

E. Kaempfer's Treatise on Japan's Policy of Seclusion and Its Influence on Japan's Decision to Open the Country

Some Reflections Concerning Mori Ôgai's Historical Novel*

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Introduction

The present subject pertains to three historical facts. First, Engelbert Kaempfer, a German scholar who came to Japan towards the end of the 17th century and later wrote a significant treatise to vindicate Japan's policy of seclusion under the Tokugawa perhaps at the early 18th century. Secondly, Japan decided to open the country to the Western world in the mid-19th century after the arrival of the American fleet led by Commodore Perry in 1853. And after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, she took decisive steps to modernize herself following the Western model. Thirdly, Mori Ôgai, who wrote several dozens of novels during his lifetime, shifted his main concern to a special genre called historical novel (*rekishi shôsetsu*) in his last days. This was in the early 20th century, especially in 1910's. How are these three historical facts, in the early 18th century, in the mid-19th century and in the early 20th century respectively related with each other? This is a point of the present subject.

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1. *A Historical Novel Titled by Tsuge Shirôzaemon*

One of Ôgai's historical novels is Tsuge Shirôzaemon, written in 1915. Tsuge was an activist of the so-called "revering the Emperor and expelling the barbarians" movement at the end of the Tokugawa period and is recorded in history as the assassin of Yokoi Shônán. Tsuge believed that the latter intended to bring Christianity to Japan, thereby endangering Japanese polity. The plot was carried out with other like-minded activists in 1869 and he was executed in the next year at the age of 23.

Yokoi Shônán was one of the important Confucian thinkers of the Bakumatsu period. He was particularly significant in the following two aspects.

1) He reinterpreted such Confucian concepts as the principle of Heaven and earth so as to provide the Japanese with an idea of international law in the modern West. It is said that this effort of reinterpretation of Confucian concepts contributed a great deal in inducing the Japanese to open the country and establish friendly relations with Western countries. This was especially true in comparison with China and Korea.

2) In the Confucian idea of five fundamental human relations, Shônán placed a greater emphasis on the equal relation between friends than other discriminative relations such as master-servant, father-son, husband-wife. Thereby he reformulated the Confucian idea of politics and consequently provided the Japanese with a framework in which such Western political principles and systems as constitutionalism and parliament came to be evaluated. In fact, later thinkers and leaders after the Meiji Restoration undertook introducing the Western political systems into Japan on this basis. In a word, therefore, Yokoi Shônán was a founding father, or at least a significant forerunner of modern Japan.

Seeing the matter in this light, Tsuge, the assassin of such a progressive thinker, must be called a fanatic exclusionist or reactionary. Now, Tsuge left a baby who later entered Tokyo University and happened to become a friend of Ôgai's younger brother. Since his youth, Tsuge's son was much pained by the fact that his father had assassinated such a significant thinker and was executed, and after a period of long years he saw Ôgai and gave him various materials pertaining to his beheaded father, and asking Ôgai to write a work in order to vindicate his father. Then Ôgai wrote the novel using these materials.

The effect of this novel can be summarized as follows: the new leaders such as Iwakura Tomomi, Ôkubo Toshimichi, who were to organize the Meiji government later, in fact recognized the necessity to open the country

at an earlier stage, but they continued to advocate instead the policy of expelling the Western barbarians in order to trouble the Shogunate government with the intention of quickening its overthrow. In a word, that policy was a political maneuver, and in view of the result, the new leaders' tactics must be said to have been successful.

But at the same time, this maneuver left many true believers behind who worked for the great cause of "revering the Emperor and expelling the barbarians." Tsuge was one of these true believers and as a naive young man, he was unable to see through what the new leaders really intended and eventually was deceived by them. In short, the Meiji Restoration had an aspect of the Revolution betrayed and Tsuge may well vindicate himself on the account that he too was a victim of the political maneuver, although he certainly could not avoid the accusation of assassinating Yokoi Shōnan. This is what Ōgai had to say in the novel.

Now what I would like to argue in the present article is this: whether Tsuge's excuse is tenable or not, the problem remains how the new leaders came to realize the necessity of opening the country so smoothly compared with China and Korea. Of course there were a number of factors which brought about this result, such as the institutional framework flexible to military impact, the pragmatic ethos of the samurai class, and the intellectual efforts of thinkers including Shōnan's view of the above-mentioned international relations, and so on. The present subject is related to just one of the major factors.

