

BEYOND PERRY'S BLACK SHIPS: THE EMERGENCE OF UNITED STATES-JAPANESE
DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, 1840s-1870s

MICHELLE BLACKBURN

Master's Program in History

APPROVED:

Brad Cartwright, Ph.D., Chair

Joshua Fan, Ph.D.

Brian Yothers, Ph.D.

Stephen L. Crites, Jr., Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

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PREVIEW

Dedication

For my parents and grandparents. Thank you for believing in me and supporting this project. I

love you so much.

Para mis padres y abuelos. Gracias por creer en mí y apoyar este proyecto.

Te quiero mucho.

PREVIEW

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MICHELLE BLACKBURN, B.A.

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INTRODUCTION

In February 1854, Commodore Matthew C. Perry of the United States Navy, re-entered Japan's Edo Bay to demand a finalization of a Treaty of Amity between the United States and Japan. The Japanese *Bakufu* made it a habit to buy time before giving Perry an answer. Finally, in February 1854, the *Bakufu* decided it was in Japan's best interests to negotiate a treaty with the United States. Commodore Perry wrote in his journal about the tactics behind his attitude and behavior towards the Japanese to accomplish his mission:

Finding that I could be induced to change a predetermined intention in one instance, they might rely on prevailing on me by dint of perseverance to waver in true policy to hold out at all hazards, and rather to establish myself a character of unreasonable obstinacy than that of a yielding disposition. I hinge the tenor of our future negotiations, and the sequel will show that I was right in my conclusions . . . For motives of policy, and to give greater [importance] to my own position, I have hitherto studiously kept myself aloof from intercourse with any of the subordinates of the court, making it known that I would communicate with none but the princes of the empire.¹

Commodore Perry was determined to negotiate a treaty with Japan. He refused to leave Edo Bay until the *Bakufu* consented to allow Perry ashore and talk with the Japanese government about how to proceed with establishing friendly relations. In the end, Perry's persistence prevailed because the *Bakufu* signed the Treaty of Kanagawa in March 1854 and friendly diplomatic relations began.

The narrative of Commodore Perry single-handedly opening Japan to the outside world has been accepted as common knowledge. Scholars agree that Perry did not have any assistance whatsoever. When reading about how Perry opened the isolated country, the tactics scholars

¹Matthew C. Perry, "From The Personal Journal of Commodore Matthew C. Perry, 1853-1854." In *The Japanese Discovery of America: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Peter Duus (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1997), 91.

write about include his tough demeanor, violence, and cold persistence that persuaded the Japanese to see reason and open a dialogue with the United States Navy.² Scholars have continued to accept this narrative as fact because of primary sources like Perry's journal that gives details on how he exerted dominance over the Japanese and pressured them into agreeing with him that signing a treaty was the best course of action. In fact, Perry is best known for his role in the opening of Japan in both United States history and Japanese history, making this monumental moment his greatest accomplishment and legacy after his death.

While Perry's participation in the initial opening of Japan is unquestionable, his sole role in the opening of the isolated country should be challenged. There is evidence that two Western-educated Japanese men assisted in the establishment and continuation of United States-Japanese relations throughout Japan's modernization process. These two men were Nakahama Manjiro and Joseph Heco.

Nakahama Manjiro came to the United States in the 1840s after being shipwrecked in 1841. Manjiro was a poor fisherman with four other crew members catching sea bass when they were shipwrecked by the *Kuroshio* in January 1841. The crew safely landed on a deserted island and lived off of the land for six months, while they waited to be rescued. In June, a ship was spotted on the horizon, sailing towards *Torishima* Island. This ship was the *John Howland*, captained by William Whitfield of New Bedford, Massachusetts. The five Japanese men boarded the *John Howland* ending their castaway days. Captain Whitfield saw something special in Manjiro. He asked Manjiro and his companions if it was alright if he took Manjiro with him to Massachusetts to be educated, which Manjiro agreed to. Manjiro was the first known Japanese to

²Tosh Minohara and Kaoru Iokibe, "America Encounters Japan, 1836-1894." In *The History of US-Japan Relations: From Perry to the Present*, ed. Makoto Iokibe and Tosh Minohara (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 7-10.

live in the United States. Throughout the 1840s, Manjiro learned English, navigation, and to be a Cooper. After a decade he decided to return to Japan in 1850.

