

## THE IWAKURA MISSION IN BRITAIN, 1872

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## Preface

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It is difficult to know just why, but the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Iwakura Mission's lengthy visit to Britain, which fell in 1997, has stirred memories and led to a number of commemorative events, mainly of an academic nature. Perhaps the centenary came too soon, as it were, for us to appreciate the ongoing significance of the visit. Over the past 25 years the political and industrial relationships of Britain and Japan have burgeoned and now we need to remind ourselves that many of the effects of that long ago Embassy will have echoes in the current close relationship between the two countries.

There had been earlier visitations. In 1862, at a time of political ferment in Japan and following a similar visit to the United States, the Bakufu sent a mission some forty strong to Europe. Its objectives were twofold: to secure some Treaty modifications and to gain knowledge that would further Japan's desire for the 'wealth and strength' that would enable it to fight off Western imperialism. But its work was inevitably tarnished by the Meiji revolution.

A notable student group was the Choshu Five whose clandestine departure from a still tightly controlled country has been well chronicled. They arrived in England in 1863, among the forerunners of an ever-growing stream of students of all kinds. They included Inoue Kaoru who was to hold numerous Ministerial posts (including Foreign Minister twice) and Ito Hirobumi, destined to return as one of the deputy leaders of the Iwakura Mission, and also Prime Minister of several occasions. Also Inoue Masaru who was not a politician but became a distinguished senior official and dedicated himself to the creation of Japan's railway network. He was made a Viscount and is commemorated today by a statue outside Tokyo Station.<sup>1</sup>

In 1865 it was the turn of Satsuma, reacting to the salutary British bombardment of Kagoshima, to send an illegal group of domain officials to negotiate behind the Bakufu's back. They were aided and abetted by Thomas Glover, a Scottish entrepreneur in Nagasaki, who provided the transport, a guide and some introductions. The aims were a mixture of politics and trade especially the purchase of arms and ships. By 1872 Britain was, in fact, quite used to Japanese visitors.

There is, of course, no doubt about the significance that the 1872 Iwakura Mission's peregrinations around America and much of Europe had – both for the nascent Meiji Japan and for its host nations. It was formidably powerful in terms of its leadership. Iwakura Tomomi himself was the second highest member of the Emperor Meiji's Government with the full status of Ambassador Plenipotentiary and there were four vice-ambassadors, all of ministerial or vice-ministerial status in the Japanese Government, including the previously mentioned Ito Hirobumi, by now Vice-Minister of Public Works.

The three main objectives were: to secure high level international recognition for Japan's newly restored Imperial regime; to open preliminary discussions on revision of the so-called 'Unequal Treaties'; and to assess Western civilisation with a view to adopting those parts of value to Japan.<sup>2</sup> Half a dozen Special Commissioners were attached, each in charge of a specific area of detailed investigation relating to the third objective. And there was a very long tail of secretaries, interpreters, and everyone else down to cooks, etc.

It was indeed at that time an incredible feat of travel logistics just to get some 100 people, many of whom had not left Japan before and few of whom spoke any foreign language, safely round the world. Although it greatly overran its schedule and probably its budget, few came to harm and none seems to have got lost!

Three celebratory events took place during 1997 in Britain. In Manchester, under the auspices of the Greater Manchester Centre for Japanese Studies, a business mission about 50 strong organised by the Osaka Chamber of Commerce attended a 'Forum'. This consisted of a range of visits to UK / Japanese projects and enterprises in the area followed the next day by a symposium on 'Relations between Greater Manchester and the Kansai Area.' In support of this a pamphlet was published entitled *Japan & Northwest England* which traced the evolution of the relationship from the cotton industry of those days through to modern times.

In Newcastle Upon Tyne the Universities of Durham and Northumbria at Newcastle jointly presented a seminar to an enthusiastic audience that heard papers from Dr John Weste of Durham who set the scene; Dr Akiho Ohta of Keio and Cambridge Universities (who also gave a separate paper at the London symposium) giving a Japanese viewpoint; and Marie Conte Helm of Northumbria, a specialist<sup>3</sup> on Japanese influence in the North East. It took place exactly on the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their arrival in Newcastle, in the Royal Station Hotel at which the Mission had stayed. Among the audience were a number of Japanese business men who clearly felt that their presence in the area was directly linked to those far-off activities by their countrymen. The papers will be published by Durham's Department of East Asian Studies early in 1998.

In London, at the Suntory and Toyota International Centres for Economics and Related Disciplines (LSE), a symposium was held on 6 December 1997 – the anniversary of the day when the members of Iwakura's delegation were received by Queen Victoria. Comprising four lectures the symposium was attended by a packed audience of some 75 people including the Joint Chairman and many members of the Japan Society, several senior representatives of the Japanese Embassy, as well as staff and students. Each lecturer focused sharply on a particular aspect of the Mission's work in Britain that fell within his or her special field and each prompted numerous questions and much discussion. It is some measure of the great range of subjects that the Mission was attempting to cover that there was no real overlap between any of the four papers. They are now included in their entirety in this volume.

### Endnotes

- 1 Yumiyo Yamamoto, 'Father of the Japanese Railways', in Ian Nish (ed.), *Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits*, vol.2, Folkestone: Japan Library, 1997.
- 2 For those interested, a fuller account of 'The Iwakura Embassy, 1871-3' appears in W G Beasley, *Japan Encounters the Barbarian*, Yale: Yale University Press, 1995.
- 3 Her book, *Japan and the North East of England – from 1862 to the Present Day*, London: Athlone, 1989, has a section on the Iwakura Mission.

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# Life in Victorian London through the Eyes of Kume Kunitake, Chronicler of the Iwakura Mission

Andrew Cobbing

Towards the end of 1872, the Iwakura mission spent four months in Britain, the single longest stage in a journey around the world via America and Europe. Iwakura Tomomi and his entourage had enough time to embark on tours in the Midlands, the north of England and Scotland, but for more than half of their sojourn, the party was based in London. One of the few officials to accompany; the ambassador throughout his stay was his personal secretary, Kume Kunitake, a thirty-three year old Confucian scholar from Saga in Hizen. He had been appointed keep a daily chronicle of the entire journey, with a view to preparing an official report of the mission's impressions of the West. During his travels, Kume compiled a detailed record of the party's research, including some vivid portraits of life in Victorian London.

Following his return to Japan in 1873, Kume concentrated on writing up his official account of the Iwakura mission, and this was finally published in 1878 under the title of *Tokumei Zenken Taishi Beio Kairan Jikki* ('A True Record of the Tour of the Ambassador Extraordinary through the United States and Europe'). The *Kairan Jikki* was a unique achievement in both its style and range, and has been aptly described as 'the product of a Confucian scholar's cram course (two years abroad and two years at home) in the Western sciences, social studies and humanities'.<sup>1</sup> In an age when Dutch, English and French books were being assiduously translated by a growing legion of experts in Western studies, it was unusual for such a work to be entrusted to a specialist in Chinese classics. Although he has often been considered something of a curious choice, however, Kume was actually well-equipped to present his ideas to the traditional elements in Japan. His training, for example, had fostered a love of history which enabled him to bring a long-term perspective to his analysis of Western development. He even contrived to describe industrial processes in classical terms, which, however impenetrable it may appear today, certainly struck a chord in early Meiji Japan, where many of his readers were struggling to reconcile the suddenly fashionable ideas from the West with their own cultural background.

Produced in five volumes, the *Kairan Jikki* was also written on a scale unprecedented among Japanese introductory works on the West. The second and longest volume was devoted entirely to the mission's travels in Britain, and included a wealth of information on London, from the physical layout of the city to trade statistics and descriptions of hospitals, zoos and exhibitions. Haga Toru has noted that Kume's presentation 'begins with macroscopic overview and then zeroes in on details, shifting focus from geographical or external conditions to the internal structure of the city, its history and institutions'.<sup>2</sup> The detail on Victorian London was almost encyclopaedic, and the *Kairan Jikki* as a whole contained such a wealth of information relating to so many different fields that, for many readers in Meiji Japan, it had particular value as a reference work.<sup>3</sup> How was it that a Confucian scholar with no previous experience of overseas travel could produce such a sophisticated account of a city like London? To assess Kume's observations in the Victorian capital, the *Kairan Jikki* must first be considered within the wider context of Japanese overseas research in the nineteenth century.

## The first Japanese investigations in Britain

In 1877, some five years after Iwakura's British sojourn, another grand mission from the East arrived in London. This was the first Chinese embassy in the West, a party which had been sent to install a resident minister, Kuo Sung-tao, at the court of St James. After two months in Britain, one member of the delegation, Liu Hsi-hung, apparently imagined the population to be leading a life of uninterrupted peace and harmony, for he recorded in his journal that, 'when we have visited others or gone to parties, we have often passed through the streets, but never have we heard people shouting or quarrelling, nor have we seen anyone looking sad or worried'.<sup>4</sup>

By comparison, Kume Kunitake and other members of the Iwakura mission were more acquainted with some of the harsher realities of life in Britain. Kido Takayoshi, one of the four vice ambassadors, for example, made a point of visiting some slums in the London docks, and after seeing 'six or seven lodging houses for the destitute in the district', he concluded that 'the poor people here are even more destitute than ours'. As befitted an embassy of such eminent rank, Kido and his fellow travellers naturally spent much of their time being entertained by aristocrats and some of the wealthiest merchants in the land. Nevertheless, considering that overseas travel was still in its infancy, many of them already had a comparatively sophisticated awareness of Victorian society.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of the fact that barely a decade had passed since the first *bakufu* mission to Europe, the Japanese had, by the onset of the 1870s, already developed an impressive track record of research in Britain. As a result, Kume had a wealth of information to draw upon, much of it compiled by Japanese travellers who had been to Britain before him. The earliest example of such research was undertaken during the Takenouchi mission, an official delegation that toured Europe in 1862. The party included a group of experts in Western studies who compiled a series of official reports on each of the six countries visited, the most detailed of them being *Eikoku Tansaku* [Investigation of Britain].

One member of this group was a young Fukuzawa Yukichi, who used his experience of overseas travel to write up his best-selling *Seiyo Jijo* [Conditions in the West]. Fukuzawa described banks, companies, museums and other unfamiliar institutions with great clarity, and soon after the publication of the first volume in 1866, the work was widely acclaimed for its success in introducing Western civilization to readers in Japan. He also presented the attractions of the steam trains, telegraph lines and gas lights he had seen on his travels, but tended to convey a rose-tinted impression of technology in the West, explaining its utility without fully addressing the costs of industrial development. In the second volume of *Seiyo Jijo*, for example, he translated a biographical sketch of the life of George Stephenson, but actually omitted a reference to William Huskisson's death in an accident at the opening of the Liverpool-Manchester railway in 1830.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, *Seiyo Jijo* did not really convey any real impression of Victorian daily life. Writers on these early *bakufu* missions such as Fukuzawa were the first real pioneers of systematic overseas research, but they saw the West largely from their hotel lobbies. Although they often took part in the demanding round of tours to military institutions, museums and hospitals which the Foreign Office had prepared for the ambassadors, Fukuzawa himself later complained that they had only been allowed out of their hotel when a *bakufu* official was on hand to escort them. Furthermore, they never really spent enough time in the West to study life there in any great depth.<sup>7</sup>

From the mid-1860s, however, the first students to have long-term experience of actually living overseas began to make their way back to Japan, and they brought with them a more informed understanding of daily life in Britain. It was they, for example, who first saw the importance of Christianity in Victorian life. Hatakeyama Yoshinari and some of the other students from Satsuma who had arrived in Britain in 1865 concluded that a study of Christianity was necessary to understand 'the essence of the West'.<sup>8</sup> Nomura Fumio, a student from Hiroshima, later referred to Christianity as one of the pillars of Victorian political structure in his *Seiyo Bunken Roku* [Record of Observations in the West], a successful work published in eight volumes between 1869 and 1870. Unlike Fukuzawa, Nomura also presented figures showing the high incidence of fatalities from railway accidents.<sup>9</sup>

These were by no means isolated cases for, towards the end of the 1860s, the first real boom in Japanese overseas travel had begun to gather impetus. Passports became freely available in 1866 after the *bakufu* removed its long-standing ban on leaving the country, although the impact of the civil war in Japan briefly arrested the trend, the numbers of overseas travellers increased dramatically during the early Meiji years. By the time the Iwakura mission arrived in 1872, there were more than a hundred Japanese students in Britain alone, most of them based in or around London.<sup>10</sup>

Although Kume was not an expert in Western studies himself, he was thus able to draw together a whole range of information from previous research, and also first-hand from Japanese students already in London. He was based in a hotel during his sojourn in the Victorian capital, but stayed there longer than any of the *bakufu* diplomatic missions of the 1860s, and he had daily access to the latest news brought by Japanese students who frequented the hotel to pay their respects to the ambassadors. He was also in contact with other members of Iwakura's entourage, some of whom had been overseas before. He relied particularly on information from Hatakeyama Yoshinari, one of the first Satsuma students of the mid-1860s, who already had several years experience of living in both Britain and America. Hatakeyama, for example, had been Kido's interpreter on his tour of living conditions in the London docks, and although Kume had not been there himself, he did hear a first-hand account immediately afterwards.<sup>11</sup>

Kume was not a pioneer of Japanese research on the West as such, but his *Kairan Jikki* was nevertheless a milestone in the development of Japanese understanding of the outside world. In range and depth, it can be seen as the culmination of the first wave of overseas research in America and Europe following the opening of Japan. In its representation of the West as a whole, it was formidable achievement and certainly did not invite imitation, so that subsequent studies tended to fragment into separate disciplines, particularly as overseas students were increasingly trained to a high standard in their respective fields before they left Japan.

One significant feature of the *Kairan Jikki* was that, unlike many previous works, Kume was able to use the unparalleled access to information that he enjoyed in his position as the chronicler of the Iwakura mission to present a multi-layered portrait of life in Britain, and this is very much in evidence in his descriptions of London. Two passages in particular must have caught the eye of many of his readers, in contrast to the copious statistics or sketches of magnificent stone edifices often found elsewhere, they presented vivid images of ordinary people engaged in their daily affairs. One of these offers a broadly positive appraisal of some of the technological innovations of the industrial age and their impact on the pace of life in the city. The other, a scathing attack on poverty and crime, reveals a

more negative interpretation of British society. Together, they can serve to illustrate the range of Kume's impressions of Victorian London.