2. *Kaempfer's Treatise on Japan's Seclusion Policy*

Engelbert Kaempfer, a German physician of wide knowledge, born in 1651 and died in 1716, visited Japan in 1690 and stayed about two years as a physician attached to the Dutch factory at Dejima, Nagasaki.

During his stay in Japan, he was engaged in the study of things Japanese in a scientific manner, and he may well claim the title of the first Japanologist in the Western world.

In fact, he collected many materials concerning Japan with the help of a Japanese assistant, covering a wide range of subjects including plants, animals, people's lives, customs, language, politics, religion, history etc., and after his return to Germany, he was engaged in writing manuscripts utilizing these materials with the intention of publishing a book, although the plan was not realized in his life.

After his death, the manuscripts were sold to an English noble, Sir H. Sloane and at his request a Swiss doctor interpreted them from German into English and published them under the title of *The History of Japan*. This was in 1727, and the publication went through several editions. Besides, two years later the Dutch and French edition were published which were retranslated from English. We see then how many readers the book found within a brief period. [By the way, a German edition was published in 1777 to 79 under the editorship of Dohm from different German original texts.] And in the course of time, it came to have a reputation as being the standard work on Japan in the Western world.

It is known that some copies of a Dutch edition of this book entitled *De Beschryving van Japan* were brought into Japan in the latter half of the 18th century, and Shizuki Tadao, a retired Dutch interpreter who served for the Shogunate at Nagasaki, undertook the translation of one part; the sixth appendix to the book, and in view of the content, he gave it the Japanese title: "Sakokuron," an English translation of which is "a treatise on the policy of closing the country." This was in 1801.

As Prof. Itazawa already pointed out in the prewar period, the Japanese word of *sakoku*, which means to close the country, was first coined by Shizuki at the instance of this translation, and then gradually prevailed among the Japanese. In the academic circle of modern Japan, historians came to use this word as a technical term to denote the foreign policy of Tokugawa Japan since the reign of Iemitsu, the third Shogun of the Tokugawa line in the mid-17th century. But recently some historians recommended not to use this word in the academic discussion on the ground that the word might give the false impression that Tokugawa Japan was a hermit society completely isolated from the rest of the world.

Going back to the main subject, Kaempfer's treatise translated by Shizuki widely circulated among the Japanese towards the end of the Tokugawa period mainly in manuscript, and called forth various repercussions, sometimes, contrary to each other. [To be exact, one edition of the manuscript was printed by a National Learning scholar under a different title and appeared in book-form in 1850, but it was immediately banned by the government, probably because foreign affairs, which were exclusively handled by the Shogunate power, were taken up in this treatise.]

In the following, I first will examine the historical background on which Shizuki undertook the translation.

3. Shizuki's Translation and Its Historical Background

At the turn of the 18th century to the 19th century, when Shizuki undertook the translation, the Russian mission twice visited Japan in order to establish diplomatic relations with her. It evoked the feeling of national crisis in some parts of the Japanese ruling class and let them realize the necessity of gathering more knowledge and information about international circumstances. On this background there appeared other persons than Shizuki who took note of Kaempfer's *History of Japan*.

I will introduce two examples. Matsudaira Sadanobu, a distinguished statesman, was in constant contact with the magistrate at Nagasaki. He led the so-called Kansei Reform of the Shogunate towards the end of the 18th century and wrote in his essay of the efforts to collect the useful Dutch books and to have them translated into Japanese. And some part of the Japanese translation which he transcribed in the essay bears a close resemblance to parts of the "Sakokuron." This essay was written between 1794 and 1797. Thus the translation at Sadanobu's request must have been made earlier than Shizuki's undertaking.

Another example is Aoki Okikatsu, a Dutch Learning scholar serving for the Kuroda, *daimyô* (feudal lord) of the Fukuoka domain, who was in charge of the military defence in Nagasaki with other *daimyô* in the district, submitted a memorial to the Han government on the occasion when Lezanov, a Russian officer, arrived in Nagasaki in 1804, leading the mission sent by the Russian government. In this memorial, Aoki referred to (the Dutch edition of) *The History of Japan* and remarked that all the facts about Japan, such as the government's politics, fiefs of *daimyô*, strongholds of important places, products, various arts and so on are recorded in the book minutely. He even admitted that as he had had no chance to travel around the eastern part of Japan, there were not a few instances in which the knowledge he got from the book made him open his eyes to the state of affairs of that region. He concluded as follows: Should we not be alarmed by this fact?