When Manjiro arrived in Japan, *samurai* officials took him into custody and interrogated him as was the customary process when dealing with foreigners. In his interrogation, Manjiro explained why he illegally left Japanese borders and what he had done for the past decade. He told these officials about the United States, their culture, politics, economic system, military strength, and technological innovation. After hearing these testimonials, the *Bakufu* decided to allow Manjiro entrance into Japan and even granted him the rank of *samurai*. He was commissioned to teach young *samurai* English and navigation. They believed that he would be useful when a Western nation like the United States would appear at their borders. Western nations were colonizing Asia during this time, through commerce. They needed all the information they could get to plan strategies on how to deal with foreign nations who wanted to take away Japan's autonomy through imperialism, as Britain had done in China in the 1840s.

When Perry arrived in 1853, the *Bakufu* knew they made the right decision to make Manjiro a *samurai* because he advised them on how to proceed with Perry's demands. Manjiro was asked to listen in on the conversation between Perry and the Tokugawa *Bakufu* behind the scenes. His knowledge of the United States helped the *Bakufu* come to an agreement that they should compromise with the United States and sign the Treaty of Kanagawa in 1854, allowing them enough concessions to placate the United States while giving the *Bakufu* more time to deliberate on how to continue their isolation policy without starting a war with a stronger nation. Manjiro's role in the Perry negotiations not only opened Japan but established United States-Japanese relations.

Manjiro's participation at the meeting between Perry and the *Bakufu* was not the only way he helped established diplomatic relations. He helped maintain them by teaching young *samurai* English and Western style navigation in a school founded by the *Bakufu*. These *samurai* students were influenced by Manjiro's teachings to participate and even lead the Meiji Restoration in the 1860s. The Meiji Restoration, in theory overthrew the *Bakufu*, however this was not the case. The Meiji government consisted of officials that governed in the *Bakufu*. Yet, the restoration was crucial to the maintenance of relations with the United States because the Imperial Court saw the benefits of adopting Western knowledge and applying it to their way of life, economics, and politics to strengthen Japan as a nation that can hold its own. The Meiji government was able to do this because Manjiro's *samurai* students became government officials. These officials had the knowledge to interact diplomatically with other foreign nations for Japan's best interests into the twentieth century.

The second man that helped establish United States-Japanese relations was Joseph Heco. Heco was shipwrecked in 1850 after traveling to Edo with his father. He was rescued by Captain Jennings of the *Auckland* after fifty-one days of drifting in the Pacific Ocean. Captain Jennings took Heco to San Francisco, California where he stayed for a year while waiting to be returned to Japan as part of the Japanese Expedition that Commodore Perry would lead. The United States government thought it was a good idea to return Japanese castaways to open dialogue with Japan about trade deals. This would show Japan that they were a benevolent country. Heco grew tired of waiting for Perry in China and returned to the United States to be educated.

Heco returned to the United States in 1854 where he was adopted by the Sanders family and educated to be useful for the United States government. Along the way he was Christianized. By the later part of the 1850s, the government believed Heco would be useful as an interpreter in

the newly opened trading port of Kanagawa, Japan. Heco applied for the position and was hired. However, he had to become a naturalized United States citizen to accept the position.

Heco returned to Japan as an interpreter. He used his knowledge of Japanese customs and United States customs to maintain peaceful relations in Kanagawa when civil war was unfolding. Heco would translate foreign newspapers into Japanese so Japanese citizens knew what was going on in the foreign community. He also advised foreign leaders what was taking place domestically as the war started. He advised *Daimyo* (*samurai* leaders) to strengthen their provinces to defend themselves. *Daimyo* believed that Heco was a trustworthy ally of the revolutionary group, the *Ishin Shin*.