### **Technological innovation and the Pace of life**

Kume was certainly aware of the showcase attractions of Victorian London such as the Crystal Palace, the British Museum and Madame Tussaud's. He thought the ministry buildings in Whitehall were so magnificent that they made the streets of Washington and New York look like filthy alleyways.<sup>12</sup> He also had an eye for the picturesque, describing how the gas lights by the Thames 'run along the banks of the river like a thread of starlight, surpassing even the beauty of snow in the light of the moon.'<sup>13</sup> Like many other Japanese travellers of the time, however, he was particularly impressed by the technological innovations of the Victorian age. Some of his most animated comments were reserved for London's recently constructed tunnels, bridges and railway lines, and the accelerated pace of life that these new transport networks had brought with them. He was amazed by the world's first underground railway, which had been opened just nine years before, and explained that 'most of it is tunnelled right underneath people's houses, although sometimes the tracks run above ground. The tunnels are built of brick and stone packed hard together. Trains run beneath the street of our hotel, so we can hear their thunderous rumbling from underground throughout the day.'<sup>14</sup>

Kume also described railway bridges in some detail, evoking a sense of the monumental in Victorian industrial architecture. In his eyes, these structures appeared to 'plunge over the rooftops before reaching stations on the riverbanks'. Looking more closely, he observed that 'the railway lines are supported by giant iron pillars, and in the wider streets, stones are piled on top of each other into the shape of an arch'. He was impressed by the way in which different transport networks operated on various levels, commenting that, 'in the streets of London, some trains run above and others run below, and these lines have all been constructed with the utmost ingenuity'.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to the tunnels and bridges themselves, Kume was astonished by the bustling traffic he saw on the railways. He described how 'trains shuttle from one station to another with a thunderous roar as they rush over the heads of people in the streets below. Passengers boarding the trains cluster together like bees, while those alighting scatter in all directions like ants'. He borrowed a British saying to describe their haste: 'all the people in the city are always so busy rushing around that it seems their feet never touch the ground'.<sup>16</sup>

This prodigious energy was most apparent in the City. 'On average', wrote Kume, '22,000 carriages cross over London Bridge every day, heading towards the centre. In the streets, carriages and horses block up the middle of the road, packed tightly together head to wheel. There is always a heady mixture of perfumes along the pavements on either side as men and women rush by. At junctions, police officers help the old and young to cross the road, and attend to injured horses. The flow of carriages is so relentless that one often has to wait for several minutes before finding a chance to cross'. Kume called on his knowledge of Chinese classics to describe this thoroughfare, for it reminded him of Linzi, the capital of the state of Qin (379-221 B.C.), which had been renowned for its prosperity in ancient times. According to *Sengoku saku* [Intrigues of the Warring States], compiled by Liu Xiang (77-6 B.C.), Linzi had once been a bustling centre, where vehicles ran so close together that the hubs of their wheels touched, and the crowds were so dense that people rubbed shoulders in the street. Kume believed 'it would be no idle boast' to apply this



phrase from ancient China to convey a sense of the thriving scenes he had seen in the streets of Victorian London.<sup>17</sup>

Kume genuinely admired the transport networks of the industrial age. Empowered by these innovations, the people of London had cultivated an energetic working lifestyle. They themselves often talked of time as money, he pointed out, concluding that Britain's much vaunted prosperity was due to the Victorians' unequalled spirit of enterprise. Even the congested traffic scenes that he described carried no negative connotations, but were intended to impress upon his readers in Japan the sheer scale and vitality of what was, after all, the world's largest metropolis at the time.<sup>18</sup>

## Poverty and crime

Kume placed great emphasis on the industrious scenes he had observed in London, not least perhaps because of the stimulating effect he hoped these might have on his readers in Japan. At the same time, he was keenly aware that such images alone would convey an inadequate impression of Victorian life. 'Everyone reading all this', he suggested, 'must surely think that the whole of Britain must be like a forest of wealth and golden flowers where everyone - high and low, noble and commoner - enjoy peace and a plentiful life. During his stay in London, however, he had seen and heard enough to realise that there were some less appealing aspects of life in the Victorian capital as well. This is particularly evident in one remarkable passage, in which he presented a scathing attack on the poverty and crime in the city.'<sup>19</sup> Perhaps he felt the need for some balance in his work, and may have wished to temper the often indiscriminate enthusiasm for Western ideas which was then sweeping through Japan. He could also have been making an oblique attempt at reconciling his readers to some of the social upheavals in early Meiji Japan by highlighting problems found elsewhere. Alternatively, he may have been simply relieved to find something during his stay in Britain which he could criticise without restraint. It made a change at least from the daily fare of admiring Victorian achievements that Sir Harry Parkes, the British minister in Japan, had contrived to arrange for Iwakura and his retinue.

Whatever concerns lay uppermost in his mind, Kume seized his opportunity with undisguised relish. Interestingly, he introduced the theme of poverty by referring to the sense of urgency that had so impressed him in the city. 'During our stay in London', he recalled, 'I used to feel like a slouch, even when I walked around at my normal pace'. To him, life in the Victorian capital really seemed like a race, but this prodigious energy which had made the country so prosperous also appeared to be one of the causes of poverty there, for he observed that 'Britain actually has a comparatively high proportion of poor people who have been unable to keep up with the vigour of the masses as a whole'. He added that, 'of a population of twenty-three million in England, there are more than one million destitute people receiving charity'.<sup>20</sup>

To reinforce his point, Kume presented some vivid images of Victorians struggling to make ends meet, starting with portraits of a working couple and their creditor. 'In the city', he wrote, 'everyone is under tremendous stress. The family accounts are calculated with great precision and, on Saturday evenings, a husband will sit down with his wife to compare their records and plan their weekly outgoings, without neglecting so much as the tiniest amounts. The pages of the daily accounts book they keep are covered in miniscule writing. When they present receipts of their takings for inspection, their creditor will put on his spectacles to scrutinise each entry in turn, comparing them with his own records, and will refuse to lend them any money until the tiniest differences in their calculations are

discussed and resolved. The stresses and strains just to make ends meet are just like that of the mean and poor people in Japan'.<sup>21</sup>

Kume then turned his attention to the city streets, where he found a variety of people living close to destitution. He observed that, 'if one finds street sellers whose goods are even slightly deficient in craftsmanship, and one asks them how much they make in a day, it becomes clear that some make just two or three shillings, and this will be used just to cover their expenses'. He noticed that 'street urchins gather at crossroads, carrying brushes in front of the pedestrians, touting for customers and polishing their shoes for them'. Thus far, Kume had been describing poverty alone, but he then developed his theme of hardship in the city to include a deliberately shocking portrait of street crime. He claimed that 'there are more than 100,000 prostitutes in London', and warned that, 'in streets with slightly fewer people around, urchins will pinch one's hat from in front, or snatch one's wallet from behind before making good their escape. In the leisure quarters, pickpockets gather in crowds, and within the space of just a few steps, all the gold chains and jewels on one's person will have vanished'. In his view, this culture of crime also extended beyond the city centre. 'If one ventures into slightly quieter and more desolate districts', he wrote, 'there are bandits who carry pistols and conceal poison, waylaying passing travellers'. He added that, 'on the steam trains, there are cunning youths who stalk through the carriages and swindle the simpler rustic folk among the passengers'.<sup>22</sup>

Kume left his readers in no doubt about the hardships to be found in the of hardened criminals. 'I heard that in London', he wrote, 'there is a never-ending stream of destitute men and women who throw themselves into the river, and there are halls of ill-repute, where every shade of villainous character can be found, congregating in pernicious gatherings, and pursuing all manner of vices from devising fraudulent schemes to the smoking of opium'.<sup>23</sup> This account was in marked contrast to the observations of Liu Hsi-hung in 1877 who, after two months in Britain with the Chinese embassy, commented that, 'throughout the whole country, there are no gambling houses and opium dens'. He also thought that, 'in their free time, the people hold boat races, horse races, and boxing and high jumping contests, all to foster military training'.<sup>24</sup> Even in 1862, Ichikawa Wataru, a member of the first *bakufu* mission to Europe, had managed to form a less noble impression of Victorian leisure pursuits after noticing some gambling at the races, when he wrote: 'there are countless cases after the Derby every year in which yesterday's paupers will suddenly be wearing brocade, and the wealthy will have lost their fortune'.<sup>25</sup>

Kume knew that many of his readers must have found his descriptions of poverty in London difficult to reconcile with the image of Victorian prosperity that he himself had contributed to fostering in much of his *Kairan Jikki*. He found an explanation in the gulf between rich and poor, noting that the landed wealth of England had become concentrated in the hands of just 20,000 owners. Although he was generally supportive of the great landowners, and praised their role in stimulating recent agricultural development, for example, he was also concerned by the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth. 'The gigantic profits accumulated year after year in Britain are confined to the rich and powerful families', he claimed. With all their assets protected by law, it seemed to him that 'the wealthy prosper day in, day out, whereas the poor, even if they are spectacularly successful, have barely enough to feed themselves. This is why poor people scale high peaks and cross great distances to seek their fortunes in other lands. He claimed that as many as 300,000 people found life in Britain so insupportable every year that they were eventually driven to emigration, and justified his argument by stressing that the ongoing process of settlement in America relies on migrants from Britain and Germany, and their great numbers alone bear testimony to the difficulties they have in making a living in their

own lands'. Whether in the streets of the City or in the settlement of far-off territories, therefore, he felt that the formidable energy of the Victorians was partly borne of deprivation.<sup>26</sup>

Although he was writing in formal literary Japanese, some of the Victorian characters that Kume introduced in his account of poverty and crime seem curiously reminiscent of the work of Charles Dickens. He did not describe these figures in any depth, and it was certainly not his intention to write a work of fiction, but one quality of the *Kairan Jikki* was that it did feature a range of living Victorians, and a much wider range than in previous Japanese research on Britain. In addition to aristocrats like the Duke of Devonshire who invited the delegation to their country seats, and the businessmen who feted the Iwakura mission at official banquets, Kume presented a world of working families, money-lenders, peddlers, street-walkers, pickpockets and professional criminals. Furthermore, Victorian London was all so novel to him that he often recorded everyday details which might have escaped the notice of more culturally accustomed observers. On the subject of the cost of travel in 1872, for example, he felt it was worth pointing out that a cab costs sixpence per mile, and the fares are printed on paper and hung inside. For longer journeys, people travel on the underground steam train for a fare of sixpence in first class, fourpence in second class, and threepence in third class carriages'. He made sure his readers in Japan also grasped the benefits of this system by adding that 'one can travel around the entire city in a matter of minutes, and it can actually save time to take a more roundabout route'.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, among the most indelible images of London that Kume took back with him to Japan were memories of the weather and the effects of pollution there. 'Throughout our travels in England', he recalled, 'it was invariably cloudy and raining whenever we arrived in a city, but the weather would always brighten up again on reaching the open countryside'. It was Kume's generation that introduced the notion of London fog to Japan, but he thought it was coal in particular that had blighted the atmosphere of the Victorian capital, and commented: 'perhaps it is the sheer density of kitchen smoke and the vast amounts of coal they burn that creates this sense of gloomy mist'. He also noticed how the coaldust in the London air had blackened the stonework in the city and, to his astonishment, no sooner had he crossed the narrow sea channel to France than the skies cleared and the walls of the buildings gleamed white in the sunlight.<sup>28</sup>

The *Kairan Jikki* was not among the vanguard of Japanese studies in the West. By the time Kume embarked on his research, a considerable body of material had already been circulated by returning travellers. Neither was he the first to portray images of Victorians in their natural setting, for these had featured to a limited extent in previous accounts of Britain. Compared with other Japanese descriptions of the time, however, Kume's strengths lay in depth and detail, and his skills as an editor. In his role as chronicler of the Iwakura mission, he was able to draw together several stages of earlier Japanese research to compile a more complex, if not always consistent, survey of life in the West.

Victorian London, in Kume's eyes, was a city smothered in fog and smoke, with monumental government buildings, museums and exhibitions, and a miraculous network of the latest transport systems. The prosperity he observed there surpassed that of any other city on the Iwakura mission's world tour, and was most clearly manifest in the prodigious energy of its inhabitants. This frantic pace of life, however, was partly enforced by the highly competitive conditions to be found in the city, and the people he saw on the streets were caught up in the daily struggle for survival, rushing from one station to the

next with relentless haste, either in the race to make their fortunes, or just to make ends meet.

Kume thus managed to capture a sense of the tensions in Victorian London. He was keenly aware of the dynamics of social change, and stressed repeatedly that Britain's spectacular industrial advances were not long-standing achievements, but rather the result of recent developments over the last few decades.<sup>29</sup> He also realised that these rapid changes were somehow related to social problems in the growing cities. While his readers were consciously encouraged to believe that Japan had the capacity to industrialise within the foreseeable future, they could also infer from the experience of the West, and especially from the example of London, that the headlong pursuit of prosperity might involve an element of social instability. For many of his readers, however, Kume simply brought London to life. In an age when few Japanese descriptions of European cities had yet achieved any sort of balance, his multi-layered portrait of a thriving metropolis conveyed a sense of both the vigour and complexity of the Victorian capital.

### Endnotes

- 1 M. Mayo, 'The Western Education of Kume Kunitake, 1871-6' *Monumenta Nipponica*, XXVI 11, (Tokyo, 1973), p.13.
- 2 Haga Toru, 'Western Cities as Observed by the Iwakura Mission,' *The Japan Foundation Newsletter* Vol.XVIII/No.1, August 1990, p.9.
- 3 Tanaka Akira, 'Iwakura Shisetsu-dan to Yoroppa to Ajia' in Kume Kunitake ed., *Tokumei Zenken Taishi Beio Kairan Jikki* (Tokyo, 1982), vol.5, p.382.
- 4 J. D. Frodsham trans., *The First Chinese Embassy to the West*, (Oxford, 1974), pp.lv-lvi.
- 5 S. Devere Brown & A. Hirota trans., *The Diary of Kido Takayoshi*, vol.2 (Tokyo, 1985), p.261.
- 6 Fukuzawa Yukichi, 'Seiyo Jijō Gaihen' in *Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshu*, Tokyo, 1958), p.407.  
A. Craig has identified the text Fukuzawa used for his translation as the 1866 *New American Encyclopaedia*.  
A. Craig, *From Technology to Invention: Fukuzawa Yukichi's Grasp of Western Society in 1867*, (JRC Seminar, London, 1 November 1995).
- 7 Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Fukuo Jiden* (Tokyo, 1970), p.127.
- 8 Inuzuka Takaaki, *Satsuma-han Eikoku Ryugakusei* (Tokyo, 1974), pp.115-6, 137.
- 9 Nomura (Murata) Fumio, 'Seiyo Bunken Roku' in *Meiji Bunka Zenshu Gaikoku Bunka Hen*, vol.7, (Tokyo, 1928), pp.223, 233.  
In the context of discovering Christianity, it should be noted that Nomura was taken to church by his host family the morning after his arrival in Aberdeen. See A. J. Cobbing, *The Japanese Experience in Britain, 1862-76* (PhD thesis, University of London, 1997), p.84.