Under the Tokugawa rule, Japan was divided into some 260 feudal domains, and various regulations were put into force in order to prevent the people of one domain from getting information from other domains, especially pertaining to political and military affairs. Given this condition, it is no wonder that Aoki was alarmed to find that a foreign scholar knew Japan much better than the natives, as *The History of Japan* amply proved. He asserted on this ground that crucial information about Japan had leaked out to the West

through trade with Holland, therefore Japan had better break off the relations with her, not to mention that the request by Russians should be rejected.

Needless to say, *The History of Japan* was written by Kaempfer with the good intention of introducing Japan to the West, but ironically when it was brought to Japan, it evoked in certain circles worry and fear about the West's hidden intentions and strengthened the Japanese exclusionist mentality.

What becomes clear now is that on the occasion of the arrival of the Russian missions at the turn of the century, Kaempfer's main work called forth some repercussions among the Japanese. And his treatise on Japan's foreign policy was translated by Shizuki against this background. What Shizuki intended by this translation can be gathered from his postscript to the treatise.

He had taken pains in studying the books of world history and geography written in Dutch for many years, and as the fruits of these long efforts, Shizuki was well informed of the recent developments in Russia which might endanger Japan such as Russia's emergence as a mighty power and the policy of expansion to the South. But also Shizuki recognized that the Kamuchaka Peninsula situated near the northern territory of Japan is far and remote from the Russian home country. Besides, the home country itself was ceaselessly pressed by powerful surrounding states such as Turkey and Germany. Furthermore, ethnic rebellions sometimes took place within the Russian territory.

Shizuki, counting these factors, concludes as follows: even if the Russians ever venture to undertake a military invasion of Japan, it must be a very difficult task for them. On the contrary, seeing the matter from the Japanese side, the Russian pressure on Japan from the North may produce a good effect on the people of Japan in keeping the tension and uniting them against the enemy, given the condition that the northern territory, that is, the island of Ezo (present Hokkaidô) and Sakhalin are under the strict control of the Shogunate.

Shizuki continues that against this background, he engaged himself in the translation of Kaempfer's treatise, hoping to heighten people's awareness as Japanese and to strengthen their loyalty to the present regime so that they might not deviate from the right course, nor be misguided by the foreign manners and teachings which would be brought to Japan in the course of time.

Shizuki's way of putting the words is so discreet that it is difficult to say what foreign policy he considered to be appropriate for Japan, but in my reading it is possible to read in his lines a suggestion of consent, though passive and implicit, of the policy of opening diplomatic relations with Russia.

But once it was put into circulation among Japanese, "Sakokuron" produced various effects sometimes opposite to what Shizuki expected. On the one hand, it acted as a catalyst to strengthen the exclusionist tendency, since the exclusionists could find a fine pretext in the treatise for maintaining the present policy of seclusion. But on the other hand, the treatise also acted as a catalyst to lead some scholars, such as Yokoi Shōnan, to the realization that now the time had come for Japan to take an open door policy and establish friendly relations with the Western countries. What brought about such effects as these, contrary to each other? In order to understand this, we must first examine Kaempfer's manner of arguing the matter.

4. *The Logic of "Sakokuron" and Its Influence*

First of all, we must note that Kaempfer in the opening sentences of this treatise advocated a theory of free trade between nations on the basis of the Christian ideal of universal brotherhood. According to this theory, God created the earth in such a specific manner as each region of the world has its own indigenous product respectively, wine in Italy, wool in England, for instance, so that the people who are settled in one region cannot lead a self-sufficient life unless being engaged in foreign trade. And this theory finds God's intention in this state of affairs. According to it, God let human beings scatter over the earth and made it impossible for them to lead a self-sufficient life, because he hoped that the peoples of different regions would help each other and promote mutual friendship through the action of supplying each other's wants. In other words, therefore, it meets God's wishes that the peoples of different regions undertake foreign trade for the sake of promoting mutual help and understanding.

This theory by Kaempfer reminds us of the one which Grotius propounded in his treatise for vindication of the principle of open sea in 1609 [*Mare liberum*], speaking for the Dutch naval interests. Especially the fact that both Kaempfer and Grotius cited the same poem by Virgil in praise for foreign trade between distant places suggests that Kaempfer probably had Grotius in his mind when he wrote the treatise.