Revolutionary leaders of the Satsuma and Choshu provinces contracted him as an agent to negotiate deals between foreign nations and the revolutionaries to gain weapons and ammunition from foreign entities that would help them win the war. Heco partook in a direct role in the war alongside Manjiro's students to help overthrow the Tokugawa *Bakufu* and create the Meiji government. By interpreting in Kanagawa and promoting the restoration, Heco maintained U.S.-Japanese relations. The Meiji government needed these relations to learn enough to defend itself from Imperialist threats from Western nations and to become a superpower greater than the United States and European nations.

Therefore, I argue that Commodore Matthew Perry did not act alone when he successfully negotiated the Treaty of Kanagawa and opened Japan in 1854. I acknowledge that his firm diplomacy was a useful tactic that played a role in gaining an audience with the *Bakufu*, but Manjiro and Heco played indirect and direct roles, that assisted Perry in opening Japan. They helped establish and maintain diplomatic relations throughout the nineteenth century, as Japan transitioned from a feudal country to a modern nation.

The opening of Japan and the ensuing Meiji Restoration are popular topics in both academia and popular culture. Academic scholarship has focused on different aspects of these two related events. Scholars have told the narrative in three different ways: (1) by looking at various groups and individuals especially *samurai* as case studies, (2) through an examination of the diplomacy that Westerners and the *Bakufu* demonstrated in the negotiations in the 1850s, and (3) by analyzing how/why the Tokugawa *Bakufu* fell under foreign pressure. The historiography that I utilize spans from the 1950s to the 2010s.

The case studies I read focused on individuals and groups of *samurai* that took part in the opening of Japan and the Meiji Restoration. In the 1950s two biographies on Nakahama Manjiro were published at the centennial anniversary of the opening of Japan. These were *Manjiro, The Man Who Discovered America* by Hisakazu Kaneko and *Voyager to Destiny* by Emily Warinner.³ Both biographies detail his shipwreck, rescue and education in the United States. They discuss his return to Japan and how he participated in the Meiji Restoration as a *samurai*. These biographies were the only scholarship in English dedicated to Manjiro until the 1980s when Katherine Plummer published *The Shogun's Reluctant Ambassadors: Sea Drifters* in 1984.⁴ Her book is a compilation of individual biographies on Japanese castaways including Nakahama Manjiro and Joseph Heco. Plummer narrates Manjiro's story but falls short on Heco's as she does not discuss his involvement in the Restoration. To my knowledge this is the earliest scholarship on Joseph Heco.

³Hisakazu Kaneko. *Manjiro, The Man Who Discovered America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1956).

Emily Warinner. *Voyager to Destiny: The Amazing Adventures of Manjiro, The Man Who Changed Worlds Twice* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.).

⁴Katherine Plummer. *The Shogun's Reluctant Ambassadors: Sea Drifters* (Tokyo: Lotus Press, 1984).

There were other case studies on individuals written to explain the narrative on the opening of Japan. One of these individuals was Sakamoto Ryoma. In 1961, Marius Jansen wrote a narrative of the Meiji Restoration as Sakamoto Ryoma witnessed it and participated in it.⁵ While Sakamoto was heavily influenced by Manjiro's interrogation and Kawada Shoryo's transcription of the interrogation, Jansen does not go into detail as to why Manjiro was so influential on Sakamoto's ideas on a democratic form of government.

In 1992, George Wilson argued that *samurai* and commoners had a motive to overthrow the Tokugawa *Bakufu*.⁶ Commoners suffered under the *Bakufu*'s systems because they endured the famines and other troubles. Manjiro and Heco are not mentioned in this work.

The other case studies focus on popular *samurai* and groups that participated in this civil war. These include Romulus Hillsborough's case study on the *Shinsengumi* in his *Shinsengumi: The Shogun's Last Samurai Corps* in 2005.⁷ Hillsborough focused on the activities these men participated in to keep the Tokugawa *Bakufu* in power. In his analysis he captured the spirit of the *Shinsengumi* and their purpose for fighting. Even though he discussed the causes that led to civil war, he did not mention Manjiro's role in the Perry negotiations or Heco's role as interpreter between Japanese and foreigners.

However, Hillsborough did mention Manjiro in his 2014 book *Samurai Revolution: The Dawn of Modern Japan Seen Through the Eyes of the Shogun's Last Samurai*.⁸ He gives credit to Manjiro as a translator in the Perry negotiations, but only dedicates a few pages to Manjiro's role

⁵Marius B. Jansen. *Sakamoto Ryoma and the Meiji Restoration* (California: Stanford University Press, 1961).