- 10 Cobbing, *op. cit.*, pp.32-3.
- 11 Nakano Reishiro et al., ed., *Kume Hakushi Kujunen Kaikoroku*, vol.2 (Tokyo, 1934), pp.420-1.
- 12 *Kairan Jikki*, vol.2, p.59.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p.51.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p.53.
- 15 *Ibid.*, pp.513.
- 16 *Ibid.*, pp.39, 534.  
There is an illustration of such a bridge on p.52. This is described as Charing Cross Station but looks very much like Holborn Viaduct.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p.58, Haga, *op. cit.*, p.7.
- 18 *Kairan Jikki*, vol 2, pp.39, 54.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p.39.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p.40.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 Frodsham, *op. cit.*, p.1v
- 25 Ichikawa Wataru, 'Biyo Oko Manroku' in *Kengai Shisetsu Nikki Sanshu*, vol.2 (Tokyo, 1928-30), p.379.
- 26 *Kairan Jikki*, vol.2, pp.40-1, 67-8.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p.54.
- 28 *Ibid.*, pp.188, 25.
29. *Ibid.*, pp.66-7.

## **The Iwakura Mission in Britain: their observations on education and Victorian society**

Akiko Ohta

### **Introduction**

On 17 August 1872 the Iwakura Mission arrived at Liverpool on board the Cunard steamer Olympus. After having stayed in Britain for 122 days, it left London for Paris on 16 December. The Foreign Office had arranged for Major-General Alexander of the Royal Marines to act as escort to the mission throughout its sojourn in Britain. W.G. Aston of the Tokyo legation was provided as interpreter and Sir Harry Parkes, Minister to Japan, who was home on leave, supervised the overall itinerary and accompanied Iwakura. Adams, Parkes' deputy in Tokyo, also left Tokyo for a period of leave in Britain and acted as travelling interpreter.<sup>1</sup>

The ambassadors and their assistants were responsible for three sets of enquiries in Britain<sup>2</sup>. One was to study the law and government, and to examine British political institutions including both Houses of Parliament. Since Britain has had a history of constitutional monarchy, the mission was eager to make a close study of her law and politics. The second area of inquiry was to study the economic structure including industry, transport and communications, banking, currency and taxation, and how these all affected trade. Britain had been prospering economically, particularly since 1850, and the members of the mission were scattered all over Britain in search of the secrets of her economic and industrial success.

The third area was to examine education in all its aspects, together with the equipment and training of military and naval personnel, and the function of museums. A great part of what was done was designed to promote an understanding of modern industrial society. In other words, the Mission's observation of education was always closely linked with that of society. One should also note here that the 1870s was an important decade of reform and change, particularly in British social policy and education.

This paper examines the nature of the Iwakura Mission's observations on education and society in Britain. It is generally said that the Meiji Government adapted the French and Dutch educational systems to their own system, and introduced the American and British curricula to their modernized schools<sup>3</sup>. If this interpretation is appropriate, how far did the Iwakura Mission contribute to this matter? What aspects of British education and Victorian society did the Mission take note of, and how did this affect its understanding of Britain and its proposals for the modernization of Meiji Japan?

### **The Iwakura Mission and the notion of education**

As I mentioned earlier, the Mission's notion of 'education' was broader than that of education given at ordinary schools. This notion seems to originate from Verbeck's proposals in *Brief Sketch*, a document produced for Okuma Shigenobu in 1869. Verbeck suggested that the new Meiji government should send a mission of high ranking officials to advanced Western countries, and that the mission should include a commission of three officers and a secretary to examine the various systems of schools, including universities, public and private schools, as well as specialized schools, such as polytechnic and commercial schools.<sup>4</sup>

When Iwakura Tomomi took up this project once again in 1871,<sup>5</sup> the notion of education became more extensive. The commissioners were expected to inspect the regulations, curriculum and management of national and private schools, polytechnic and commercial schools, hospitals, orphanages and nurseries<sup>6</sup> It is likely that Verbeck, who remained in an advisory position throughout the planning process, made influential suggestions on educational inspections.<sup>7</sup> Tanaka Fujimaro of the Education Ministry was chosen as commissioner for education, and he was given five assistants who were assigned to inspect and gather information.<sup>8</sup>

Before his departure from Japan, Tanaka submitted an official plan to the Japanese government in which he stated the objectives of the inspection. Alongside the numerous aspects of school education, he wrote that the Mission was also planning to look into museums, libraries, hospitals, workhouses, institutions for physically and mentally handicapped people, asylums and so on<sup>9</sup> This clearly indicates that the notion of 'education' of the Iwakura Mission not only covered a wide sphere of the administration of school education, but also included cultural policies and social welfare. One should note that this wider notion of education marked a sharp contrast to what the former Japanese missions to the West had in mind. The ultimate objective of the inspection was, of course, to adopt in Japan whatever points the members of the Iwakura Mission found useful for the modernization of their country.

### **The Itinerary of inspection of 'education'**

During their sojourn in Britain, the members of the Iwakura Mission visited virtually all the main cities.<sup>10</sup> What were the places Ambassador Iwakura and his attendants visited for their inspection of 'education'? The itinerary included, during their sojourn in London, visits to a primary school, London Zoo, British Museum, the museums in Kensington and Crystal Palace; visits to the Free Library and Museum, and four training ships, including two reformatory ships in Liverpool (2 October); an inspection of Owen's College in Manchester (8 October); visits to Edinburgh University, the Signet Library, the Advocates' Library and Industrial Museum (14 October); passing by (maybe not a visit) another reformatory ship near Tynemouth (23 October); a visit to Saltaire, where the members looked around the school, nursing home and hospital on the estate (25 October); a visit, after inspecting his carpet factory, to the Orphan's Home and School built by Crossley in Halifax (26 October); an inspection of the schools attached to the glassworks of Messrs Chance in Birmingham (4 November); and finally back again in London, visits to Greenwich Hospital & School, India House Museum and Agricultural Hall, before leaving for France.

As the itinerary suggests, Iwakura and the core members of the Mission did not seem to have had much opportunity of inspecting ordinary primary and secondary schools in Britain despite their initial interests. Most of the schools they visited could be categorized as specialized schools --- training schools for sailors and nurses, reformatory schools, schools attached to factories and orphanages, and also specialized institutions such as Owen College. Some of these inspections seem to have taken place as part of the industrial visits. Vice Ambassador Kido, however, tried to spend more time in visiting schools, hospitals, and military schools.

This was quite a contrast with the Mission's itinerary in America, where the members had a well-organized round of visits to a variety of schools. Even in Chicago, where they stayed for only one night, their itinerary included an inspection of two local primary schools<sup>11</sup>. Observation of the well-organized and systematic learning process of the mass public seems to have convinced the Mission that Japan should emulate this pattern. On

inspecting American primary education, Vice Ambassador Kido Takayoshi became convinced that schools must not only aim at producing men of talent but also endeavour to inculcate traditional morality to provide a firm basis for nationhood<sup>12</sup>. Kume Kunitake, who compiled the official report *Bei-O Kairan Jikki*, stressed the fundamentals of grammar, penmanship, and arithmetic (the three R's). He believed that through singing hymns in primary schools every day children were absorbing lessons in morality<sup>13</sup>. The members of the Mission were favourably impressed with the moral effects of regularly singing songs and the national anthem and of march drill and physical exercises as part of the curriculum in ordinary schools. Subsequently, Tanaka Fujimaro summoned David Murray of Rutgers College to the Japanese Ministry of Education after Kido had interviewed him twice, and the American model held sway in Japan in the 1870s<sup>14</sup>.

Why, then, was the itinerary of school inspection in Britain not as systematic as that in America?

Firstly, the planners of the Mission's itinerary in America were eager to let the members have an extensive knowledge of American education: the names of Verbeck, Charles De Long (American Minister to Japan, who accompanied the mission during its sojourn in America) and Mori Arinori should not be forgotten, in particular. Mori, who was Japanese Charge d'Affaires in Washington, had been in close communication with many eminent politicians including Hamilton Fish, Secretary of State, and scholars in academic institutions, such as Professor Joseph Henry, of the Smithsonian Institution<sup>15</sup>. In Britain, however, Terashima Munenori, the newly appointed minister to Britain, had only arrived in Britain shortly before the Iwakura Mission. Unlike Mori, Terashima had barely had time to begin his activities in Britain as representative of the Japanese government. As for Sir Harry Parkes, he did not seem particularly keen on showing the Mission the primary and secondary schools in Britain. One might add, nevertheless, that this did not necessarily mean that he was uninterested in education. Parkes was fully aware of the increasing challenge of the United States for influence over the Meiji Government, and followed a well-established course of providing technical assistance and advice where they could excel the Americans. Parkes also put considerable pressure upon the Admiralty to allow Japanese to serve on board British training ships; something for which there was no clear precedent<sup>16</sup>. This might explain why the Mission was taken to inspect so many training ships.

Secondly, the itinerary of the special commissioners and their attendants started to diverge quite substantially from Washington D.C. Tanaka Fujimaro and his assistants left Washington D.C. in May 1872, and by the time Iwakura reached Britain, they had spent two months here, and were already travelling around the Continent. During their sojourn in Britain, Tanaka and his group inspected many educational institutions in major cities such as Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh and London, meeting important figures in education including Forster, Littleton and Arnold.<sup>17</sup> One might say that the division of labour was well under way by the time the Mission reached Britain, and the Ambassadors did not necessarily have to cover everything.

Thirdly, the idea of primary education in America and Britain was fundamentally different in the mid-nineteenth century. Although education policy was at a turning point in the 1870s, as symbolized by Forster's Education Act of 1870, primary education was not yet necessarily an education for the youngest age group in Britain. The term 'primary education' itself did not come into general use until the early 1900s.<sup>18</sup> It was industrialization that took place first in Britain, and the idea of the education of the mass public came later chronologically. Two conflicts over education, the first within the middle



classes, in terms of the Church of England versus the nonconformists, and the other between middle-class educational advocates and working-class radicals, delayed the formation of a national education system in Britain.<sup>19</sup> In America, on the other hand, a systematic education of the general public from an early age was a prerequisite for the enhancement of industrialization and national growth. In other words, mass public education and industrialization were sought simultaneously in America. It was quite obvious that the American model was more suited to the necessities of Meiji Japan than the British model. Therefore it is quite likely that the planners of Iwakura's itinerary in Britain were not so enthusiastic about including so many school visits and put more emphasis on visiting such schools as were closely linked with industry.

### **Notable observations in *Riji Ko tei* and *Bei-O Kairan Jikki***

Although the content of school inspection by the main group was not so extensive as in America, this did not necessarily mean that the Iwakura Mission took less interest in British education and society. When one reads through *Bei-O Kairan Jikki?* one can see that the members were trying to grasp the characteristics of British education in spite of their limited visits to educational institutions.

This was greatly helped by Tanaka Fujimaro and his official reports on Western education. Tanaka returned to Japan in March 1873, about six months earlier than Iwakura and the core group of the Mission. He immediately started compiling an official report on education (*Riji Kotei*), and submitted two volumes on America and one volume on Britain to the Ministry of Education before the end of that year.

In this official report, Tanaka introduced the history of education in Britain from mediaeval times right up to Forster's Education Act of 1870. The report also covered various aspects of current school administration, regulation and curriculum, and contained some questions and answers exchanged between the British officials and the Japanese delegation on specific issues. The report gave an overall and well-balanced view of British education from past to present.<sup>20</sup>

Kume Kunitake not only read this *Riji Kotei*, but used it as a useful reference book when he compiled *Bei-O Kairan Jikki*, which was published in 1878.<sup>21</sup> The passages where Kume gave a general introduction to British education in *Bei-O Kairan Jikki*, for instance, showed a strong reflection of what Tanaka wrote in *Riji Kotei*.<sup>22</sup>

Although Kume did not mention the name of Forster and his Education Act in *Bei-O Kairan Jikki*, he took notice of the change in education policy in the nineteenth century. He pointed out that education in Britain had once been exclusively for aristocrats and monks, which he found analogous with the situation in Japan until shortly before his own time, but that more people had started to take an interest in education after the development of printing technology and the wider distribution of books. Whilst he referred to some people who hired private tutors for their children's education, he noted the year 1811, when the first national school opened entitling poor people to receive education.<sup>23</sup>

After inspecting a primary school and an adjoining nursery school in London, Kume was impressed with the teaching methods and the favourable effect they were likely to have on small children. However, he pointed out that since the frivolities and distractions in big cities tended to corrupt youth, most of the schools, apart from primary schools, were located in the countryside.<sup>24</sup> Although this reasoning was rather too simplistic, Kume, in a way, seems to have sensed the existence of the unfillable gap between the provision of

education for the masses and that for the wealthier classes. Although the Elementary Education Act of 1870 marked a new beginning in education, the system of working-class education and that of the wealthier students were seen as wholly separate,<sup>25</sup> and the majority of the institutions in secondary and higher education were indeed located in the countryside.<sup>26</sup>

What one should also note in Kume's observation of British education is that he referred to education when he was observing other aspects of society as well. For example, when the Mission visited the main post office in the City of London, he discussed how the development of postal services was related to trade and education. According to Kume, the flourishing of British trade went hand in hand with the development of postal communication in daily life, which enhanced the 'education' of the mass public. Since people inevitably had to develop their reading and writing skills in order to rely on postal communication, the illiteracy rate dropped, and the nation became more intellectual. Thus, more people used postal services as a means of communication, and hence trade and economy and the whole country thrived even more.<sup>27</sup> This may be assessed as a rather naive argument, but it is worth noting as an observation in which Kume tried to integrate the development of telecommunication and trade with that of education.