Now the thesis that free trade between nations in the world-wide scale meets God's wishes implied that Japan's policy of seclusion by the Shogunate is totally unjustifiable, because it prohibited free trade with other nations and strictly forbade the Japanese to go abroad. Under this policy, there can be no

chance for the Japanese to promote mutual help with other peoples. But quite interestingly, Kaempfer, at this point of his argument, takes the Shogunate's side and vindicates its seclusion policy mainly in the following two counts.

First, the geographical and economic conditions unique to Japan. According to Kaempfer, Japan is a great island and isolated country defended by natural forts such as cliffs and the troubled and rough sea, so that it is not easily accessible from the outside world. Besides, each region in the country brings forth products of various kinds in abundance; furthermore, the population is large and the people are capable and work hard. Counting these points, Kaempfer says that Japan is like a small earth, consisting of a number of islands, and these conditions enable Japan to lead a self-sufficient life, relying solely on home trade. On these accounts, Kaempfer concludes that foreign trade is unnecessary for Japan, and the policy of seclusion well suits the people's welfare.

He emphasizes in this context that Japan is a fortunate country blessed with the grace of God. These are the sentences which, for instance, Hirata Atsutane, a fanatic National Learning scholar, found gratifying later when he read a manuscript copy of "Sakokuron." In fact, in a couple of works written for the populace, he referred to these sentences by Kaempfer as a proof that even a foreigner admits that Japan is a special country in the world loved by God.

Second, the historical and political conditions in the early Tokugawa period. Kaempfer, in this part, analyses the process in which the long lasting civil wars were brought to an end and once turbulent society was finally pacified by two distinguished military rulers, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu. It is significant that Kaempfer notes the political measures which these rulers and their successors imposed over the feudal lords and the people for the sake of unifying the country, such as the system of *sankin kôtai* (alternate yearly attendance under which *daimyô* were obliged to stay one year at Edo to minister to the Shogun after spending one year in his domain) and the system of *goningumi* (a five-family neighborhood unit in which the unit members were placed under mutual surveillance and were collectively responsible to the government for the misdeed of others). Kaempfer analyses these measures from a viewpoint of real politics in a manner which reminds us of the political theory of Machiavelli.

Now, according to him, it was in this crucial moment of reunifying the country that the Portuguese tried to establish their influence in Japan, using Christianity as political tool. What was worse, they even schemed to overthrow the Shogunate. Under the circumstances, the Shogunate unavoidably took the

last steps: the ban of Christianity and the policy of seclusion. Counting these points, Kaempfer asserts that this was the rightful choice from the political standpoint.

It is worthy to note that behind this vindication of the Shogunate policies by Kaempfer, there was the historical background that Germany, his home country, had suffered a crushing blow from the Thirty Years War in the former half of the 17th century. For Kaempfer who was born in 1651, the sufferings must have been vivid in memory. It is understandable then that Japan at the turn to the 18th century appeared to him to be a blessed country, which enjoyed economic prosperity under the strong military rule and the seclusion policy, without suffering from war.

5. The Influence of the "Sakokuron" in the End of the Tokugawa Period

It is now clear that Kaempfer in the "Sakokuron" tries to justify Japan's policy of seclusion from two major standpoints, considering the conditions which seemed to him peculiar to Japan: first the standpoint of autarky, and second the standpoint of Machiavellian statecraft, whereas he admits in a manner similar to Grotius that in principle every nation should engage in foreign trade in order to promote mutual help and understanding. Thus when a translation of this treatise was put into circulation in Bakumatsu Japan, i.e., from the early to the middle of the 19th century, its influence came out taking various forms, depending on to which aspect of the treatise the reader attached importance.

For instance, Yamaga Sosui, a scholar of traditional military learning, justified Japan's seclusion policy in his work in 1848, almost totally depending on Kaempfer's argument that Japan is a country which produces all the things she needs. He borrowed the ground for his argument from Kaempfer, although he did not mention the name. Another example of the same line can be found in the main work written by Ôhashi Totsuan in 1852–53, a leading thinker of the exclusionist movement of the day.

But in the following sentences, I will focus on how an irony of historical development came about. That is to say, despite of the fact that Kaempfer himself vindicated Japan's seclusion policy, his "Sakokuron" acted as an essential catalyst to quicken Japan's decision to open the country. The effect of this sort was produced when Japanese in some quarters came to realize

that the conditions of the world in the mid-19th century had completely changed from the one of the period when Kaempfer wrote his treatise.