⁶George M. Wilson. *Patriots and Redeemers in Japan: Motives in the Meiji Restoration* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁷Romulus Hillsborough. *Shinsengumi: The Shogun's Last Samurai Corps* (Vermont: Tuttle Publishing, 2005).

⁸Romulus Hillsborough. *Samurai Revolution: The Dawn of Modern Japan Seen Through The Eyes Of the Shogun's Last Samurai* (Vermont: Tuttle Publishing, 2014).

as this book focuses on Katsu Kaishu and his point of view and participation in the Meiji Restoration. There is no mention of Heco. It could be because Heco was not a *samurai* like Manjiro.

Hillsborough's latest book *Samurai Assassins: "Dark Murder" and the Meiji Restoration, 1853-1868* continues his trend to focus on individual *samurai* who were politically assassinated for supporting foreigners' presence in Japan.⁹ Hillsborough decided to write on Ii Naosuke, Takechi Hanpeita, and Sakamoto Ryoma, who all of whom supported revolutionary change. Hillsborough only mentions Manjiro briefly in the section dedicated to Sakamoto because of his influence on Sakamoto regarding democratic government. Heco is not mentioned.

The second type of scholarship in the historiography focuses on the Perry/*Bakufu* negotiations in 1853-1854. The first book that looks at the negotiations is Peter Booth Wiley's *Yankees in the Land of the Gods* published in 1990.¹⁰ Wiley states that the opening of Japan was a result of Imperialist attitudes like Manifest Destiny and commercialism. He argued that Japan opened because Perry's gunboat diplomacy added more stress to an already broken system. He mentions Manjiro's role as translator. Wiley also mentioned in his book that the Russians tried to open Japan. This experience with the Russians and using Manjiro gave the *Bakufu* more of an idea of how to deal with the United States.

In 2006, two books came out about the foreign negotiations. The first was William McOmie's *Opening of Japan, 1853-1855: A Comparative Study of the American, British, Dutch and Russian Naval Expeditions to Compel the Tokugawa Bakufu to Conclude Treaties and Open*

⁹Romulus Hillsborough. *Samurai Assassins: "Dark Murder" and the Meiji Restoration, 1853-1868* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2017).

¹⁰Peter Booth Wiley and Korogi Ichiro. *Yankees in the Land of the Gods: Commodore Perry and the Opening of Japan* (New York: Viking, 1992).

Ports to their Ships.¹¹ McOmie chronicles how these foreign nations approached opening Japan, emphasizing their successes and failures. Since he analyzed the United States and their approach, Manjiro is mentioned as a translator for the negotiations between the *Bakufu* and Perry.

The second book was George Feifer's *Breaking Open Japan: Commodore Perry, Lord Abe, and American Imperialism in 1853*.¹² Feifer analyzed how the opening of Japan created hostile relations between the United States and Japan into the twentieth century leading up to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. These hostile relations began when Perry's cold attitude forced Japan to open, making Japanese inferior beings in the eyes of the superior Western nations. Manjiro was included in Feifer's analysis as a translator for the *Bakufu*. He discussed Manjiro in more detail than previous scholarship on the opening of Japan, but certainly not enough like the biographies that were solely dedicated to explaining Manjiro's life story. Feifer did not include Hecor in his analysis.

The latest book on the opening of Japan is *The History of US-Japan Relations* edited by Makoto Iokibe.¹³ This book is a compilation of essays that examines diplomatic relations. For this thesis, I only used the first chapter that covered the relations between the 1830s and 1890s. This chapter examines how the United States wanted to establish friendly relations solely for commercialism. After Perry managed to open a few Japanese ports, Townsend Harris further negotiated with Japan to open more ports, persuading them that the United States only wanted access to markets and did not want to colonize Japan like European nations wanted. Surprisingly,

¹¹William McOmie. *The Opening of Japan, 1853-1855: A Comparative Study of the American, British, Dutch, and Russian Naval Expeditions to Compel the Tokugawa Shogunate to Conclude Treaties and Open Ports to their Ships* (United Kingdom: Global Oriental, 2006).

