at the imperial meeting. Learning of this, Terajima requested that Richard Henry Brunton, a foreign employee of the Yokohama tomyo-dai kyoku (燈明台局) [Yokohama department of lighting], hire British telegraph engineers.

In April 1868, the *Kanagawa bugyo-sho* (神奈川奉行所) became the *Kanagawa saiban-sho* (神奈川裁判所) in the hands of the new Meiji government, and Saito of the Takenouchi mission continued to work there as *shirabeyaku*. (調役) In November 1868, he began to work at the *Tomyo-dai kyoku*, (燈明台局) where Brunton was also employed. Then, on February 30, 1869, he presented his opinion in five articles to the new government, arguing for the introduction of the telegraph, just as Terajima had done. Furthermore, he proposed constructing government educational facilities, women's schools, and orphanages. This could be seen as broadly applying what he had seen in Europe as a member of the mission. Additionally, he not only made these proposals but also, like Terajima, was involved with the construction of the telegraph line between Tokyo and Yokohama, the first telegraph project in Japan.

This is shown in a historical document addressed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated October 18, 1869.

What should be noted here is that Saito was employed as the *Kanagawa denshinki gakari* (神奈川電信機掛) [head of telegraphs] in addition to the *tomyo-dai gakari* (燈明台掛) [head of lighting] and thus also participated in the construction of the telegraph line between Tokyo and Yokohama. Moreover, on September 18, the office of lighting and telegraphs was relocated from the Foreign Ministry to the Ministry of Popular Affairs and Finance, causing Terajima to change his role in July from Lieutenant Governor of the Foreign Office to *gaimu tayuu* (外務大輔) [a post in the Foreign Vice Ministry]; thus, he had to leave Yokohama. However, we know that he continued to be responsible for the telegraph plan.

Hence, construction of the telegraph line of *Yokohama saiban-sho* (横浜裁判所) *Tokyo tsukiji unjo-sho* (東京築地運上所) began on September 19 and progressed favorably, with operation beginning on December 25. As planned, with the attendance of Terajima, a ceremony to celebrate the launch of the telegraph was held on the grounds of the *Yokohama denshin kyoku* (横浜電信局) [Yokohama telegraph department], which was located on the premises of the *Yokohama saiban-sho*. (横浜裁判所) Eight years after the Takenouchi mission, former members Munenori Terajima (寺島宗則) and Dainoshin Saito (齋藤大之進) had created Japan's fundamental telegraph line, thus initiating the governmentally and publicly managed telegraph system.

CONCLUSION

Thus far, it was argued that the results of the foreign investigation mission dispatched to Western countries by the bakufu failed to be fully actualized during the Bakumatsu period. However, having come into contact with western culture, most of the members—particularly the western cultural scholars—continued their work in the Meiji period and contributed to the modernization of several fields in Japan. Besides the scholars, Terajima can be recognized as one of these contributors. As seen in the example of Saito, it is important to recognize that even some shogunate vassals, in the form of government officials, contributed to the new Meiji government. The establishment of the telegraph in the Meiji period can certainly be identified as an example where western culture was introduced directly as a result of the scholar Terajima's work and the former shogunate vassal Saito. Furthermore, in addition to concretely putting their experiences with western culture into practice, it is important to recognize that they also relied on Brunton, a foreign employee. In other words, as is clear in the case of the telegraph, the modernization of Japan was carried out during the Meiji period by restoration bureaucrats who began as scholars of western culture, former shogunate vassals, and western workers in Japan, taking advantage of developments such as the western cultural experiences of the Takenouchi mission during the Bakumatsu period.

This study has focused on the relationship between the Takenouchi mission and the telegraph. Many scholars of western culture in the Bakumatsu period believed that eastern ideology was superior, but western science and technology was more advanced, as depicted in the words of Shozan Sakuma: (佐久間象山) 'Eastern ethics, western technical learning.' (「東洋道德, 西洋芸術」) I presume that Terajima basically believed this himself. However, Terajima's proposal to introduce the telegraph was not based on these beliefs as a western studies scholar, nor his experiences in western countries during the Bakumatsu period. One could also say that he was using his political judgment as an official in the new government. Finally, concerning "the introduction and development of western culture," further research is needed on the activities of other mission members, such as Fukuzawa, after their return. Furthermore, I aim to broaden the scope of future research to study the relationships that members of other missions had with western culture during the Bakumatsu period.

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