To suggest my conclusion just briefly beforehand, since the latter half of the 18th century, Western civilization had made a great advancement in the way of production and in means of transportation and communication, owing to the technological innovations made in the course of the Industrial Revolution. As a result of this, the conditions of the outside world surrounding Japan underwent a drastic change so that the argument which Kaempfer used for Japan's policy of seclusion now became untenable. And instead of these aspects, the general principle of free trade among nations in the opening lines of his treatise came to be noted by Japanese as an essential reason why Japan should open the country.

6. *The History of Japan as a Standard for the Study of Japan in the West*

Then what intellectual situation in Bakumatsu Japan prompted the "Sakokuron" to produce this kind of effect? In order to find an answer to that question, we shall first turn to how *The History of Japan* (or its versions in other western languages) and its appendix pertaining to Japan's foreign policy were utilized by the Western governments in the diplomatic negotiations with Japan.

As I noted before, this book gained a good reputation as a standard work for the study of Japan in the West since its first publication in the former half of the 18th century. In fact, it had a good deal of readers among whom Montesquieu in his *De l'esprit des lois* in 1748 and Kant in his *Zum ewigen Frieden, ein philosophischer Entwurf* in 1795 are well-known examples.

One important aspect of this fact for the present purpose is that this book became one of the main sources from which the Western diplomats and military officers who visited Japan got a well-defined concept of Japan. Put differently, they came to Japan, having been well-equipped with theoretical weapons, so to speak, by reading Kaempfer's book in advance.

For instance, if we look at the introductory part of the book of Commodore Perry's expedition to Far East [the exact title of which is, to be sure, *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan, Performed in the Years of 1852, 1853, and 1854, under the Command of Commodore M. C. Perry, United States Navy, by Order of the Government of the United States*, (Washington, in three volumes, 1856)] we can find that Kaempfer's book is often referred to concerning the state of affairs in Japan.

Also, when Townsend Harris (1804–78), the first American consul general and then envoy in Japan, met the Magistrate at Shimoda after his arrival in Japan in 1856, he showed the Magistrate and his interpreter Kaempfer's *History of Japan* and tried to ascertain how accurate the map of the city of Edo was printed in the book. According to Harris, the magistrate recognized that the map was accurate as a rule, pointing on the map where in Edo his and his interpreter's houses were. (See his diary, *The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris*, for the 15th Sept. 1856.) Both of these examples illustrate that Kaempfer's book was utilized as a kind of source book, and was always kept at hand for reference even during the journey.

7. "Sakokuron" and Its Original Texts: A Common Base for Argument

What should be noted in this regard is that the Western governments and diplomats [in the Western countries such as Holland, the United States and Britain] in the former half of the 19th century had a certain understanding of the history and justifiable grounds of Japan's policy of seclusion through the study of Kaempfer's treatise. This fact was of great significance. In order to have the Japanese government open the country, the Western governments and diplomats endeavored to find convincing reasons why the policy of seclusion was no longer justifiable nor profitable to Japan herself, and on this ground to persuade the Shogunate government to open the country, whereas admitting that the seclusion policy was once surely right.

On the other hand, on the part of Japanese too, especially after a translation of Kaempfer's treatise by Shizuki under the title of "Sakokuron" was put into circulation, they came to know widely how the Westerners looked on Japan's foreign policy. In this way, in a rather unexpected manner, "Sakokuron" and its original text in the Western languages provided both sides with a common basis on which Japan and the West argued, discussed, and negotiated the problem as to which policy should be better for Japan to continue, to close or to open the country.

The earliest example regarding this, to my knowledge, is found in the conversation made between Struler and Takahashi Kageyasu (1785–1829) in 1826. Struler was the head of the Dutch factory at Dejima who visited Edo, and Takahashi was an officer of the *Tenmonkata*, the section of the Shogunate in charge of the study of geography, astronomy, calendar making and translating Western books. [By the way, Takahashi was later involved in the so-called

Siebold affair and was arrested on the accusation of presenting the Dutch doctor a map of Japan in return for Western books and unfortunately died in prison].