¹² George Feifer. *Breaking Open Japan: Commodore Perry, Lord Abe, and American Imperialism in 1853* (New York: Smithsonian Books, 2006).

¹³Makoto Iokibe, editor. *The History of US-Japanese Relations: From Perry to the Present*, trans. Tosh Minohara (Japan: Yuhikaku Publishing Co.Ltd., 2017), 3-22.

Manjiro and Heco are not discussed even though they both played roles in the opening of Japan and the maintenance of these relations in this new scholarship.

The third type of scholarship that makes up the historiography deals with the Japanese response to Western pressure and the origins of the Meiji Restoration. Manjiro and Heco were not discussed as important players in this time period in the early scholarship. The first book that argues the Tokugawa *Bakufu* failed in the wake of foreign threats was Paul Akamatsu's *Meiji, 1868* published in 1968.¹⁴ He argued that there was a revolutionary change in Japan despite the lack of change in government officials. The change came about with changing the system of governance to fix the domestic problems the *Bakufu* created and to make Japan strong enough to defend its autonomy. Manjiro and Heco are not mentioned in this analysis.

Conrad Totman makes a similar case in his *The Collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu, 1862-1868* published in 1980.¹⁵ He argues that the political, economic, and social systems that Tokugawa created were not equipped to handle the threat of Western imperialism. Thus, revolutionaries took advantage of the weak points in these systems to overthrow Tokugawa. Manjiro and Heco were not discussed in this analysis either.

William Beasley took a different approach to discuss why the Tokugawa *Bakufu* fell in his *Japan Encounters the Barbarian: Japanese Travellers in America and Europe*.¹⁶ He argued that the *Bakufu* fell because of foreign pressure. The *Bakufu* realized how weak its systems were and needed to create stronger systems using Western education. To do this the *Bakufu* sent Japanese students on missions and envoys abroad to America and Europe to learn from the West.

¹⁴Paul Akamatsu. *Meiji, 1868: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Japan*. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968).

¹⁵Conrad Totman. *The Collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu, 1862-1868*. (Hawaii: The University Press of Hawaii, 1980).

¹⁶W.G Beasley. *Japan Encounters the Barbarian: Japanese Travellers in America and Europe* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1995).

One of these people was Manjiro as he was commissioned to participate in the Japanese Embassy of 1860 and the Iwakura Mission of 1870. Despite Manjiro's role, Beasley does not provide a detailed account of Manjiro's life because he was examining this phenomenon using different actors during this period. More scholarship arguing that the *Bakufu* fell due to Western pressure would not be published until the late 2000s.

In 2009 Dana Kenneth Teasley wrote a thesis analyzing this historiography and how it does not truly paint a comprehensive picture of the opening of Japan and the Meiji Restoration.¹⁷ He argued that the system fell because of the foreign threat, but individual *samurai* and groups took advantage of the failure to create a democratic government to fix domestic issues. Manjiro and Heco are not mentioned in this thesis even though they both supported a democratic government because of what they experienced in the United States and the roles they played in overthrowing the *Bakufu*.

The latest scholarly work was *Toward the Meiji Revolution: The Search for "Civilization" in Nineteenth Century Japan* published in 2019.¹⁸ Karube Tadashi argues that the Meiji Restoration was rooted in social and intellectual ideas that began to spread a long time before Perry arrived. These ideas came about because people of all sectors knew that the systems were flawed and had to change for the *Bakufu* to remain in power.

While my project may overlap with previous scholarship in the historiography, my aim is to tell a narrative of the opening of Japan and the Meiji Restoration from the perspective of two Western educated men. My analysis of Nakahama Manjiro may be repetitive from the biographies and other works, but I hope to add to the scholarship on this lesser-known *samurai*

¹⁷Dana Kenneth Teasley. *The Japanese Revolutionaries: The Architects of the Meiji Restoration 1860-1868*. (El Paso: The University of Texas, 2009).

