America's Part in Founding Modern Japan

The part America played in the founding of modern Japan is usually understood to have reached its climax in the treaty affected by Commodore Mathew Calbraith Perry in 1854. Perry's achievement was indeed foundational, everything subsequent to it is built upon it; thereafter, instead of merely the Dutch *factory* on Déshima island at Nagasaki, all nations had two ports at which to call in Japan, Hakodate and Simoda. But Perry had a fleet, 3 steam vessels, 3 sailers. After Perry came an American who was alone, Townsend Harris, who, except the Dutch under restrictions at Déshima, was the only westerner resident in Japan during nearly two years; and during this period, alone, neither a warship supporting him nor even a dispatch boat, he effected the *commercial treaty* with Japan that is the foundation of the Japan of our day.

At the end he wrote briefly to Sir John Bowring at Hongkong:

"Lord Elgin (for the British) and Baron Gros (for Russia) will find their work all done to their hands when they arrive, and that a large fleet was not required as a demonstration."

So it fell out, Townsend Harris, a business man all his life, made the commercial treaty with Japan that all others had to follow; he made such a treaty as led to the early downfall of the shogunate, the domestic revolution, the restoration of the emperor, the adoption of a constitution and all the stupendous changes that have occurred during the past 50 years.

It was on September 4, 1856, that Harris raised his flag, the first of a foreign consul in Japan. Commodore James Armstrong had landed him at Simoda from the steam frigate *San Jacinto* in August, and had then returned to China. Armstrong had brought Harris from Siam, where he had effected a treaty of commerce for the United States after others had failed. Doing this, he had laid in Siam the basis of friendship that has prevailed between America and Siam ever since. Landed in Japan, it was to be 14 months before, from Hakodate, his first mail from home arrived; and in this mail the latest cover from the state department (under General Lewis Cass, of Michigan) was dated August 1856, the very month Harris had established official residence in Japan. This cover pertained to a very minor matter. The war in China, of which Harris was perforce ignorant, detained the American ships there: besides suffering extreme ill health almost constantly, Harris's isolation and the unexplained prolonged absence of American ships from his station made him feel deserted.

With only the instructions brought with him from Washington, and a letter from President Buchanan for the Tycoon, or reigning shogun or dictator, Harris discharged his every responsibility in a way to inculcate the utmost respect among the Japanese for the United States. It is to be remembered that all this was done at a time when the United States was approaching civil war between North and South. Harris was consul general under Democrat Buchanan, minister plenipotentiary under Republican Lincoln, and went home in 1861 to a war-torn country where he anxiously espoused the cause of the Union of the States.

Negotiations with the Japanese were most laborious. Dutch was the medium of mutual communication. A young Dutchman, Henry C. F. Heusken, was Harris's companion and interpreter. (When he was assassinated by a fanatic, Harris got an indemnity of $10,000 for his family). What the Japanese had to say was put into Dutch; the translation verified, it was put into English for Harris. From Harris to the Japanese the process was reversed. Some handicaps were the limited knowledge of Dutch, learned from the traders at Déshima, the absence of singulars and plurals in the Japanese language, also relative pronouns and antecedents.

Beginning as strangers, the negotiators had painstakingly to acquire acquaintanceship of one another. Harris had to break down prejudice, fear and the intriguing of placemen who felt their very lives at stake in having intercourse with a foreigner at all.

Japan's suspicions of the western powers were of course justified, to their view at least, by current events in the Far East. This reserve was hard to penetrate. It made the Japanese do curious things, and these things Harris made it his duty to prevent—in jealous regard for the dignity of the United States. Thus when the governor of Simoda was to receive him, the Japanese commissioners tried every means for him to be received jointly with Commodore Armstrong—as if reception of the consul general who was to reside in Simoda was incidental, or perhaps compelled by the American navy. Harris had gently to assert his priority, thus to enforce a provision of the Perry treaty.

Established ashore, Harris found himself under a guard of spies. The Simoda authorities explained that these men were to see to his safety, but the rule of nations that no man should be on his premises without his consent was explained and insisted upon; after due patience, but perseverance, the right was recognized and the spying ceased. Then, at the negotiations, appeared a multitude of secretaries—really spies. Again matters had to be straightened out. These are only random examples of obstacles to amity and the writing of a treaty. Another was the difficulty in delivering the president's letter to the tycoon at Yedo (Tokio). It was Harris's duty to deliver this in person. Long were the conversations opening the way for him to go to Yedo; and once there, still longer were the weeks before the work of the treaty could be begun.