Kume noted that the current prosperity of Britain was based upon her thriving trade and industry, and that the energy of the people was her driving force. The term 'eigyo-ryoku' was used, which could be translated as power and energy in sustaining the growth and productivity of the nation.<sup>28</sup> He also pointed out that all the British people (from top to bottom of society) valued their property rights, and that the idea of political rights and legislative power in Britain was based upon the security of property rights.<sup>29</sup>

Whether or not this interpretation was appropriate should be discussed from several points of view, which is beyond the scope of this paper, but one should note here that Kume was trying to understand Britain by linking and integrating industry, trade, education, communication, politics, the class structure and various aspects of society. In other words, Kume was trying to deal with the three objectives of the Iwakura Mission in Britain, mentioned earlier in this paper, by linking together close observations of various aspects of Victorian society. Kume endeavoured to keep his perspective wide and to avoid providing piecemeal information of Western society. All his studies and observations were systematically converging on the ultimate aim of trying to reveal the secrets of Britain's prosperity and to adapt whatever information would be useful in Japan. One may note that such organic observations were not to be found in the official records of governmental missions preceding the Iwakura Mission.<sup>30</sup>

There were, however, certain aspects of education that were, for unknown reasons, not mentioned in *Bei-O Kairan Jikki*. (The most notable of these was London University.) Apart from Edinburgh University which the Mission visited, two references were made to Oxford and Cambridge, as the best and the most prestigious institutions for higher education in Britain.<sup>31</sup> Yet one cannot find a single reference to University College, London where so many Japanese students were studying at that time, and where Vice-Ambassador Ito also attended when he stowed away to Britain in 1863.<sup>32</sup>

### **The Mission's observation of Victorian society: from the very bottom to the *creme de la creme***

How did the Iwakura Mission observe Victorian society? The most important point of all was that the members attempted to look into the lives of Victorian people from as many

angles and on as many levels as possible. In big cities, they were trying to observe both the bright and the dark sides of urban life. One can find a positive appraisal of the busy energetic pace of life in London and other industrial cities in *Bei-O Kairan Jikki*. Kume praised the transport system, including the underground, urban planning, and modern facilities such as gaslights; he noted that the British were industrious, very busy and time-conscious, and he introduced an anecdotal comparison of the working attitudes of the British, Americans, French and Germans; he also felt that compared with the grandeur of Whitehall, the roads in Washington and New York City seemed narrow.<sup>33</sup>

On the other hand, Kume did not leave out the observation of the poverty, crime, pollution and slums in Britain. In Liverpool, for instance, he took notice of the density of population, and was appalled by the unhealthy living conditions of the workers, who had to live in overcrowded and unhygienic slums where the air was polluted so heavily. Kume wrote that when one saw the city from the south bank of Mersey, one would see a thick smog from the coal fire hanging over the city and the sky was dark even on a sunny day. He classified the workers into three groups and noted that their life expectancy was a mere fifteen years amongst the lowest (unskilled) group.<sup>34</sup>

Vice Ambassador Kido Takayoshi was also eager to look into the reality of urban life in industrial cities. On his arrival in Liverpool on 17 August, he noted that Liverpool had the largest shipyards in England and the city looked prosperous, but had a dreary appearance about it when compared with America.<sup>35</sup> In London, he ventured to take a ride on the underground and was thrilled with the prosperity and modern technology of the metropolis.<sup>36</sup> He, too, noted the slums, orphans and child labour in practically every industrial city the Mission visited. Towards the end of the Mission's sojourn in Britain he and Okubo asked General Alexander to take them privately to the East End. There they were shown the lodging houses for the destitute (doss houses), a few music-halls, and even an opium den.<sup>37</sup> They were disgusted to see the revolting condition of poverty, crime and vulgarity in the capital of the most 'advanced' country of the world. Although they were relieved to know that the opium den was run by a Chinese and no Japanese was there, Kido and Okubo noticed the ironic contradiction and paradox of an industrial and economically prosperous society. They even seem to have anticipated what would probably follow once Enlightenment ('Bunmei Kaika') was well under way in Japan.<sup>38</sup>

However, it was not only the bottom of British society that the Iwakura Mission managed to see. During the tours of the industrial north of England and Scotland, in particular, the Japanese envoys were entertained by local entrepreneurs. They were frequently offered warm hospitality by landed or industrial magnates. Mayors and Chambers of Commerce in the English and Scottish cities also greeted them with civic welcomes.

Lord Blantyre, for instance, entertained the Mission at Erskine House near Bishopton. The Japanese stayed there for three consecutive nights, and Lord Blantyre took charge of their itinerary throughout their stay. Iwakura and his attendants visited the manors of the Duke of Atholl and Earl Kenmore during their trip around the Scottish Highlands. In Sheffield, the envoys were entertained by Mr. George Wilson for three nights, and also made a visit to Chatsworth House where the Duke of Devonshire and members of his family greeted them. Mr. Tollemache invited them to his residence Peckforton Castle near Chester, and entertained them for three nights. Invitations to luncheon, dinner and tea in private residences were frequent.

Although most of the itinerary of the Iwakura Mission in America and Europe consisted of official and formal visits and receptions, there were two exceptions where the members

were frequently offered a warm and personal hospitality --- in the American West and in Britain. One should note, however, that there was a big difference between the hosts in America and Britain. Whereas the American hosts were 'self-made men', the English and Scottish hosts varied from landed aristocrats to landed gentry and industrialists. In other words, the Japanese envoys were able to have a glimpse of various types of the 'upper crust' of Victorian society.

The members of the Mission seem to have greatly enjoyed and made the most of such hospitality. They admired the gorgeous interiors of the hosts' residences, and enjoyed rambling in their large estates and watching hunting. They learned that the aristocrats spent the winter season in their residences in London and spent the summer months on their country estates. Kume noticed the difference between the landed aristocracy and the landed gentry, and mentioned their political representation in Parliament.<sup>39</sup>

Kume even started appreciating some of the Western table manners: he noted and praised the fact that table manners and politeness to ladies were strictly observed, dinners were served only in the dining room, and that it was considered rude to discuss business during the meal.<sup>40</sup> This was a remarkable change from his views in America, where Kume and other members of the Mission had often been appalled to see men serving women attentively as if they were their servants, and women sailing into the room majestically before men.<sup>41</sup>

Having seen a wide range of society, Kume tried to integrate his observations into a model of the overall structure of Victorian society. This concern cannot be found in the records of the Japanese delegations to the West preceding the Iwakura Mission. Nor can we find a similar point of view among Chinese contemporaries, for instance. The Chinese governmental mission in the 1870s lacked any enthusiasm for looking into the darker side of Victorian society.<sup>42</sup>

## Conclusion

What was Kume's analysis of Victorian social structure? As mentioned before in this paper, Kume noticed the significance of the landed classes in Victorian society and pointed out that most of the land in Britain was owned by aristocrats and gentlemen. Since many of the landed classes were members of Parliament, they had political as well as economic power. It should be noted that Kume's tone was not critical, but sympathetic towards the prominence of the landed classes in Britain. One can even detect a leaning towards the patrician aspect of Victorian society in the mid-nineteenth century. In *Bei-O Kairan Jikki*, he wrote:

'In the Westminster area, the authority of the monarchy and legislature are prominent. In the City of London and also in major cities, companies are thriving with their business, and the atmosphere allowing their free activities somewhat resembles republicanism. In the rural areas, landed aristocrats and gentlemen have great power, and one can find a landed oligarchy. When we were first told that British politics consisted of all of those three elements, it sounded strange to us. Nevertheless, after having actually seen the society on the spot we came to understand that the secret of British politics does lie in this structure.'<sup>43</sup>

The Iwakura Mission's favourable view of the dominance of the landed classes in Britain must have been drawn from actually socializing with them on personal terms and from having made a close observation of their stylish ways of living. One should also bear in

mind that *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* was published in 1878, when the Japanese government was facing the upsurge of the Popular Rights Movement ('Jiyu Minken Undo'). This observation of Victorian social structure could also be construed as proposing to the Meiji Government a favourable model of an industrialized society with a constitutional monarchy and landed classes.

One may also notice that no reference was made to industrial relations in *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* despite the passing of the Trade Union Act in 1871 in Britain. Despite the fact that there was a strike, demanding that working hours be no more than eight hours a day, during the Mission's sojourn in Britain, one cannot find any reference to this issue either. On its arrival in Rome, later on, the Iwakura Mission met with a large demonstration and had to divert its route. However, no reference was made to this incident in *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* and other documents, although an Italian newspaper reported it in detail.<sup>44</sup> It can be assumed that such points were deliberately left out because they were considered to be unimportant for the modernization of Japan for the time being.

This viewpoint was also reflected in the observations of factory workers and working conditions in *Bei--O Kairan Jikki*. Kume often noted that there were child workers and female workels in the factories the Mission visited, and sometimes described the nature of the work they were engaged in. He also often wrote down the average wages, working hours and the total number of workers.<sup>45</sup> The overall tone, however, was impersonal --- as if he were taking notes of statistics --- and one may detect here the general attitude of the early Meiji officials towards labourers.<sup>46</sup> The Mission's point of view was naturally on the managerial side, yet it may be inappropriate to criticize its lack of sympathy with hindsight (according to the moral ethics of contemporary society).

As I mentioned earlier, Kume was also aware that Britain in the mid-nineteenth century was essentially a country of industry, commerce and trade. He observed that more emphasis was put on industry and trade and more people were moving into urban areas, thus intensifying the neglect of agriculture and deterioration of productivity in the rural areas. He was critical of this aspect of Victorian society and concluded that not all aspects of British society were worth adopting in Japan in spite of Britain's current prosperity.<sup>47</sup>

Although Kume wrote briefly that the number of landowners in England and Ireland was decreasing,<sup>48</sup> and although he was well aware of the rise of the industrial bourgeoisie in Britain at that time, he did not seem to relate these matters fully to the change in the social structure that was taking place in the early 1870s. The second electoral reform in 1867 and its aftermath did not seem to bear particular significance for him. In this context, his understanding of Victorian society was limited and probably insufficiently informed. Had he been informed, for instance, of the relation between the rise of the new industrial middle-class (the industrial bourgeoisie without inherited estates) and the rise of public school education in the mid-nineteenth century he might have provided us with an interesting analysis and a proposal for education in Meiji Japan.

As mentioned earlier, one should look at Tanaka's *Riji Kotei*, Kido's diaries and letters alongside *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* in order make an overall assessment of the extent to which the Iwakura Mission influenced the education policy of Meiji Japan. This would exceed the length of this presentation, but I should like to emphasize once again the significance of how the members of the Mission looked into Victorian society, interrelating its various elements and levels.

## Endnotes:

- 1 The BEASLEY, William, *Japan Encounters the Barbarian* (London, 1995), p.165.. DANIELS, Gordon, *Sir Harry Parkes: British Representative in Japan 1865-83* (Richmond, Surrey, 1996), p.133.
- 2 CHECKLAND, Olive, *Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan, 1868-1912* (London, 1989), p.110.
- 3 See, for example. PASSIN, Herbert, *Society and Education in Japan* (Tokyo, 1965), pp.69-71.
- 4 VERBECK, Guido, *Brief Sketch*, in TANAWA Akira ed., *Kaikoku* (The Opening of Japan) (*Nihon Kindai Shiso Taikei*, Vol. I, Tokyo, 1991), pp.354-371.
- 5 OKUBO Toshiaki made a detailed survey of the takeover of the mission from Okuma to Iwakura in OKUBO Toshiaki ed., *Iwakura Shisetsu no Kenkyu* (A Study of the Iwakura Mission) (Tokyo, 1976), pp.15-70. Okubo pointed out that there was a rivalry for power between Okuma and Iwakura and argued that Iwakura conspired with Okubo Toshimichi to hinder Okuma from carrying out this project in 1869 and eventually put forward his own plan in 1871. Verbeck, however, remained in an advisory position throughout the planning process.
- 6 TANANA Akira, *Iwakurashisetsudan Bei-O Kairan Jikki* (Tokyo, 1994), pp.4Q-41.
- 7 VERBECK, Guido, 'Verbeck yori uchi-uchi sashi-idasare soro sho' (Confidential paper from Verbeck) in TANAWA Akira ed., *Kaikoku* (The Opening of Japan) (*Nihon Kindai Shiso Taikei*, Vol. I, Tokyo, 1991), pp. 373-374, pp.379-380. Although this paper is not dated, it seems to have been written around late 1871 or early 1872.
- 8 Tanaka Fujimaro(1845-1909) was 27 when he left Japan. After his return to Japan, he was appointed Vice-Minister of Education in 1873. The five attendants included Nagayo Sensai(1838-1902), who, after his return to Japan, contributed to the development of higher medical education and the improvement of sanitary conditions in Japan.
- 9 Preface by KOBAYASHI Tetsuya to the reprint edition (Kyoto, 1974) of *Monbusho* (Ministry of Education) ed., *Riji Kotei* (Tokyo, 1875), p.4. I have used the reprint edition throughout this paper.
- 10 The principal British cities and areas they visited were: London, Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, the Scottish Highlands, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Bradford, Halifax, Sheffield, Burton-upon-Trent, Birmingham, Coventry, Warwick, Worcester and Chester. There were many side visits made by vice-ambassadors and commissioners. Vice-ambassador Kido, for instance, made a brief visit to Dublin with three other members. Three experts in mining and mineralogy, including Oshima Takato who had studied the reverberatory furnace before the Meiji Restoration and later worked on iron-smelting at Kamaishi, visited the Cornish tin-mines, and went as far as the Welsh coal mines near Cardiff. One may see how extensively the members travelled around Britain.

- 11 KUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* (paperback edition, Tokyo, 1978), Vol. I, p.176. The Mission visited two co-educational primary schools in Chicago.
- 12 Kido Takayoshi to Sugiyama Takatoshi, 26 January 1872, in *Kido Takayoshi Monjo* (Kido Takayoshi Papers), (8 volumes, Tokyo, 1929-30), Vol. IV, pp.319-321.
- 13 KUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* (paperback edition, Tokyo, 1978), Vol. I, pp.88-89.
- 14 BROWN, Sidney DeVere, 'The Iwakura Embassy in the American West' in TANAWA Akira ed., *Bei-O Kairan Jikki no Gakusaiteki Kenkyu* (Interdisciplinary Studies on *Bei-O Kairan Jikki*) (Hokkaido, 1993), p.80). PASSIN, Herbert, *Society and Education in Japan* (Tokyo, 1965), pp.70-71. Murray remained in Japan, either as advisor or Education Inspector until 1878.
- 15 See LANMAN, Charles ed., *The Japanese in America* (New York, 1872), the archives in the National Archives and the Smithsonian Institution.
- 16 DANIELS, Gordon, *Sir Harry Parkes: British Representative in Japan 1865-83* (Richmond, Surrey, 1996), p.132.
- 17 Preface by KOBAYASHI Tetsuya to the reprint edition (Kyoto, 1974) of Monbusho (Ministry of Education) ed., *Riji Kotei* (Tokyo, 1875), pp.5-6. In November, Tanaka and Nagano made a brief visit to London to see the main group of the Mission, but hastily returned to the Continent to resume their inspection in Europe before Iwakura started off for France.
- 18 COOK, Chris and KEITH, Brendan, *British Historical Facts 1830 - 1900* (London, 1975), p.191.
- 19 CHECKLAND Sydney, *British Public Policy 1776-1939* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 99-102, pp.141 142.
- 20 Tanaka Fujimaro, however, did not deal with the theory and method of teaching. This was a typical attitude in the early Meiji period. See OGATA Hiroyasu, *Nihon Kyoiku Tsuushi* (General History of Education in Japan) (Tokyo, 1960), pp.232-233; LINCICOME, M.E., *Principle, Praxis, and the Politics of Educational Reform in Meiji Japan* (Honolulu, 1995).
- 21 Kume and Tanaka were both assigned to collaborate on inspecting religious issues, and they were often exchanging views even after their return to Japan.
- 22 For example, compare the following passages: KUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* (paperback edition, Tokyo, 1978), Vol.II, pp.41-42; Monbusho (Ministry of Education) ed., *Riji Kotei* (reprint edition, Kyoto, 1974), Vol. III, pp.1-14.
- 23 KUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* (paperback edition, Tokyo, 1978), Vol.II, p.41.
- 24 KUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* (paperback edition, Tokyo, 1978), Vol.II, pp.100-101.