¹⁸Karube Tadashi. *Toward the Meiji Revolution: The Search for "Civilization" in Nineteenth-Century Japan*. Trans. David Noble. (Japan Library: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture, 2019).

and his contributions to the modernization of Japan. I also hope to unearth the buried contributions of Joseph Heco, a Japanese American who used his Western education and United States citizenship to maintain peace between Japanese and foreigners in Kanagawa and Yokohama, Japan. His knowledge was useful to the restoration because he used his contacts to get foreign ships and weapons to win the civil war. These two men, though rarely mentioned in the scholarship, deserve recognition for their contributions among other Japanese men such as Sakamoto Ryoma and Katsu Kaishu and American men like Commodore Perry and Townsend Harris.

I would also like to explain why I chose the secondary sources I use to give background knowledge on this topic. I am aware that some of my sources may be outdated and more recent scholarship is available. The Covid-19 Pandemic forced me to choose these sources because of the stay-at-home orders that were implemented. These orders closed libraries and their Inter-Library Loan networks. Therefore, I was not able to request newer scholarship and I had to make do with what the University of Texas at El Paso Library had on its shelves that I could borrow before the stay-at-home orders were put into effect.

To understand the significance of the opening of Japan by any Western nation and the ensuing Meiji Restoration, historical context on both Japan and the United States must be explained. Japan was an isolated country that planned to continue its isolation. Many in the United States thought Japan needed to be opened for trading purposes. The United States needed new markets to expand its commercialism, and as well as its ideology of Manifest Destiny, into the Pacific Ocean to gain more resources to continue its growth as a superpower.

In 1603 Tokugawa Ieyasu, the third and final unifier of Japan became *shogun* and established the Tokugawa *Bakufu* in Edo after winning the century long *Sengoku* Era civil war. It was his goal to maintain the peace in Japan. To do this he instituted political, economic, and social reforms that dictated how the Japanese lived for 250 years. To achieve the safety of his government and his legacy, he needed to do two things: 1) subdue the Imperial Court by keeping them under his rule and 2) to control the *Daimyo* (*samurai* leaders) in a way to ensure that they do not rebel and overthrow his government.

Regarding the Imperial Court, Ieyasu continued to subdue the Emperor and his court. He did this by allowing them to live peacefully in Kyoto. They were allotted an income that they could live by and had very little political power, as was the case since the end of the *Heian* Period in 1185.¹⁹ To further subdue the Emperor and his vassals, Ieyasu sent loyal *samurai* to Kyoto to live among them in the Imperial Palace in order to keep a watchful eye on their daily activities and whereabouts and to make sure the nobles were not plotting against the *Bakufu* to retake their rightful sovereign power.²⁰

Ieyasu needed to control the *samurai*, who fought for the position of *shogun* during the civil war in the *Sengoku* Era. This war demonstrated that every *Daimyo* was out for themselves and their vassals, as they battled against each other. Only a few were loyal to Tokugawa Ieyasu before he won the war. Ieyasu rewarded these *samurai* for their loyalty by promoting them to be his trusted advisors in his government. They were known as the *fudai*. The ones that pledged their loyalty after it was clear that Tokugawa won were known as the *tozama*. They were given

¹⁹The rise of the *Samurai* began in the mid-12th century when Minamoto Yoritomo took military power and created an early version of the *Bakufu*. His goal was not to take away power from the emperor because the emperor was the descendent of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu and therefore had the divine right to rule Japan. Instead, Minamoto made the Imperial Court a puppet-government under the feudalist *Samurai* government.

²⁰Nancy K. Stalker. *Japan: History and Culture from Classical to Cool*. (California: University of California Press, 2017), 147.

land furthest from Edo. To maintain his government, Ieyasu implemented *sankin kotai* or an alternative attendance system. This system forced *Daimyo* to go to and live in Edo as part of their duty to the *shogun* every other year, while their wives lived permanently in Edo as hostages. *Sankin Kotai* was an ingenious way to keep the *Daimyo* under control because if they disobeyed orders, their wives would suffer the consequences. *Sankin Kotai* also subdued *Daimyo* financially because traveling from their provinces to Edo was expensive, deliberately keeping them poor so they could not raise an army and overthrow the government. *Sankin Kotai* was not the only reform put in place that controlled politics and the economy. Reforms were put in place to control ordinary Japanese subjects as well.