Harris had to guard against persons of inferior rank being assigned to deal with him. The shogunate (which was to fall as a result of all this) was fighting every inch of the way for its life—the daimios 10 to 1 against it—and any observable gesture of superiority to the foreign envoy was so much on the shogunate's side. In all but total ignorance of the country, Harris had to feel his way along; this he did with the manners of a gentleman who would neither gratuitously offend nor tolerate an offense. He soon found that once the Japanese had agreed to any proposal, they adhered to this agreement to the letter. But they too were feeling their way along, and even under more personal danger than Harris. Thus the mere providing Harris with a map of Yedo was of the gravest concern to the commissioners, and had to have the previous and absolute sanction of the shogun.

So too a place for Harris to ride, for the exercise he stood so much in need of, because in riding abroad he was in view of the public who could see with what freedom, in contrast with the surveillance over the Dutch, this American was treated. Almost interminable were the preliminaries for the trip to Yedo, but at last all was carried out to Harris's minutest liking; not that he wanted the pomp for himself, but it was custom of the country and he would therefore have it for the sake of his own. Harris began his journey from Simoda to Yedo November 23, 1857, thus:

"My avant-courier was Kikuna, a military officer with a rank corresponding to captain; he had his horse, and norimono (chair of state with 22-foot poles and bearers), and the usual bearers and attendants, but before him went three lads, each bearing a wand of bamboo, with strips of paper attached to the top; they cried out alternately, 'Shi-ta-ni-ro!' that is, 'Sit down,' 'sit down'; they kept some four hundred yards in advance, and their cry sounded quite musical. Next to Kikuna came the American flag guarded by two of my guards. Then I came on horseback with six guards; next my norimono with its twelve bearers, and their headman, bearers of my shoes, etc.; then Mr. Heusken on horseback with two guards, then his norimono bearers, etc. Next followed my bedding, chairs, food, trunks, and packages containing presents; my cook and his following.

"The vice governor of Simoda followed with his train, then the Mayor of Kakizaki, and lastly the private secretary of the governor of Simoda. A Dutch interpreter was carried in a *kago* in Mr. Heusken's rear. The whole train numbered some three hundred and fifty persons. All the bearers of luggage, etc., etc., were changed every two ri, or about five miles, and I was glad to see that these men were all paid for their labor."

Officials from each succeeding town along the way to Yedo came out to greet the Harris cavalcade at their boundaries; as it had been agreed, not the least courtesy or detail of comfort was omitted. Sunday was observed without travel. Harris was an Episcopalian; from the first he had read the service of Sundays with Mr. Heusken, and, though it was still a capital offense, had apprised the Japanese that he did so in order that they should know not only that he was a Christian but that as the envoy of the United States he adhered to his privileges and stood upon international law rather than national. The commissioners, once Yedo was achieved and Harris ceremoniously installed in the temple chosen for his residence, asked how he should proceed to the tycoon's castle on the occasion of his state visit to present the president's letter. At first he thought he would go horseback, and said so. But this so pleased that he knew it could not be right. He inquired and learned that only the highest officials went to the castle in their norimonos, so of course he resorted to a change of mind and went in that way also.

It can be imagined how health-taking all these details were to an official alone in a country of 40 million hostile strangers, whose language he could not speak nor they his.

The daimios' frank hostility to a commercial treaty held off real progress for months, but on February 17, 1858, definite word was given that the treaty would be signed, come what would, and experience taught Harris he could rely upon his men. The Prince of Shinano was the chief of two commissioners dealing with him about the treaty, so there was no question of ample rank; but Harris knew all along that as each point came up, and decision was delayed until the commissioners could ruminate about it, that in reality the tycoon and the state council were being consulted. So great was the opposition of the daimios—the 260 military

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America's Part . . .

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princes who had retinues of troops and collected taxes, half of them always in residence at Yedo, with their families hostages there—that at last there was nothing for it but to dispatch a high envoy to Kioto and lay the treaty before the real emperor. (This in itself was a revolution, but if the emperor spoke, which he never did until many years later, the obstinate daimios would take it as heaven's word and submit).

Premier Hotta's overtures at Kioto failing (Harris meantime having, on the pledge of February 17, returned to Simoda, *by a Japanese steamer* be it noted), Shogun Iyesada "resolved to summon to the helm a fearless soul who would quail at no storm." This was the man who in 1861 paid his life for the treaty, in that swift way the fanatic assassin in Japan so often demands. He was Ii Kamon no Kami, baron of Hikoné, long afterward execrated in Japan—until as an outflow of his labors the revolution was complete and the long night of isolation ended. Shimada Saburo, in his *Opening of the Country*, purged Ii Kamon no Kami's name of infamy. Harris had but to invite his wise attention to events in China to move him to fearless action. On the gunboat *Powhatan*, on July 24, and not so late as September 4 as first arranged, Ii Kamon no Kami's commissioners signed the treaty.