- 25 CHECKLAND, Sydney, *British Public Policy 1776-1939* (Cambridge, 1983), pp.99-102, pp.142-145.
- 26 COOK, Chris and KEITH, Brendan, *British Historical Facts 1830-1900* (London, 1975), pp.195-199.
- 27 KUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* (paperback edition, Tokyo,1978), Vol.II, p.108.
- 28 KUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* (paperback edition,Tokyo,1978), Vol.II, p.22, p.39, p.384.
- 29 KUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* (paperback edition,Tokyo,1978), Vol.II, p.83.
- 30 *Seiyo Jijo(1866-1870)* by FUKUZAWA Yukichi may be an exception, but this was not a governmental paper.
- 31 KUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* (paperback edition,Tokyo,1978), Vol.II, p.41, p.101.
- 32 The following books provide useful information concerning the Japanese students studying abroad in the middle and late nineteenth century:  
ISHIZUKI Minoru, *Kindai Nihon no Kaigai Ryugaku-shi* (History of Studying Abroad in Modern Japan) (Tokyo, 1972). |  
WATANABE Minoru, *Kindai Nihon Kaigai Ryugaku-shi* (History of Studying Abroad in Modern Japan), 2 vols. (Tokyo, 1978).
- 33 KUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* , paperback edition (Tokyo, 1978), Vol.II, pp.47-61.
- 34 KUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki*, paperback edition (Tokyo, 1978), Vol.II, p.119.
- 35 KIDO Takayoshi, *Diary*, 17 August 1872. (*The Diary of Kido Takayoshi*, translated by BROWN, S.D. and HIROTA, A., Vol.II, (Tokyo,1985), p.198.
- 36 KIDO Takayoshi, *Diary*, 21 September 1872. (*The Diary of Kido Takayoshi*, translated by BROWN, S.D. and HIROTA, A., Vol.II, (Tokyo, 1985), p.219.
- 37 KIDO Takayoshi, *Diary*, 12 December 1872. (*The Diary of Kido Takayoshi*, translated by BROWN, S.D. and HIROTA, A., Vol.II, (Tokyo, 1985), pp.261-262.
- 38 KUME Kunitake, *Kume Hakase Kyuju-nen Kaikoroku* (Memoirs of Kume Kunitake), (Tokyo,1934), Vol.II, pp.420-422. Kido Takayoshi wrote in his diary that Kinnaird sent him a book on 12 December 1872. Sidney Brown writes that this might be Baron Kinnaird (1814-1887), Member of Parliament with a special interest in the welfare of the working classes. See Brown's footnote to KIDOTakayoshi, *Diary*, 12 December 1872. (*The Diary of Kido Takayoshi*, translated by BROWN, S.D. and HIROTA, A., Vol.II, (Tokyo, 1985), p.262.
- 39 RUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* (paperback edition, Tokyo, 1978), Vol.II, pp.204-205.



- 40 KUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* (paperback edition, Tokyo, 1978), Vol.II, p.198.
- 41 KUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* (paperback edition, Tokyo, 1978), Vol.I, pp.247-249.  
KUME Kunitake, *Kume Hakase Kyuju-nen Kaikoroku (Memoirs of Kume Kunitake)* (Tokyo, 1934), Vol. II, pp.251-255, pp.263-264, p.977, pp.294-297.
- 42 See, for instance, FRODSHAM, J. D., *The First Chinese Embassy to the West* (Oxford, 1974).
- 43 KUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* (paperback edition, Tokyo, 1978), Vol.II, p.196.
- 44 OHTA Akiko, 'Iwakura Shisetsudan to Italia' (The Iwakura Mission and Italy), *Kyoyo-Ronso*, No.102 (1996), p.41.
- 45 KUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* (paperback edition, Tokyo,1978), Vol.II, p.173, p.178, pp.200-201, p.216, p.223, p.264, p.288, pp.292-293, p.294, p.318, p.328, p.340, p.341, pp.342-343, p.357, p.359, p.362, p.370.
- 46 Kido Takayoshi, however, was concerned with the education of the child factory workers and praised the factories that secured for the child labourers the opportunities to receive education. See KIDO Takayoshi, *Diary*, 7 October and 25 October 1872. (*The Diary of Kido Takayoshi*, translated by BROWN, S.D. and HIROTA, A., Vol.II, (Tokyo, 1985),p.228,p.240.
- 47 KUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* (paperback edition, Tokyo,1978), Vol.II, pp.384-385.
- 48 KUME Kunitake, *Bei-O Kairan Jikki* (paperback edition, Tokyo,1978), Vol.II, p.40.

## The Iwakura Mission, industries and exports

Olive Checkland

The Iwakura Embassy<sup>1</sup> presented British industrialists with an unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate, over several months in the autumn of 1872, the superiority of British manufactures over all others. It was a chance in a million - which eager entrepreneurs seized with both hands.

The members of the Mission landed at Liverpool on 17 August and left London for Dover and France on 16 December 1872. During their four month stay in Britain they visited innumerable industrial sites (and they were feted - interminably - by civic dignitaries throughout the country). Their visits to France - in January 1873 - and Germany in March 1873 - by comparison - were fleeting. France was, in 1873, recovering from the Franco-German War of 1870-71, during which the Germans had not only captured the French Emperor but also had besieged Paris for several months before its capitulation. Peace had come, for the French, at a high price, for they were required not only to pay a huge indemnity, but also to cede most of Alsace-Lorraine, the main coal and iron manufacturing provinces of France, to the Germans. The Germans, with the defeat of France, had completed their unification programme, having earlier launched a campaign, with the Austrians, against Denmark, from whom they had wrested most of the provinces of Schleswig-Holstein. Fearing that the Austrians would never countenance a unified Germany, they then picked a quarrel, and soundly defeated Austria at the battle of Sadowa.<sup>2</sup> While Germany was poised to become a great industrialist power the Japanese of the Iwakura Mission could hardly judge on German potential. Certainly the Mission was in America from January to August 1872 but the United States of America had recently emerged from a crippling Civil War which had ended in 1864. It is true that as a result of the 'brothers war' there had been much work done into the manufacture of armaments. In particular the small arms industry of the United States was, as will be explained later, second to none. Otherwise industries of the United States, although the potential was huge, were still in an infant state.

In Britain members of the Mission visited cotton mills, dye works, woollen mills, carpet factories as well as many plants connected with the iron and steel industries. They must have been dazzled by the extraordinary range of industrial achievements which they were invited to admire. There were two main consequences of the Mission's visit. British industry strengthened its grip on the Japanese market - and, equally importantly, the Japanese had their determination to industrialise themselves, reinforced.

For the present purpose an attempt will be made to look more closely at the effect on the Mission of visits to industries relating to the iron and steel trades - that is on those elements of Britain's industrial might which produced railways, ships and guns.

In the autumn of 1872 during one of his 'side' trips, Ito Hirubumi, at the University in Glasgow, asked Professor J.M. McQuorn Rankine, 'tell me, Professor Rankine, how do we in Japan set up a factory to make guns?' McQuorn Rankine replied that it would be better for Japan to establish a college to train young men as engineers.<sup>3</sup> The argument in this paper would be that although the Iwakura Mission generally, and the individual members in particular, had many objectives, none were more immediate than those which related to the supply of railway equipment, steamships whether for commercial or naval use, and armaments, whether on ships or as hand weapons.

It should be stressed that the British export trade benefited greatly - for more than forty years - but from the Japanese perspective - this was a half-way house. They would go on - again with British help in Japan - to establish their own heavy industries which would in course of time compete successfully in world markets.<sup>4</sup>

## Railways

In Japan there had been fierce debate about the wisdom of committing themselves to the building of the first railway, the line between Shimbashi and Yokohama. One of the great Meiji leaders, Kido Takayoshi, had been on the side of the modernisers, as he wrote, 'Today we rode the steam train on its trial run. The issue of the steam railroad has stirred heated controversy in the nation since the year before last. In consequence we were on the point of abandoning the project several times. I worked quietly inside the government on behalf of the project, .... Today's run was sufficient demonstration that we are on the road to success'.<sup>5</sup>

The Iwakura Mission's journeys in Britain by rail, throughout the length and breadth of the country, were in effect one long demonstration of the brilliance of British manufacturing and as such were a public relations triumph. They visited steam engine works - Messrs Dübs in Glasgow [10 October] and Sharp Stewart's in Manchester [12 October], engine repair shops at Crewe (London and North Western Railway) [3 October] and the London rail terminals Victoria [1860], Charing Cross [1864], Cannon Street [1866] and St Pancras [1868], which were already in use.<sup>6</sup>

The rail network on which they travelled was, more or less, that with which we are now familiar.<sup>7</sup> As Kido reported 'he train on which we rode was the fastest we have had yet. It is the so-called 'Express' train which runs at 60 miles an hour'<sup>8</sup>. They often had extra, special, coaches attached to a regular train and they were sometimes shunted on to sidings so that they could make industrial visits.

The availability of first class railway engines, rails and other necessities for an efficient railway system in Britain led to a trade boom for those British industries. From say 1870 to the outbreak of the First World War, in 1914, the British were exporting large quantities of railway equipment to Japan.

Over 1000 British built railway steam engines were exported to Japan between 1871-1911.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 1**

### **1871-1911 Steam Locomotives exported to Japan by British Manufacturers**

Avonside Engine	Bristol	4
Bagnall	Stafford	1
Beyer Peacock	Manchester	194
Dübs	Glasgow	170
Kerr Stewart	Stoke on Trent	2
Kitson	Leeds	27
Manning Wardle	Leeds	3
Nasmyth Wilson	Patricroft, Manchester	138
Neilson	Glasgow	97

North British	Glasgow	335
Sharp Stewart	Manchester and Glasgow	24
Stephenson	Newcastle	4
Vulcan Foundry	Newton le Willows (Manchester)	23
Yorkshire Engine	Sheffield	1
<hr/>		
Total		1023

Source: P.J. English, *British Made, Industrial Development and Related Archaeology of Japan*, pp.13-14.

Even at the end of the nineteenth century, after Germany and the United States had become strong competitors, the British secured huge orders. As was reported,

‘In 1899 North British engine makers requested help from Dübs and Sharp Stewart (all in Glasgow) to complete a contract for 168 locomotives - one of the largest single orders ever received - whilst Beyer Peacock, in Manchester, in 1893, were selected to fabricate an additional 72 highly successful tender locomotives, mostly to operate on the Tobu lines.’<sup>10</sup>

Rails, for the engines to run on, were also exported to Japan. This trade only became important years after the Iwakura Mission, when the rate of railway building in Japan began, in the mid 1880s, to accelerate.

**Table 2**

**Rails exported from Britain to Japan**

	<hr/>
1886	7,305 tons
1887	21,106 tons
1888	105,313 tons
1913	162,014 tons
	<hr/>

Source: Extracted from P.J. English, *British Made*, (1982), p.15.

English gives annual figures of “Finished steel, including rails” for 1913-1935 and 1937-1978.

This trade continued for many years; in 1929 - 146,769 tons of ‘finished steel’ were sent to Japan. In the 1930s, at last, the Japanese achieved their final objective, manufacturing their engines and their steel rails, themselves, at home in Japan. During the years of Britain’s supremacy in the Japanese market, Barrow Haematite Iron and Steel Company, was the supreme rail maker. The rails were stamped ‘Barrow’ and the Japanese, and everyone else, knew that these rails were of the highest quality. The other manufacturer, also highly regarded, was Charles Cammell and Company Limited who made steel rails, armaments and heavy castings at Sheffield, Grimethorpe and Peniston.<sup>11</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century manufacturers from the United States (Union, Carnegie and Tennessee Steelworks) and Germany (Thyssen, Krupp and Braunschweig) were struggling to replace the British. It was also the case that the great age of steam

would eventually pass, and new electric technology would give Britain's competitors greater opportunities in Japan.

As has been noted, the Emperor Meiji's private rail coach was a paean to British achievement. It was 'a custom designed walnut panelled, Birmingham built coach, furnished with Lancashire cotton cushions, adorned with the finest Nottinghamshire lace. It was smoothly spring-supported on Fox and Company (Leeds) bogies, and ran on Barrow and Sheffield rolled rails, hauled by a Manchester built steam engine. All the switching and signalling equipment was British.'<sup>12</sup>

In Japan, British railway engineers were working devotedly not only to build Japanese railways but also to run them efficiently. James Forest, the Secretary of the Institution of Civil Engineers, in London received several detailed accounts, in English, of progress in Japan. Benjamin Frederick Wright, wrote, from the Superintendent's Office of the Locomotive, Carriage and Wagon Department, Kobe, to report that

'In 1881 there were 9 Britons employed at Kobe (no other foreigners). All the engine drivers were Japanese, although two British instructors were employed to supervise'.

Several of the papers written about Japanese railways in Japan were read to the Society, in London, (by the authors' friends) and subsequently published in the *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers*.<sup>13</sup>

Notwithstanding the considerable contribution made by the British, and in Hokkaido, by the Americans, the Japanese aim was always to become self-sufficient. Japan was fortunate in that Inoue Masaru,<sup>14</sup> one of the original Choshu five, known as the 'father of Japanese railways', devoted his professional life to establishing an efficient Japanese railway system. Inoue's aim was, from the beginning, to make Japan's rail system, truly Japanese, and independent of the foreigners.

## **Electric Traction**

Notwithstanding the remarkable export achievements of British steam railway engineering in dominating the Japanese market in the years after the Iwakura Mission's visit, other developments would in course of time bring good business to Britain's competitors. In 1895 Kyoto Electric Railway<sup>15</sup> carried its first passengers, from Kitano Shrine to the railway station, through the streets of the ancient city thus inaugurating a new era. It was an inevitable progression. Despite the vigorous exploitation of coal resources such as those at Takashima and Miike Collieries (both located at Kyushu) Japan was always short of coal. If cheap hydro-electric power could be developed, utilising the rapid flowing rivers of mountainous Japan, then electric engines would not only be cheaper but also cleaner. Both Germany and the United States were advanced in electric engineering technology and both were eager to have a share of the lucrative Japanese market.

The new century, after 1900, brought contracts for A & G Maschinenfabrik, Esslingen (Stuttgart, Germany) to design and build 12 electric traction locomotives for service in Japan and for Curtiss G.E. (USA) to prepare a purpose built electric power plant in Japan to supply the electric energy. The Japanese themselves were to manufacture the boiler and cooling plant for themselves. Some auxiliary motors for this project were made and supplied by English Electric.