By the 1630s, Ieyasu's grandson, Iemitsu declared that Japan should be isolated from the rest of the world and passed *Sakoku*. According to this policy, Japanese were not allowed to leave Japan. If they left, they would not be able to return. Foreigners, with the exception of Chinese, Koreans, and Dutch were not allowed to enter Japan as well. This may seem like a drastic measure that the *Bakufu* took to maintain order, but it was worried that foreigners and their religion were influencing ordinary Japanese into rebelling against the government. The foreign religion was Christianity.

The Portuguese introduced Christianity in the mid-sixteenth century. It was tolerated to an extent by all the unifiers of Japan, but it became a threat by the mid-seventeenth century as civilians plotted to overthrow the government. Essays and memorials were written describing how foreign nations came to Japan's shores looking for products to trade and in return spread the religion as they traveled within Japan, and how Christian missionaries helped the people in need. Foreign nations used Christianity to conquer the world without fighting through the conversion

of souls to Christianity and receiving charity.²¹ At first it was only a threat, until it became reality. In 1637, Christian rebels led the *Shimabara* rebellion in Kyushu to overthrow the local *samurai* government. The *Bakufu* stepped in to suppress the situation and was successful. This event convinced Iemitsu that foreigners and their culture were dangerous to not only his rule, but the safety of Japan. He decided to close Japan to the rest of the world to make sure that foreigners could not make a direct and indirect attack on his legitimate rule.²²

Sakoku stated that no foreigners were allowed within Japan's boundaries. In turn Japanese ships were not allowed to cross political boundaries, Japanese could not travel abroad lest they be forbidden to return, and if they tried to return, they were arrested, interrogated, and possibly executed.²³ There were loopholes to this isolation policy. Japan only traded with China, Korea, and the Netherlands. Each country could do business with Japan in certain areas: China in the *Ryukyu* Islands, Korea in *Tsushima* Island, and the Netherlands on *Dejima* Island in Nagasaki, Kyushu Island. It was important for Japan to maintain contact with a Western nation because it needed to know what was going on in the world. The Dutch provided crucial information that the *Bakufu* would use to make decisions regarding its isolation and how to keep their sovereignty, especially in the 1700s and 1800s when Westerners repeatedly tried to open Japan.²⁴

By the 1700s Japan experienced economic problems that stemmed from the unequal social hierarchy. The social hierarchy constituted with *samurai* at the top, farmers second, artisans third, and merchants at the bottom. Since *samurai* were at the top as a warrior and

²¹Anonymous, "From Kirishitan Monogatari (Tales of the Christians) 1639." In *The Japanese Discovery of America: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Peter Duus (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1997), 45-48.

²²Stalker, 141.

²³ Conrad Totman. *Japan before Perry: A Short History*, 25th Anniversary ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 145-147.

²⁴Stalker, 141.

bureaucratic class, they had to live lavish lifestyles that denoted their prestige in Japanese society, but they did not have to produce those lifestyles for themselves. *Samurai* were given everything they needed: food, clothing, housing, weapons and even income. These items came from the other three classes because they were responsible for producing everything Japan needed; limited foreign trade was not enough to handle the demand for necessities. These financial difficulties worsened as the population grew in the late 1600s and 1700s. Most of the food and supplies produced went to the *samurai*, leaving little for the commoners. This rise in population put an extra burden on farmers, especially since they could not grow enough crops to support both the *samurai*'s lifestyle and a growing population. They could not keep up with the demand when Japan's economic system transformed from an agrarian system to a mercantile system.²⁵

Even though merchants were at the bottom of the social hierarchy, they were the ones that benefitted most economically. Towns surrounding *Daimyo*'s castles grew along with the mercantile economy. *Samurai* had to buy items from merchants for their trips to Edo as a part their duties for *Sankin Kotai*. The items they bought had to be lavish enough to satisfy the demands of the Tokugawa *Bakufu*, draining *Samurai*'s pocketbooks. *Sankin Kotai* was devised to do this, so *samurai* did not have enough money to raise an army and overthrow the government. Iemitsu's careful deliberation to protect his dynasty led to economic growth in cities and towns, because *samurai* had to buy goods from merchants. However, in the long run, Iemitsu's policy put his country's economy and commoners and *samurai* in danger by creating these financial burdens and their poverty. Farmers were expected to produce enough cash crops to support a mercantile economy, but they could not grow a sufficient amount of crops to sell and pay their