According to a note which Takahashi left, Struler, after telling him about the recent political situation in the West since the Napoleonic War advised him as follows: (here a Japanese translation retranslated) “Your country depends on natural strongholds and prohibits the people to communicate with the outside world under the seclusion policy. What the government intends by this policy should certainly be commendable, but it might cause a disadvantage in protection against foreign invasion, if you, a maritime country, will not practice in the art of naval forces nor establish cordial relations with neighboring countries.” Apparently he warned Takahashi that the seclusion policy had become dangerous to Japan, whereas admitting that the policy was justifiable in its intention, following Kaempfer’s argument.

On the other hand, Takahashi once engaged himself in translating some parts of (the Dutch version of) *The History of Japan* by Kaempfer under the title of “Seiyôjin Nihon Kiji” and in that undertaking referred to the “Sakokuron” translated by Shizuki. Thus we may safely say that Takahashi was able to see what Struler meant with his advice, for the very reason that he too had already become acquainted with Kaempfer’s argument.

Another example is the letter of Willem II, the King of Holland, addressed to Shogun Ieyoshi in 1844 advising the latter to open the country. This letter is significant because it exposes the point which the note of Takahashi did not. The Shogunate which had learnt of the defeat of China in the Opium War in 1842, decided to relax the previous policy of expelling foreign ships without condition and permitted to supply them with some food, water, and fuel in case of emergency. But the Dutch government, upon learning of this new policy, worried that this very relaxation itself might lead to the increase of instances in which Japan was involved in conflict with Western countries, since there were no dictates in this new regulation as to how to deal with foreign ships which might visit Japan for the sake of establishing friendly relations or on any other official mission. This was the reason why Holland sent this letter to the Shogun, and the gist of it is found in the following sentences:

* Here a German translation made by Prof. Kracht (1976) from a Japanese text is available. This translation is very accurate, so I use it.

Wir haben den Gang der Zeiten vom Altertum bis in die Gegenwart durchdacht. Die Völker der Welt kommen einander mit schnellen Schritten näher. Diese Entwicklung ist durch menschliche Kraft nicht aufzuhalten. Durch die Erfindung des Dampfschiffes sind die Länder trotz weiter Entfernungen einander nähergerückt. Ein Land, welches sich in dieser Zeit solchermaßen zunehmender freundschaftlicher Beziehungen allein abschließt und mit allen anderen Ländern keine freundschaftlichen Kontakte aufnimmt, wird von den anderen nicht geschätzt werden. Es ist in Europa allgemein bekannt, daß es Ihnen durch ein seit Generationen bestehendes Gesetz Ihres Landes streng untersagt ist, mit Menschen fremder Länder Beziehungen anzuknüpfen. Lao-tzu hat gesagt: "Wenn ein Weiser auf dem Thron sitzt, bewahrt er vor allem den Frieden." Daher entspricht es nur den Grundsätzen des Weisen, dieses Verbot zu lockern, wenn man durch die strenge Befolgung des alten Gesetzes im Gegenteil Unfrieden bewirkt. Dies geben Wir Ew. Majestät freundlich zu bedenken. Wenn Sie nicht zu bewirken wünschen, daß Ihr gegenwärtig glückliches Land durch kriegerische Unruhen verwüstet wird, so sollten Sie das Gesetz mildern, welches (den Verkehr mit) Ausländern streng verbietet. Wir geben Ihnen diesen Rat in aller Aufrichtigkeit und ohne Bedacht auf den Nutzen Unseres Landes. Wir hoffen, daß Sie in Ihrer Weisheit reiflich bedenken, daß der Friede in der Unterhaltung freundschaftlicher Beziehungen besteht und die Unterhaltung freundschaftlicher Beziehungen sich durch den Handel vollzieht.

As you see from these sentences, this advice, too, was made taking Kaempfer's argument into consideration. For instance, the view that the peoples of the world naturally grow closer to each other reminds us of Kaempfer's ideal of universal brotherhood. Also the view that friendly relations are promoted by trade was similar to what he emphasized in the opening sentences of his treatise.

But what makes this letter epochal is that it pointed out that the differences of distance between nations became unimportant in trade and communication owing to the recent invention of steamers, so that the justification of the seclusion policy based on a geographical condition peculiar to Japan became no longer tenable. Surely, the letter does not mention Kaempfer's name, but it is evident that the Dutch government tried to convince the Shogunate that Japan should adapt herself to external changes, referring to Kaempfer's argument for the seclusion policy.