After the First World War the decision was taken to electrify all Japanese railways.

Armoured Ships of the Imperial Japanese Navy (before the Russo-Japanese War 1904-5)

During their visit to Glasgow they stayed at Erskine House, the seat of Lord Blantyre, and there - within yards of the Clyde - the members of the Embassy watched in amazement "as several dozen steamships sailed up and down the river daily".<sup>16</sup> There is no doubt that during the visit of the Iwakura Mission to Glasgow and the Clyde and Newcastle upon Tyne the red carpet was laid out. In Newcastle, as was reported,

Tuesday, 22 October 1872,

'Sir William Armstrong called at the Station Hotel shortly before 10 o'clock in order to accompany the party to the Elswick Engine and Ordnance Works. The carriage of the mayor had been placed at Iwakura's disposal and the carriages of Sir William Armstrong and Captain Noble were also used. Joined at the works by Captain Noble and Mr Rendell. Shown through the erecting and fitting departments, the bridge shop and the turning and boring shops. Inspected numerous guns in various conditions. Watched the forging of a breech piece for a 9" cannon. Saw a Gatling gun demonstrated. After 'a cursory glance' at the moulding shops and blast furnaces, lunch was taken'.<sup>17</sup>

The Scotsman, Richard Henry Brunton (1841-1901) then lighthouse engineer to the Japanese government, was also of the party. He commented that

'The Embassy ... came on to Newcastle where they had the opportunity of inspecting the works of Sir William Armstrong from which they have since obtained so many vessels and munitions of war. The hydraulic machinery and appliances with which the whole establishment was fitted were explained to them by Sir William Armstrong himself. One of the first Gatling guns ever made, which had ten bands and which fired 250 shots per minute, was shown at work'.<sup>18</sup>

William George Armstrong had come to public prominence in the Crimean War (1854-56) when the government found that his guns, and those of Joseph Whitworth in Manchester, were of superior manufacture. The Elswick Ordnance Works were founded on the Tyne, west of Newcastle upon Tyne. Both Armstrong and Andrew Noble (his co-partner) were involved as scientists and engineers in a business which they ran with skill and dedication.

At the time of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) the Japanese had nine battleships, nine armoured cruisers and seventeen protected cruisers - making a total of 35 vessels. Armstrong's had built three of the nine battleships, four of the nine armoured cruisers, and four of the seventeen protected cruisers. In addition to building these vessels Armstrong also armoured other battleships and cruisers which were built at other British yards.

It should also be noted that other British shipyards involved in building ships for the Japanese included John Brown of Clydebank on the Clyde, the Thames Iron Works in London, and Vickers and Sons of Barrow in Furness. R.H. Brunton also reported that the members of the Mission 'visited some of the large shipbuilding works on the Clyde'.

**Table 3**  
**The Imperial Japanese Navy: Battleships (at 1905)**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Ship Builder</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Waterway</u>
<i>Chin-Yen</i> (originally Chinese)	(1882)	Vulcan Works	Stettin	Oder
<i>Yashima</i>	(1896)	Armstrong Mitchell & Co	Elswick	Tyne
<i>Fuji</i>	(1896)	Thames Iron Works	Blackwall	Thames
<i>Shikishima</i>	(1898)	Thames Iron Works	Blackwall	Thames
<i>Asahi</i>	(1899)	John Brown & Co	Clydebank	Clyde
<i>Hatsuse</i>	(1899)	Armstrong Mitchell & Co	Elswick	Tyne
<i>Mikasa</i>	(1900)	Vickers & Sons	Barrow in	Furness
<i>Katori</i>	(1904-06)	Armstrong Whitworth	Elswick	Tyne
<i>Kashima</i>	(1905)	Vickers & Sons	Barrow in	Furness

Note: The Chinese battleship *Chin-Yen* surrendered on 12 February 1895 at Wei-Hai-Wei, subsequently she was taken into the Imperial Japanese Navy as *Chin'en*.

Source: Information extracted from H. Jentschura, D. Jung, P. Michel, *Warships of the Imperial Japanese Navy 1869-1945*, (translated from the German by A. Preston and J.D. Brown), London 1977.

**Table 4**  
**The Imperial Japanese Navy: Armoured Cruisers**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Ship Builder</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Waterway</u>
<i>Chiyoda</i>	1888-90	John Brown & Co	Clydebank	Clyde
<i>Asama</i>	1896-99	Armstrong Whitworth	Elswick	Tyne
<i>Tokiwa</i>	1898	Armstrong Whitworth	Elswick	Tyne
<i>Azuma</i>	1898-99	Société des Chantiers de la Loire	St. Nazaire	
<i>Idzumo</i>	1898-1901	Armstrong Whitworth	Elswick	Tyne
<i>Iwate</i>	1899-1901	Armstrong Whitworth	Elswick	Tyne
<i>Nisshin</i> (originally Italian)	1902-04	G. Ansaldo & Co,	Sestri Ponente	Genoa
<i>Kasuga</i> (originally Italian)	1902-04	G. Ansaldo & Co	Sestri Ponente	Genoa

Note: The *Nisshin* and *Kasuga* were built by the Italians as *Roca* and *Mitra* then sold on to Argentina, before being bought by the Japanese in 1903-4.

Source: Information extracted from H. Jentschura, D. Jung, P. Michel, *Warships of the Imperial Japanese Navy 1869-1945*, (translated from the German by A. Preston and J.D. Brown), London 1977.

**Table 5**  
**The Imperial Japanese Navy: Protected Cruisers (at 1905)**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Ship Builder</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Waterway</u>
<i>Idzumi</i>	1881-84	Armstrong Mitchell & Co.	Elswick	Tyne
<i>Naniwa</i>	1884-86	Armstrong Mitchell & Co	Elswick	Tyne
<i>Takachiho</i>	1884-86	Low Walker	Elswick	Tyne
<i>Itsukushima</i>	1888-91	Société de Forges et Chantier	France	(Emile Bertin)
<i>Matsushima</i>	1888-91	La Seyne	France	(Emile Bertin)
<i>Hashidate</i>	1888-94	Yokosuka Dockyard	Japan	
<i>Akitsushima</i>	1890-94	Yokosuka Dockyard	Japan	
<i>Yoshino</i>	1892-93	Armstrong Mitchell & Co	Elswick	Tyne
<i>Suma</i>	1892-94	Yokosuka Dockyard	Japan	
<i>Akashi</i>	1894-99	Yokosuka Dockyard	Japan	
<i>Chitose</i>	1896-98	Union Iron Works	San Francisco	
<i>Kasagi</i>	1896-98	William Cramp & Co	Philadelphia	
<i>Takasago</i>	1896-98	Armstrong Mitchell	Elswick	Tyne
<i>Tsushima</i>	1901-04	Kure Dockyard	Japan	
<i>Niitaka</i>	1902-04	Yokosuka Dockyard	Japan	
<i>Otawa</i>	1903-04	Yokosuka Dockyard	Japan	

Source: Information extracted from H. Jentschura, D. Jung, P. Michel, *Warships of the Imperial Japanese Navy 1869-1945*, (translated from the German by A. Preston and J.D. Brown), London 1977.

It should be noted that British shipyards built all the Japanese battleships (with the exception of one which had been originally Chinese and was built in Stettin) and all the armoured cruisers (with the exception of two built in Italy and bought in ready-made).

The Japanese themselves started using their hard earned skills as builders of naval vessels, with protected cruisers which were of a lesser tonnage than battleships or armoured cruisers. Those Japanese naval architects and naval engineers, who had not only studied abroad but also worked in British dockyards, were the pioneers, bringing this advanced technology to Japan. By the late 1880s the Yokosuka Dockyard was equipped to handle this work, although the first vessel built, the *Hashidate* (1888-94) took over six years to complete. The *Akitsushima*, *Suma* and *Akashi* were built at Yokosuka before 1900, while the *Niitaka* and the *Otawa* were completed by 1904. Of the eighteen protected cruisers which Japan had by 1904, one third had been built at Yokosuka. The Kure Dockyard was also being geared for this task, the *Tsushima* being completed there in 1904. Much of the material for these vessels was imported - from Britain.

Not only were the Japanese, by 1900, building their own Protected Cruisers themselves, but they were ordering them from shipyards which were not British. Emile Bertin, a French ship designer who had worked at Yokosuka years before (pre-1868) was responsible for designing and supervising the building of the *Itsukushima* and the *Matsushima* both completed in France in 1891. And in 1898 two shipyards of the United States, the Union Iron Works of San Francisco and William Cramp and Co. of Philadelphia completed the *Chitose* and the *Kasagi* respectively.

The extraordinary build-up of the Imperial Japanese Navy, involving Japan in heavy investment which strained her financial resources, developed because of a number of



priorities. The Japanese were eager to emulate the Royal Navy and use the Imperial Japanese Navy to demonstrate Japanese power in East Asia. The Royal Navy, especially after the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, did not discourage the development of Japanese naval power. In some senses it was useful to have Japanese ships operating in the China Seas. Prior to the Russo-Japanese War therefore the Japanese deliberately invested heavily in naval vessels. The British rather encouraged this, and the British shipbuilding industry flourished and profited from this development.

### **Small Arms**

In one field, that of small arms manufacture, it was the British who were not able to compete. The American Civil War (1861-64) had forced the Americans, on both sides of the divide, to improve on the performance of hand held guns. The Iwakura Mission had visited the Springfield gun works, 20 June 1872.<sup>19</sup> The Springfield rifle had, perhaps, won the Civil War for the North. In Britain the Mission did visit the 'small arms factory', in Birmingham, this would be the Birmingham Small Arms works (BSA).<sup>20</sup>

It should be noted that Richard Brunton had referred to the Gatling gun 'which had ten bands and which fired 250 shots per minute' during the visit of the Mission to Armstrong's works on the Tyne. But Richard Jordan Gatling (1818-1903) was from North Carolina and his gun, which had been too late to affect the outcome of the American Civil War, was being manufactured under license on Tyneside from 1870.

The great innovator of the arms trade was Hiram Maxim (1840-1916) an American from Maine. Maxim's gun harnessed the recoil of the weapon 'to insert a fresh cartridge into the barrel and to detonate this cartridge in turn.'<sup>21</sup> This was the machine gun which forced a revolution in arms. Maxim, himself, had approached Vickers and his company was bought by Messrs Vickers (in Barrow-in-Furness) in 1897. Hiram Maxim became a British citizen and was knighted in 1901.

### **Mission Accomplished?**

It is hoped that it has been shown here that, whatever their other pre-occupations, members of the Iwakura Embassy had seen at close quarters British industrial might and that this effected them profoundly. It can also be argued that in some senses Britain was seen as a role model for Japan, determined to develop her own engineering industries. Henry Dyer, back in Glasgow, in the early 1880s, after his important decade of service in Tokyo, like others, referred to Japan as 'the Britain of the East'.<sup>22</sup>

In a broader sense it has been argued, convincingly, that, industrially, these years from the late 1870s until the First World War were, for Britain, the end of pre-eminence. In these years the Germans and the Americans were competing successfully with the British.

Did the continuing demand from Japan for railways, ships and guns, which may have been related to the favourable impression of British manufacture which the members of the Iwakura Mission received in 1872, slow down the decline of British manufacture? Certainly the Thames Iron Works (at Blackwall) which closed in 1912, and which had built the *Fuji* and the *Shikishima* for the Japanese in the 1890s, was driven out of business by high wages, rent and rates, as well as by congestion on the river Thames.<sup>23</sup>

Care should be taken not to over-emphasise the British decline. There was plenty of initiative left. At the University of Glasgow Professors Barr and Stroud<sup>24</sup> had won an

Admiralty competition to make range-finders for Royal Navy vessels. The warships of the Imperial Japanese Navy were fitted with these before the Russo-Japanese War. This new technology helped the Japanese to win the battle of Tsushima in May 1905, which brought the war, for the Japanese, to a successful conclusion.

The memorial to the Russo-Japanese War, which stands behind the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, is enlivened by a series of *bas-reliefs*. These show scenes from the naval operation. Prominent are the Japanese battleships armed with the range-finders which enabled the great guns to find their targets, in this case the Russian battleships.

On 13 July 1911, Admiral Togo, the victor of Tsushima, visited Glasgow to thank the workers of Barr and Stroud, he told them 'You won the battle of Tsushima for me'. The members of the Iwakura Mission, more than thirty years earlier, would have understood, and approved, his sentiments

### Endnotes

- 1 With thanks to D.W. Anthony and G.H. Healey for the copy of *The Itinerary of the Iwakura Embassy in Britain*, University of Sheffield, November 1996.
- 2 See A. Ramm, *Germany, A Political History*, (1967).
- 3 The Imperial College of Engineering independent (from 1873-1886) under the Ministry of Public Works in Tokyo became the Faculty of Engineering of the Imperial University of Tokyo, see O. Checkland, *Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan*, (1989), also available in Japanese from Hosei University Press, Tokyo, (1996).
- 4 Since a first visit to the Mitsubishi Shipyards in Nagasaki in 1981 a fine museum has been set up in one of the old brick-built engine houses on the site. And there, in 1997, in pride of place, is the first Parsons turbine which the Japanese made *themselves* under license from Parsons on the Tyne, see O. Checkland, *Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan*, (1989), also available in Japanese from Hosei University Press, Tokyo, (1996).
- 5 See S.D. Brown and A. Hirota, *The Diary of Kido Takayoshi*, Vol.II, (Tokyo, 1985), 20 September 1871, hereafter Kido's *Diary*. It is intriguing that the Vice War Minister, Maebara Issei, was a vocal opponent of the railways. In fact the Japanese military were not to realise the full benefit of the railway network until the Sino-Japanese War (1894-5).  
<sup>6)</sup> See J.R. Kellett, *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities*, (1969).
- 7 With thanks to Tom Hart, Department of Economic and Social History, University of Glasgow.
- 8 See Kido's *Diary*, 9 November 1872. On Friday, 4 October their coaches were

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shunted on to the sidings of the London and Manchester Plate Glass Company's works at St. Helens in Lancashire, (Anthony and Healey, 27).

9 Peter J. English, *British Made, Industrial Development and Related Archaeology of Japan, Rail Transportation*, (Aalste Waalre, Netherlands, 1982).

10 P.J. English, *British Made ...*, (1982), p.14.

11 These rails, (replaced because of different demands of high-speed electric trains), (if you are observant) can sometimes be seen supporting some wooden station roofs, usually between Tokyo and Osaka.