²⁵W.G. Beasley. *The Japanese Experience: A Short History of Japan* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 159.

taxes. This led to their poverty.²⁶ The country's poverty was a reason why foreigner's demands for trade relationships led to the downfall of Tokugawa and the restoration of the Emperor in the nineteenth century. These classes knew that the systems in place were broken and needed to be fixed by changing the governing system.

If dealing with the domestic problems Tokugawa's reforms created was not enough, threats to the isolation policy posed problems for the government. Western nations tried to gain concessions and start trade relations since the 1700s. The first was Russia who tried to colonize and set up trading stations in Ezo or present-day Hokkaido. The *Bakufu* thought about how it was going to deal with foreigners in a manner that allowed Japan to remain cut off from the world. By the end of the eighteenth century, scholars and *samurai* wrote on these threats and possible strategies to deal with them. They were afraid that if the *Bakufu* did not handle these situations in the best possible manner to pacify the foreigners and maintain their autonomy, the foreigners would colonize Japan. A possible solution Honda Toshiaki proposed dealt with colonizing the territory around Japan such as Ezo to keep foreigners at bay. His suggestion was very frank: colonize or be colonized.²⁷ However, there was no clear answer to these problems as foreigner's encroachment drew closer and closer going into the nineteenth century.

A quarter into the nineteenth century, threats from foreigners came in different varieties. Some nations continued to try to negotiate treaties to open Japan for its markets. Other nations like the United States wanted to open ports for its whaling ships to be able to stop and resupply. These whaling ships, who were a part of a lucrative trade, sailed across the Pacific Ocean catching whales. Sailors were shipwrecked and landed in Japan, where they were arrested under

²⁶Ibid., 163-164.

²⁷ Honda Toshiaki. "From Keisei hisaku (A Secret Strategy for Ruling the Country) 1798." In *The Japanese Discovery of America: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Peter Duus (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1997), 48-50.

the laws of the isolation policy. Thus, Western nations sought relations with Japan to be able to recover their sailors from being imprisoned and as a docking port to rest and resupply their ships to continue their journey catching whales.

Samurai like Aizawa Seishisai, wrote memorials on how the *Bakufu* should deal with foreigners. In his *Shinron* (New Theses) he stated that Japanese should be wary of the foreigners' proposals to diplomatic relations because it could be a motive to spread Christianity through the façade of trading. Christianity was still believed to be dangerous as it could lead to the people rebelling against the Japanese government. It was also believed that foreigners would use trade to learn about a country and eventually conquer it from within.²⁸ Thus, the *Bakufu* needed to strengthen their forces and enforce the law whenever a foreigner was close to Japanese borders. It was during this time that there was a rise in Japanese nationalism that created a sense that Japan needed to be defended against Western encroachment. They issued an edict the same year that Aizawa wrote his theses on how to handle foreign threat. This Expulsion Edict stated that any foreign ships that crossed into Japanese waters would be bombed without any questions to drive them away. If sailors manage to dodge cannon fire and land ashore, *samurai* were authorized to arrest them. This edict created the laws that pushed the need for Western nations to negotiate treaties for the release of their incarcerated sailors.²⁹

By 1840, the foreign problem and their threat had increased exponentially when Japan learned that China lost territory and concessions to England.³⁰ Japan's fear of being colonized through treaties with foreign nations rose as well. Clearly, the *Bakufu*'s edicts, policies and laws

²⁸Aizawa Seishisai. "From Shinron (New Theses) 1825." In *The Japanese Discovery of America: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Peter Duus (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1997), 52-56.

²⁹ Japanese *Bakufu*. "A *Bakufu* Expulsion Edict 1825" In *The Japanese Discovery of America: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Peter Duus (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1997), 57-58.

³⁰Patricia Ebrey and Anne Walthall. *East Asia: A Cultural, Social, and Political History*, Third Ed. (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2014), 317.