Most English historians, since England soon had her own capable Alcock in Japan, make little of Townsend Harris's lonely and uniquely successful two years' diplomatic vigil in Japan—while England in China gave the Japanese their cue to sign with Harris quickly. This is much to their hurt, since the Japanese will not allow miswritten history respecting Townsend Harris to stand.

Their envoys went to the United States in 1860, on the *Powhatan* with Captain Tatnall, to exchange ratifications of the Harris and to obtain a fresh copy of the Perry treaty. *They returned from the United States in a steam warship of their own*, commanded by Katsu Awa, first organizer and historian of the modern Japanese navy. In the Harris treaty, gold and silver foreign moneys were made exchangeable with Japanese gold and silver at par weight value. Subsequent treaties all followed the Harris treaty in its general outline, and gave nothing to another country that was not conceded also to the United States. The Harris treaty provided consular courts. In all his later years Harris urged that this extraterritoriality be rescinded, which came about only after his death, which occurred in New York February 25, 1878, when he was 75 years old. His declining years were spent at the Union Club, whose library he founded. He had only a few congenial friends, and used to say he and they talked sense at one end of the club while dollars were talked at the other. This was because he was old and full of honors and could take privileges. Yet it is true that throughout his active business life he also followed literary pleasures. Latin American relations in his drygoods business in New York made him acquire a fluent mastery of Spanish. In the Far East for six years before being chosen for Japan, he was master and sole owner of a trading ship. He studied all the port cities, the peoples and cultures behind them. So the east became his primer, he was fitted to follow Perry in Japan. Christmas 1850 he spent in Manila, and succeeding Christmases in order: at Penang, at Singapore, at Hongkong, at Calcutta, at Ceylon, at Simoda in his consulate, alone with Mr. Heusken, reading the day's religious lesson. "I am sick and solitary, living, as one may say, in a prison; a large one it is true, but still a prison." The day before but one had registered the first attempt on his secretary's life. He had thereupon cautioned him always to go armed when he left the consulate premises. The next Christmas was at Yedo, and indoors for diplomatic reasons: Harris had found that the Japanese associated indolence indoors with rank and authority, and while that precious treaty was in the balance Harris was determined to do nothing to lessen the appearance of these attributes in himself.

The country he thus opened to ocean commerce sent its first exhibit abroad to Vienna in 1873, another of only 6,000 tons of stuffs to the Philadelphia Centennial in 1876, and a tremendous one to Chicago, the fourteenth, in 1893, when its annual increase of population had reached 500,000, half what it is today. Harris's diary notes the astonishing rapidity with which western ideas were examined and assimilated in Japan. One of the presents Perry gave them was a brass cannon, and when Harris came two years later they had 500 of them from their own foundries. So it was with steamships, weaving mills and all that came to hand; and all this, until 1895, while foreign goods, under a rank distortion of the Harris treaty (which Harris denounced as dishonorable) came into the country under a duty of but 5% *ad valorem*.

Life Insurance . . .

(Continued from page 7)

or university qualifications of applicant solicitors a distinct recommendation. The women among its solicitors are single and have their own living to make.

For education of children the business of insuring them is growing in the islands. In this specialized branch of soliciting women would seem to fit well; they should be able to make effective appeals to mothers, where appeals most count. This is a branch of insurance possibly destined to rapid growth in the Philippines.

The total of 40,889 life insurance policies in force in the Philippines at the close of 1932 is small in a total population approximating 14,000,000. That population signifies about 2,335,000 families. If we take this estimate, 6 to the family, we see that insurance protects very few families in the islands, even counting 1 policy to each family. It actually runs, on this basis, 1 policy of ₱3,607 to less than 1 family in 57. Even a slight increase in the general level of family incomes in the Philippines would, it may be deduced from this situation, increase the number of life insurance policies in the islands enormously. (Conversely however, the encouragement given the gambling instinct in the revival of the lottery in the islands will, with all analogous influences, harm insurance as well as all other influences toward thrift. Governor-General Frank Murphy wants no more lotteries after the ones now legalized have been terminated. He is dead right about it).

The annual reports of the insurance commissioner, purely of a stilted financial character, fall far short of adequacy when an economic survey of insurance is undertaken. There is in them no segregation of insurance by sexes and ages of the insured, the average life of policies is not stated, and nothing is learned of the number of policies that, once lapsed, have been revived. Neither is their identification of the insured by their occupations, while many other desirable facts are equally lacking. But all this granted, it is still evident from all that does appear that life insurance in the Philippines has riden the depression well. The volume of business is little below the peak years (increased, in fact, in 1932) and the financial status of the underwriters is sound.

—*W. R.*

She.—So you came home and found your wife in the arms of your best friend—who is he?

He.—I don't know—I never saw him before in my life!

—Cut and comment from *Judge*.

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