12 P.J. English, *British Made ...*, (1982), p.16.

13 See *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers*, Vol. LVI, Session 1878-79 and Vol. LXVII, 1880?

14 See Y. Yamamoto, "Inoue Masaru - 'father' of Japanese Railways" in *Britain and Japan. Biographical Portraits*, Volume II (edited by Ian Nish), (1997).

15 See P.J. English, *British Made ...*, (1982), pp.18-33.

16 See *Kido Diary*, 10 October 1872.

17 D.W. Anthony and G.H. Healey, *The Itinerary of the Iwakura Mission*, p.33

18 R.H. Brunton, *Building Japan, 1868-1876*, (1991), p.120.

19 With thanks to Akiko Ohta.

20 D.W. Anthony and G.H. Healey, *The Itinerary of the Iwakura Mission*, p.40.

21 J.D. Scott, *Vickers. A History*, (1962), p.38. See also R.C. Trebilcock, *The Vickers Brothers: Armaments and Enterprise 1854-1914*, (1977).

22 H. Dyer, *Dai Nippon, the Britain of the East, A Study in National Evolution*, (1905).

23 S. Pollard and P. Robertson, *The British Shipbuilding Industry 1870-1914*, (1979), p.64. It should be noted that Messrs Yarrows (1908) and Thornycroft moved from the Thames and relocated themselves successfully in Scotstoun (Clyde) and Southampton respectively.

24 M.S. Moss and I. Russell, *Range and Vision. The First Hundred Years of Barr and Stroud*, (1988).

## **Public statements and private thoughts: the Iwakura Embassy in London and the religious question**

John Breen

### **Introduction**

We are gathered here in the LSE to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the four month stay in Britain of Iwakura Tomomi and his embassy. I would like to begin rather perversely by recalling a second 125th anniversary that occurs this year: namely, the arrival in Britain of the first ever Buddhist embassy from Japan. A party of six Honganji priests left Yokohama in March 1872, travelled by a rather different route to Europe and, having spent some four months in France, converged with Iwakura in London in August. The convergence in London of the two embassies has some significance, it now seems to me, for the question that I address today of the linkage between the Iwakura embassy's experiences in London and changes in the religious policies of the government back in Japan.

I approached this subject with several working assumptions. I assumed

1) that Christianity was of immense importance to both embassy and foreign governments in the US and Europe; a reasonable enough assumption given that Christianity - in the form of the government's banishment of native Christians - was the most weighty diplomatic challenge facing the Meiji government between 1868 and 1871;

2) that Britain - London particularly - occupied a special place in any negotiations / confrontations that took place on the religious question. After all, back in Japan, the British minister, Sir Harry Parkes, had played the leading role in diplomatic protests about the new government's Christian persecution.

3) that the stance adopted by Britain helps explain changes that surfaced in the policy of the Japanese government on Christianity in early 1873, shortly after the embassy had left England for France. How else might there have been such dramatic change as the removal of the anti-Christian notice boards, that stood all over Japan declaring the Christian proscription to be 'a law for all ages'; how else might the government have been induced to release from exile the Nagasaki Christians?

As can sometimes happen with working assumptions, my three proved rather less workable than I had hoped.

### **Public statements**

Christianity surfaced for the first time at a meeting in November in London between Iwakura Tomomi and British government representatives. Lord Granville, the British Foreign Secretary, appears to have called the meeting to inform Iwakura that Queen Victoria would receive him at Windsor Castle on 5 December.<sup>1</sup> Granville kicked off, though, by asking Iwakura what his views were on the way to proceed with treaty revision. Iwakura replied he was charged only to inquire into British views on the subject. What were Granville's views? Granville too declined to answer the question put to him and chose, instead, to 'raise one or two points'. Christianity was the first of these. In Granville's view: '[Nothing would] conduce more to create a favourable feeling towards Japan than the

adoption of a more liberal policy on this subject.' Iwakura replied he would state his opinions on Christian policy on a future occasion, and the subject was promptly dropped.

That future occasion was five days thence on 27 November, once more at the Foreign Office. Iwakura insisted again he was authorised only to seek British opinions. Granville, having proposed 'greater facilities for European ships in Japanese ports', among other things, once more commended 'toleration in religious matters'.<sup>2</sup> The gist of Iwakura's riposte was this: that it was the 'earnest desire of [his] government to favour, by all possible means, the attainment of this objective'.<sup>3</sup> There were difficulties in view of historical circumstances, but greater leniency was presently guiding the actions of his government: suspected believers were no longer forced to trample sacred images nor to recant under pain of death. Iwakura concluded by assuring Granville that his government 'endeavoured to close its eyes to the profession of Christianity except when political motives rendered it necessary to act'.<sup>4</sup>

The official memorandum of the meeting has Granville 'thanking Iwakura for these assurances'; Granville himself seems later to have thought better of this, crossing it through and replacing it with a 'Lord Granville took note of Iwakura's assurances'. It seems safe to assume, however, that Granville was, indeed, grateful,<sup>5</sup> he was probably taken aback, too, and with good reason. Just a few days before, Parkes had sent him a memorandum which concluded with a pessimistic note about Christianity. The Japanese had clearly made up their minds, he wrote, 'not to afford any protection to native Christians'.<sup>6</sup> Precisely what provoked these thoughts of Parkes is unclear; yet, here was Iwakura assuring Granville, in Parkes' presence, that toleration was 'the earnest desire' of his government; that his government endeavoured henceforth to 'close its eyes' to Christian practice.

The whole tone of this short exchange on Christianity was quite different to that back in America, the embassy's previous port of call. In mid March in the White House, Iwakura, the ambassador and Kido Takayoshi, one of his four vice-ambassadors, had both argued heatedly with Secretary of State Hamilton Fish over the latter's insistence that any new treaty contain an article specifying religious tolerance. Iwakura declared all discussion of the subject to be 'intolerable'.<sup>7</sup> When talks resumed two days on, Kido demanded Fish justify his insistence, which Fish did. He spoke of the Japanese government's banishment of the 3,000 or so Nagasaki Christians, and of recent reports of renewed persecutions elsewhere. Kido responded angrily that these incidents were no business of the Americans, but Fish insisted that only when cruel persecution ended could the Japanese expect equality of status.<sup>8</sup> Kido replied the Japanese were not cruel towards Christians, but was lost for words when asked whether banishing Christians was not in fact cruel.<sup>9</sup>

This earlier Washington experience obviously had a profound effect on some members of the embassy. Vice-ambassador Itō Hirobumi, for example, left Washington a couple days later and headed back to Japan.<sup>10</sup> On arriving in Tokyo on 1 May, he went straight to the Seiin to demand the anti-Christian notice boards be removed immediately: '[Foreigners will always] regard us as a barbaric nation [as long as they stand] and.... will refuse equal relations with us'.<sup>11</sup> My suspicion is that Ito Hirobumi was acting independently here, petitioning the Seiin without authority from Iwakura. This would certainly not be out of character. The effect of the Washington talks on other members of the embassy is difficult to tell, but it is certainly tempting to see the more conciliatory tone of Iwakura in London as evidence of an American lesson well-learned.

Intriguing, too, is the attitude of the British government in its negotiations. Parkes, so easily stirred to anger by the Christian issue as British minister in Japan, abstained from all obvious provocation in formal discussions in London; and Granville, for his part, merely commended to Iwakura the advisability of 'a more liberal policy' and then dropped the subject: he neither demanded the removal of the anti-Christian notice boards nor the release from exile of the Nagasaki Christians. The British stance is to be explained partly, of course, as a response to a new situation: the Iwakura embassy, long before reaching London, had abandoned all hopes of negotiating treaty revision, so disputation about the inclusion of one article or another was redundant. But the much broader context of Anglo-American relations probably had a part to play, too. As Gordon Daniels has pointed out, the British were increasingly anxious over the expansion of American influence in Tokyo, and Granville was perhaps tempting the Japanese with a more accommodating position on the otherwise explosive issue of Christianity, as well as the 'technical assistance and advice' that Daniels cites in this context.<sup>12</sup>

The Japanese in London were, for their part, no doubt greatly surprised and no less relieved that religion was not to be divisive. Iwakura's statements were less than concrete, perhaps, but were nonetheless striking. The obvious question here is this: Was this mere posturing on Iwakura's part, or had his approach to Christian policy - and perhaps to Christianity itself - undergone a genuine transformation? It would certainly seem that the latter was the case. A week or so later, Iwakura was apparently happy to receive the Archbishop of Canterbury, who congratulated him on the progress being made 'in the cause of religious liberty in Japan'.<sup>13</sup> A week on, Iwakura received Lord Ebury and other representatives of the Evangelical Alliance, and reassured them that his government's desire was to foster a spirit of greater religious, as well as civil liberty'.<sup>14</sup> A week after this, Iwakura and his embassy crossed to France from where Itō Hirobumi petitioned Tokyo for a second time for the immediate removal of the anti-Christian notice boards. On this occasion Ito represented the views of Iwakura and the entire embassy; or rather, it would seem so because within a matter of weeks, that is, on 21 February 1873, the caretaker government issued an order for the removal of the anti-Christian notice boards.<sup>15</sup> The order appeared to mark the end of an era of nearly three centuries duration, in which the ban on Christian practice had been proclaimed the length and breadth of Japan; and it was followed a month later by the release from exile of all the Nagasaki Christians. Here was genuine change.

All seems pleasingly straight forward: the Iwakura embassy, shocked by the ferocity of the American stance on religion, wisely adopted a more conciliatory, realistic position in Britain; perhaps, too, it was impressed by the goodwill of the British government, by religious tolerance as observed in Britain. Anyway, on crossing to France, and having reflected there on the American and British experiences, the embassy determined to take to their logical conclusion the public statements made by Iwakura in London: the caretaker government would be instructed to withdraw the anti-Christian notice boards,<sup>16</sup> and this would be no cosmetic gesture: Christianity would be tolerated, in both its Catholic and Protestant forms; particularly noteworthy since, as Iwakura and Kido well knew, the Catholic church was just now being suppressed in Prussia.<sup>17</sup>

Full acceptance of this straightforward assessment must depend, of course, on a much clearer idea than we have so far gained of what Iwakura and other members of the embassy were actually thinking; their private thoughts, as well as their public statements, must merit the most careful consideration, in other words. A fuller exploration is also required of what actually happened in Japan after the spring of 1873. Was there really the change that Iwakura was promising, or was there not?

## Private thoughts

Vice-ambassador Kido Takayoshi of Chōshū was one of the most outstanding and influential leaders of the new Meiji government. The British chargé, Francis Adams, described him as 'one of the most zealous members of the party of progress in Japan'.<sup>18</sup> Among the forms his zeal took was the sponsoring of fellow Chōshū men on trips to Europe. Kido sponsored a trip to Europe by Aoki Shūzō in autumn 1868: Aoki headed for Berlin to study medicine, only to take up a post as 1st secretary at the Japanese consulate in Berlin. Aoki was in London to greet Kido when he arrived with Iwakura in August, 1872.

Shimaji Mokurai, a Honganji priest, was another who travelled to Europe at Kido's urging. A leading member of that Buddhist embassy I referred to earlier, Shimaji had arrived in France in April 1872, spent several months touring, exchanging notes with fellow Japanese, thinking and writing. Shimaji, too, was in London to welcome Kido in August.<sup>19</sup> Aoki Shūzō and Shimaji Mokurai come to assume considerable importance in the present context. Both men discussed religious matters with Kido Takayoshi, and with each other, in London on a good many occasions from mid August through to early September. The substance of Aoki's discussions with Kido are the more accessible since Aoki discloses them himself in fascinating detail in his autobiography.<sup>20</sup> He recalls a particular discussion in London sometime in late August of 1872 at which all the Chūzō men resident in London were present.

As Aoki tells it, Kido asked him why Westerners were so passionate about religion. Kido himself knew only Buddhism and little more than that it encouraged good and chastised bad. Aoki explained that it was to do with the fact that Christianity was the source of European civilisation and enlightenment. When asked by Kido whether all Japanese should, therefore, convert to Christianity, Aoki replied, 'No, not necessarily. But it remains that all people need a religion to believe in. How can you, otherwise, be disciplined; how can you keep your house in order; how might [government] otherwise keep its people in order?'<sup>21</sup>

Kido then told Aoki about the Christian problem he had encountered in Washington, and said men of influence there had warned him that, if Japan wished parity of status with America, all Japanese should convert to Christianity. 'Some members of our party', said Kido pointedly, 'have been arguing we should petition the emperor himself so that he and all the government convert to Christianity; their idea is that all the people would then follow suit, to the immense benefit of our diplomatic relations with the great powers.'<sup>22</sup> Aoki responded with a long exposition of the folly of any government anywhere seeking forcibly to replace a people's religion with another. The European experience of the Reformation demonstrated such a course to be madness. 'Were Japan to embark now on a strategic conversion of all Japanese to Christianity, there would be civil war', was his considered opinion.<sup>23</sup> At this point Kido paused thoughtfully, before turning on Itō Hirobumi:

'It shocks me to think that you .... should lend an ear so readily to American missionaries and empty-headed American politicians, and come up with a plan that threatens to throw our entire nation into civil chaos. What Aoki has just been saying and what you have persisted in saying are diametrically opposed!'<sup>24</sup>

At this point, the gathering broke up. It was obviously hurt and Aoki went to reassure him that he, Aoki, had not meant him harm.

Aoki seems to have persuaded Kido of the potentially disastrous consequences of Itō's radical position to have all Japanese convert to Christianity and yet, at the same time, of the immense political and social value to a modern state of religion; and, though Aoki did explain that modern constitutions typically provided for religious freedom, he made no suggestion here that Japan should follow suit.

These arguments of Aoki's were by no means discordant with the major ideas of the Buddhist priest, Shimaji Mokurai. It is reasonable to assume that Shimaji discussed these thoroughly with Kido in London. He met Kido on seven or eight occasions before he left for Berlin on 4 September. We know also he discussed his report, *Ōshū seikyō kenbun* (Observations on religion and politics in Western society) with Kido before presenting it to Iwakura some time in August. The document may serve as a neat summary of Shimaji's thinking at this time. Three themes recurred: a) that a modern state is sustained by religion - although politics and religion must occupy distinct realms, playing mutually supportive roles; b) that the religion needed by the modern Japanese state is none other than Shimaji's own Honganji Buddhism; and c) that Christianity, in both its Catholic and Protestant forms, was extremely dangerous and should be banned.<sup>25</sup>

Kido was clearly impressed by all the advice he received; during the discussion with Aoki, in fact, he praised the European-resident Japanese scholars, Aoki and Shimaji, for the wisdom of their advice, and compared it most favourably with that given him by Japanese resident in America.<sup>26</sup> It was around this time, early September 1872, that Kido commissioned Aoki Shūzō to draft a constitution for Japan, and the impact of his discussions on religion with Aoki, but especially with Shimaji, can be seen therein.<sup>27</sup> The draft, with amendments by Kido, was completed by the end of 1872. Its Article 12 banned the practice in Japan of Christianity and all other creeds, while Article 13 established Buddhism as Japan's state creed.<sup>28</sup> The timing of Kido's amendments is intriguing; for, it was just around this period, late November to early December 1872, that Iwakura was assuring Lord Granville, Sir Harry Parkes, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Ebury of his country's earnest desire for religious liberty.