8. *Harris's Speech and the Japanese Response*

Now it is known that the American government obtained this royal letter addressed to the Shogun from the Dutch government. And significantly, the Americans took the same way as Dutchmen in persuading the Shogunate to open the country, referring to the drastic changes that the world was undergoing at the time.

For instance, T. Harris emphasized in his speech in December 1857 addressed to Elder Counsellor Hotta Masayoshi who took charge of foreign affairs in the Shogunate, that the invention of steamers and the electric telegraph had created a new world. In addition to this, he referred to such recent changes of the Western world as follows: The freedom of thought is firmly established, so that civil wars arising from religious conflicts which once caused great turmoil in Western society no longer take place. Also that kind of Western people who came to Japan with the malicious intention of colonizing her in the pretence of trade and/or religious teaching ceased to exist years ago. On the contrary, it becomes the general current of the world that each nation supplies each other's wants so as to achieve friendly relations in terms of equality.

What Harris says here amounts to saying that the two major conditions to which Kaempfer referred for the sake of vindicating Japan's seclusion policy, did no longer exist in the present world. Instead, the theory of free trade based on the ideal of universal brotherhood which Kaempfer set forth as the general principle at the outset of his treatise, came to be stressed as the principle which now Japan should follow as well.

This speech of Harris circulated among the progressive leaders of Japan and brought about repercussions to a significant degree. For instance, Hitotsu-bashi Yoshinobu, who later became the 15th Shogun of the Tokugawa line, asserted in 1862 as follows: "As Japan is a country surrounded by the sea, it is difficult to maintain the policy of seclusion. Much truer does this become since the invention of steamers, because steamers carry us to distant countries as if we go to neighboring villages. [...] Therefore in view of the principle of Heaven, I find it impossible to maintain the independence of Japan under the seclusion policy."

Another notable example is Yokoi Shōnan. In his proposal to the Fukui clan in 1860, he first admits, referring to Kaempfer's "Sakokuron" that Japan had created a happy country thanks to its unique conditions, but then he turns to the recent changes of the situation and asserts as follows:

The state of affairs in the Western countries changed greatly and the art of navigation advanced quickly. [...] Especially since the invention of steamers, even distant places of thousands and hundreds of kilometers have become like neighboring places. [...] In the present state of world affairs like this in which we can no longer depend on natural strongholds, there remains no possibility that only Japan can maintain isolation and seclusion.

On this ground, he emphasized that Japan ought to open the country, and promote mutual understanding through trade and establish friendly relations with other countries.

It is obvious that what Shōnan asserted here is based on the same argument Kaempfer had made in the opening sentences of "Sakokuron." In the Confucian Analects, there is a famous thesis that human beings under Heaven should be friendly to each other like brothers. Shōnan had been inclined to this universalistic tendency in his Confucian thought. And now that the policy of seclusion became maladjusted to the present world, he found the Western counterpart of his Confucian universalistic idea in the ideal of universal brotherhood which Kaempfer and Harris asserted. And the leaders of the Meiji government such as Iwakura Tomomi and Itō Hirobumi later came to use this argument in order to justify their new policy "opening the country and establishing friendly relations with other countries" (*kaikoku washin*).

To conclude my argument, I would say that we should pay attention to the fact that the "Sakokuron" in an unexpected manner provided Japan and Western countries with a common basis on which both sides could argue about the problem of opening the country. In the case of China and Korea, there was no treatise of the same kind available as far as I know. And the traditional Confucian theory of *hwa-i* (the Middle Kingdom and inferior barbarians) continued to be dominant in these two countries. According to this theory, the Middle Kingdom occupies the centre of the world, while the barbarians, culturally inferior to the Kingdom, surround it. Both Chinese and Korean Confucian literati officials in the mid-19th century continued to stick to the policy of seclusion under the strong influence of this theory. Thus Western countries were looked on as Western barbarians and it was unacceptable for China and Korea, the heir to the Middle Kingdom in their self image, to establish cordial relations with the peoples who were no better than birds and beasts.

In contrast, in the case of Japan, the "Sakokuron" provided the Japanese with a different framework of international relations from the Confucian theory of *hwa-i*, and thereby benefitted Japan in making a smooth transition from the seclusion policy to the policy of opening the country. It is a well-known fact that the United States, Britain and France played significant roles respectively in the Bakumatsu period. Germany did not appear on the scene. But if we take note of the fact that the "Sakokuron" was written by a German thinker, we may realize that Germany did perform a significant role in Japan's decision to open the country.