Two additional points need to be made here: firstly, and briefly, Kido and others in the embassy were deeply impressed by the news which Aoki and Shimaji brought with them to London of contemporary events in Prussia. Bismarck's infamous Kulturkampf, his struggle with the Catholic church, had begun that very year; Jesuit priests were even now being expelled from Prussia. As Kido noted in a letter home in September, the Jesuits expelled from Prussia belonged to the very same branch of Christianity as the missionaries presently active in Nagasaki.<sup>29</sup> If further justification was needed for Article 12 of the draft constitution, this was surely it. The second point, which relates to Article 13, and the setting up of Buddhism as Japan's state creed, is that Kido supported Shimaji, or rather egged him on, in his campaign against new and disturbing developments in the religious policies of the caretaker government.<sup>30</sup> These policies that roused Kido and Shimaji were defined by nothing so much as their ever-increasing anti-Buddhism. Religious policy in the caretaker government was overseen by a ministry called the Kyōbushō. Kido and Shimaji had, in fact, both played a part in its creation before they left Japan on their overseas travels. However, news began to filter through to Shimaji in France and to Iwakura in London that all was not well with the Kyōbushō. Its originally pro-Buddhist position had been attacked in the press by several luminaries and, partly as a result, the ministry was coming increasingly under the sway of some very anti-Buddhist, pro-Shintō bureaucrats from Satsuma.<sup>31</sup> Over in Paris, earlier in the summer, Shimaji had prepared a critique of Kyōbushō policies, which he apparently discussed with Kido in London. Anyway, after Shimaji left for the continent in September, Kido stayed in touch with him, and resumed



close contact once more when the Iwakura embassy moved on to Paris in mid-December. Kido was almost certainly behind a trenchant critique of the Kyōbushō submitted in Shimaji's name to the caretaker government early in the new year of 1873.<sup>32</sup> Its arguments were an extension of those set out earlier in the *Ōshū seikyō kenbun*: religion and government had to work together, but forcing a creed on the people - the creed referred to here was not Christianity, of course, but Shintō - was utter madness; it would end up driving people into Christianity, since Shintō was a laughable creed; that the people might be driven to Christianity at all was quite simply because the people needed a religion; the religion they really needed, though, was Honganji Buddhism.<sup>33</sup> Kido and Shimaji were in total agreement on this last point: 'Kido said to me [wrote Shimaji]: People at home in Japan make such a fuss about enlightenment, enlightenment, and they go around insulting religion. They are so shallow to think we can be enlightened... without religion, without teachings.'<sup>34</sup>

After his return to Japan in July 1873, Kido remained a loyal, indispensable supporter of Shimaji and other Honganji Buddhists, as they moved to dismantle the Kyōbushō, to reassert Buddhists' fortunes, to guarantee their freedom of conscience, the better to ensure Christianity was smothered.<sup>35</sup>

The picture we now have begins to look a good deal more complex; our earlier assessment, based uniquely on public statements, much less persuasive.

Kido Takayoshi had told a British diplomat in Nagasaki five years earlier, in spring 1868, that he would do all in his power to stop the progress of Christianity in Japan; it is not clear that his experience in the US or Britain, for that matter, effected any substantial change in his position at all. Christianity, it was reaffirmed to him in Britain, had been the cause of much strife in the past and was so still in the present day. Conversations with Aoki, but especially with the Buddhist priest Shimaji, fanned Kido's fears: Christianity would wreak havoc with the interior. There is no reason to believe Kido's fears were any less genuine now than they were in 1868. His foreign experience confirmed what he had already probably known: that, without some gesture on the part of the Japanese government in the direction of religious toleration, Japan would remain isolated internationally. The British experience, if it had taught him anything, taught him, no doubt, that it need be little more than a gesture.

Iwakura, known more for his 'conservative turn of mind' than any zeal for progress,<sup>36</sup> is most likely to have shared Kido's views. Iwakura had been outspoken in his opposition to Christianity before he left Japan; and there is no evidence that subsequent experiences effected any more of a transformation in him than in Kido. His public statements alone do not constitute proof that his views regarding Christianity or the desirability of Christian practice in Japan had changed.

This rather negative re-assessment, based on a look behind the public statements, appears to find further support in events back in Japan.

### **'Perfectly understood'**

The anti-Christian notice boards were removed by Dajōkan Order no.68, on 24 February 1873. Order no.68 stated that the public proclamation of the Christian proscription was to be ended since that proscription was 'perfectly understood'.<sup>37</sup> Two days later, foreign diplomats in Tokyo were informed by the Gaimushō (Foreign Ministry) that the anti-Christian notice boards were now being removed.<sup>38</sup> There was, however, no mention

either in Dajōkan Order no.68 or in the brief communique to foreign diplomats that Christianity was now to be tolerated. This caused some confusion. The Gaimushō's need to be clear on the implications of Order no.68 was obviously acute. It was the Foreign Ministry, after all, that would have to field such questions as might be posed by foreign diplomats. As it turned out, there were none, but all the same, on 14 May 1873, Ueno Kagenori, second in command at the Ministry, asked the Seiin for clarification. Is it true that the removal of the notice boards does not signify toleration of Christian practice? If so, what do we do with the Nagasaki Christians who have gone home without recanting? What happens in the future should a Japanese convert to Christianity? The Seiin's reply to Ueno was drafted a couple of days after vice-ambassador Ōkubo Toshimichi returned from Europe, but was not sent to Ueno until 14 June:

[With regard to the first of your questions], the notice boards were removed because their meaning was anyway perfectly understood. [Order no.68] is not, therefore, a notice to the effect that we now close our eyes to [Christian practice]. [With regard to your next point], there will be no further instructions regarding those [Nagasaki] Christians who refused to recant. [With regard to your final point], as and when Japanese converts to Christianity emerge, we shall respond as seems best at the time.<sup>39</sup>

Though hardly brimming with confidence about the future, it is abundantly clear that the government had no intention of sanctioning or signalling, internally or externally, the start of a new era of tolerance. As far as real changes in Christian policy are concerned, then, it looks as if all we can claim for the Iwakura embassy in Britain - or rather in the US, Britain and Europe combined - was some considerable success in pressurising the caretaker government to have the anti-Christian notice-boards, those public insults to Christianity, done away with, a move which was, anyway, cosmetic. It turns out, though, that even this much is questionable. It emerges that ever since the Restoration those concerned with government finances were acutely aware of the prohibitive cost of the notice board system - it proclaimed not only the Christian ban of course - and from 1872, the Ōkurashō Finance Ministry, launched a campaign to have the whole system abolished, quite independently, it would appear, of foreign protests about Christianity.<sup>40</sup> As the legal historian Hattō has recently remarked: 'The 'perfectly understood' argument was nothing other than an expedient; an altogether unconvincing reason for explaining [the new situation]. Foreign protests against the notice boards were, for their part, nothing other than one [among a number of different reasons] for their removal. It is essential not to overstate the importance [of foreign protest].'<sup>41</sup>

I would like, by way of conclusion, to make two comments of a more general nature about the issue of the Iwakura embassy in London and government religious policy.

It is, firstly, important not to ignore what actually happened to Christians in Japan after spring 1873; there were consequences to the removal of the noticeboards. The government could no longer, for example, point to the existence of a law that sanctioned the proscription of Christianity; it could no longer justify anti-Christian action on the grounds that Christianity was forbidden in law. It had at least one major trump card, however: the ban on what the government called 'private' funerals. Buddhist and Shintō funerals were permitted by law; but private funerals - which meant all others - were banned, and they remained banned for many years to come.<sup>42</sup> You may or may not get away with professing Christianity, but you would not get away with giving your dead a Christian burial. Eighteen months on, the government learned for the first time just how tied its hands were. In October 1874, a group of six men from Nagasaki applied to the Nagasaki prefectural office for permission to become Christians, saying they loathed

Shintō, Confucianism and Buddhism.<sup>43</sup> The Nagasaki authorities did not know how to respond and so referred the matter to the Kyōbushō; the Kyōbushō had no idea what to do and sought the advice of Prime Minister Sanjō Sanetomi. Sanjō's failure to reply can perhaps be construed as evidence of the depth of his quandary. When other would-be converts to Christianity subsequently emerged, as they did, their cases too were referred first to their local prefectural governor and then to the Kyōbushō and on to the Seiin, and the advice was only ever: 'The applicants must be spoken to and made to realise their waywardness'.

The second of my concluding points concerns Buddhism, which was of course another anti-Christian trump card concealed in the sleeve of government. Much had been expected by Christian missionaries and converts alike of Iwakura Tomomi's embassy to the US and Europe but, as we have seen, the embassy did very few favours for the practice of Christianity in Japan, and its intention was clearly to do even fewer. The irony is that the embassy served the cause of Japanese Buddhism - or rather Honganji Buddhism - exceedingly well. It was in London that Kido became convinced of the real importance of religion to the modern state and, more specifically, of Buddhism to the modern Japanese state. And after his return to Japan, Kido and Itō, in concert with Shimaji and other Honganji priests, were responsible for a dramatic revival in Buddhist fortunes. They prised apart the Kyōbushō's vice-like grip on Buddhism, abolished the Kyōbushō itself, and rendered Buddhists free: free to engage unhindered in counter-Christian activity. And it is important to emphasise here that, at every stage in the painful process of the dissolution of the Kyōbushō, counter-Christian necessity dominated discussions. The second point I wish to make, in brief, then is that it was not Christianity but Buddhism that benefited directly from the Iwakura embassy's experiences overseas, and it did so primarily because of a new understanding of its counter-Christian capacities.

## Endnotes

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1 FO 46/160, Memorandum of an interview, 22 November 1872.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 *Dai Nihon Gaikō Monjo*, 5, 19, p.32; 59, pp.149-50.

8 'To insult Western religion is to insult Western people'. *Dai Nihon Gaikō Monjo*, 69, pp.149-50.

9 *Dai Nihon Gaikō Monjo*, 5, 70, pp.163-5.

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- 10 There is no suggestion that the departure of Itō Hirobumi – he left vice-ambassador Ōkubo Toshimichi – was directly related to the Christian dispute; the primary purpose of their return was to obtain authority to engage in full negotiations over treaty revision.
- 11 ‘Kaisei yōshi’, in Shunkyūkō tsuishōkai ed., *Ito Hirobumikō den*, vol.1, Tōseisha, 1935, p.654. Itτ and σkubo left Yokohama for the US once more on 22 June.
- 12 ‘...Parkes and Adams... did not intend to concede an American victory without a fight. Consequently, British policies towards Japan followed the well-established course of providing technical assistance and advice.’ (Gordon Daniels, *Sir Harry Parkes: British representative in Japan, 1865-83*, Japan Library, 1996, p.132)
- 13 *The Times*, 10 December 1872.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 11 December 1872.
- 15 Nihon shiseki kyōkai ed., *Ōkuma Shigenobu kankei monjo*, vol.2, pp.3-5.
- 16 See below, p.61.
- 17 On Prussia, see below, p.59.
- 18 FO 46/151, Adams to Granville, 12 January 1872.
- 19 Fukushima Kanryū, ‘Kaigai kyōjō shisatsu: haibutsu jōkyōka no Seiō’, *Ryūoku Shidan*, pp.46-7.
- 20 Aoki Shūzō, ‘Kido Takayoshi fukushi to no shūkyōron’, in *Aoki Shūzō jiden*, Heibonsha, 1970, pp.38-44.
- 21 *Aoki Shūzō jiden*, p.41.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p.41.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p.42.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p.43.
- 25 ‘Ōshū seikyō kenbun’ in Futaba Kenkō et al, eds., *Shimaji Mokurai zenshū*, vol.1, Kyōto, Honganji Shuppanbu, 1978, (hereafter SMZ) pp.198-204.
- 26 *Aoki Shūzō jiden*, p.42. Kido was almost certainly referring to Mori Arinori and Niiijima Jō here.

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- 27 Sakane Yoshihisa, *Meiji gaikō to Aoki Shūzō*, Tōsui Shobō, 1985, pp.45-7. The draft containing Kido's amendments is known as 'Dainihon seiki (genkō)'.
- 28 Ienaga Saburō (ed.), *Meiji zenki no kenpō kōsō*, Fukumura Shuppan, p.51 and Sakane Yoshihisa, *Meiji gaikō*, p.46. This document was updated, again after consultation with Kido, in winter of 1873, and circulated as 'Teigo Dainihonkoku seiten sōan'. It was without the two earlier insertions of Kido, and now provided for religious freedom. (Sakane, *Meiji gaikō*, p.53). Whether Kido had any role in its formulation is unclear.
- 29 *Kido Takayoshi kankei monjo*, vol.4, p.384.
- 30 Fukushima, 'Kaigai kyōjō shisatsu', p.53.
- 31 Sakamoto Koremaru, *Kokka Shinto keisei katei no kenkyū*, Iwanami Shoten, 1994, pp.205-10.
- 32 Fukushima, 'Kaigai kyōjō shisatsu', p.53. Fukushima reports that Shimaji entrusted the document to Yuri Kimimasa, who took it back to Japan with him.
- 33 Fujii Takeshi, 'Shinzoku nitei ron ni okeru Shintōkan no henka: Shimaji Mokurai no seikyōron no motarashita mono', in Inoue Nobutaka and Sakamoto Koremaru, eds., *Nihongata seikyō kankei no tanjō*, Daichi Shobō, 1987, pp.232-5.
- 34 Shimaji Mokurai to Ōzu Tetsunen, 28 January 1873, *SMZ*, vol.5, p.190.
- 35 Sakamoto, *Kokka Shintō*, pp.213-4.
- 36 FO 46/151, Adams to Granville, 12 January 1872.
- 37 *Dajō ruiten*, 2, 1, p.61.
- 38 *Nihon gaikō monjo*, 6, p.242.
- 39 *Nihon gaikō monjo*, 6, p.254.
- 40 Cited in Hattō Hiroshi, 'Meiji shonen no kōsatsu', in Tezuka Toyo kyōju taishoku kinen ronbunshū iinkai, ed., *Tezuka Toyo kyōju taishoku kinen ronbunshū: Meiji hōseishi, seijishi no shomondai*, KeiōTsūshin, 1987, p.79.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p.85.
- 42 Sakamoto, *Kokka Shintō*, p.250. The ban was finally lifted in October 1884.
- 43 Sakamoto, *Kokka Shintō*, p.250.