

Edo on the Move: Parades and Processions in Early Modern Japan
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My primary purpose in giving this presentation is to provide brief comments on each of the papers of this symposium. I will save some of my own observations on the topic for the end, but ask those in attendance keep in mind that I am not an expert on parades or processions of any kind, let alone those of Tokugawa Japan.

Kurushima

Professor Kurushima's paper demonstrates the extent to which the parades and processions of Tokugawa Japan can give historians insight into different aspects of Tokugawa society, especially attitudes toward those involved in the processions themselves. He argues that the presence, in the case of Ryūkyū and Korea, or the absence, in the case of the Dutch, of *chisō* 馳走 or "reception," indicates the ways in which the Edo Bakufu viewed its relationships to foreign cultures. Ron Toby argues that the

decline of the Ming dynasty in 1644 fueled the development of a Japan-centered world order, the fundamental structure for which the Japanese borrowed from the Chinese, namely, the tributary system. At nearly the same time, the custom of *sankin-kōtai* was taking shape, developing from a voluntary display of loyalty to the Shogun to a mandatory one. These parallel developments converged in the practices associated with processions, as those of foreign envoys bolstered this Japan-centered world order and those of the daimyo reinforced the political reality of Tokugawa dominance. This convergence also served to elide, in the minds of those paying close attention, the Edo Bakufu with Japan, so that the processions of foreign envoys were both a display of respect for the Bakufu and also for Japan, while *sankin-kōtai* fostered an image of political and even cultural unity.

Professor Kurushima observes how the Dutch were treated less well than the Koreans and the Ryūkyūans because the Dutch were not viewed as guests of the Edo Bakufu. Although the Ryūkyūans were guests, their participation in the procession to Edo was not exactly by choice, unlike the Koreans. The Dutch were in Japan for purposes of trade, and so they were ineligible for *chisō* despite the fact that they engaged in processions of their

own to Edo. Beginning in 1853, the Americans arrived in Japan also with trade in mind; following the Treaty of Kanagawa, they had permission to trade just like the Dutch, with the exception that they were not required to conduct their business in Nagasaki. What impact, if any, did the so-called “opening of Japan” have on the practice of processions? Tokugawa Iemochi’s procession to Kyoto in 1863 came the year after the requirements for *sankin-kōtai* were relaxed by the Bakufu, so that the imperative to proceed fell on the shogun himself, rather than on the daimyo. One way to view his procession is to juxtapose its image of power and authority against the image of Bakufu weakness that developed in the aftermath of the unequal treaties with the West.

Smits

_____ Professor Smits argues very convincingly for a shift in the Ryūkyūan attitude toward China following Satsuma’s invasion in 1609. Under direction from Satsuma, and also from the Edo Bakufu, Ryūkyū was required to make every effort to maintain its status as a tributary state of the then waning Ming dynasty. Although this trade was not as lucrative as the

Satsuma and Bakufu leaders had hoped, it was still a vital conduit for Chinese trade goods, and it gave the Bakufu access to China in a way that circumvented the need for the Bakufu to become a part of the tributary system. The Ryūkyūans had to be mindful to hide the true nature of their relationship to Satsuma and to the Bakufu, even if these efforts devolved into ritualistic farce. At the same time, cultural Sinification was another way for the Ryūkyūans to maintain close ties with the Chinese by creating “a good impression.” While all of the specific ways that the Ryūkyūans used to do this that Professor Smits mentioned in his talk are all valid, it is important to remember that the Ryūkyūans wanted to make a good impression on the Satsuma officials as well by showing the degree to which they had mastered Japanese cultural and artistic forms, such as Ikebana and the tea ceremony. Professor Smits likens the ceremonies associated with investiture that were undertaken on Okinawa during the visits of Chinese investiture officials as a kind of “parade,” in the sense that the Ryūkyūans wanted, literally, to put on a good show, a fact to which the origins of *kumiudui* attest. In addition to this functional equivalent of a parade, the Ryūkyūan envoys that journeyed to Edo as either *keigashi* or *sha'onshi* were critical to the success of actual processions, and the

impression that they left with the Japanese people was both a lasting and positive one.

Anyone visiting Shuri Castle today cannot avoid the crowds that gather around the famous Shureimon gate. The gate itself dates to the 1530s, and its famous inscription, or *hengaku*, *shurei no kuni*, meaning “the realm that observes ritual,” a phrase attributed to the Ming emperor Wan Li in praise of Ryūkyū, dates to a few decades later during the reign of King Shō Ei (r. 1573-1588). In other words, both the gate and its inscription date to the period prior to the Satsuma invasion. The *hengaku* was displayed on the gate only during the stay of the Chinese investiture officials; once they left, it was taken down. King Shō Shitsu (r. 1648-1668) ordered that the *hengaku* remain on the gate permanently, and thereafter the gate became known as the Shureimon. Prior to the Satsuma invasion, the gate and its *hengaku* were displayed by Ryūkyūan kings as a proud accomplishment, in recognition of their efforts to adopt Chinese cultural institutions, for the consumption of their Chinese guests. After 1609, especially after the *hengaku* was made permanent, it functioned more as a goal both for the consumption of their Chinese guests and also for their Japanese overlords.

Yokoyama

Professor Yokoyama observes how Japanese commoners of the Edo period developed a rather positive image of Ryūkyū via the *keigashi* and *sha'onshi* processions and their graphic representations, especially those that were published. This image of Ryūkyū carried over into the modern period, and it was one of the likely factors behind the Meiji state's annexation of Ryūkyū in 1879. During the Edo period, this positive image of Ryūkyū developed alongside the adoption and use of Ryūkyūan items by the Japanese people in their everyday lives, and the transformation of the *sanshin* into the *shamisen* might be one of the more prominent examples of this. Since the depictions of Ryūkyūan and Korean processions were very nearly the same, did a similarly friendly image of Korea develop during the Edo period? Did the Tokugawa Japanese adopt and use Korean items as they had Ryūkyūan ones? Despite the requirement that the Ryūkyūan envoys had to look as foreign as possible, did the people of Tokugawa Japan still see the Koreans as somehow *more* foreign than the Ryūkyūans?

By drawing on the notions of cultural hierarchy implicit within the Chinese tributary system, the Edo Bakufu was able to project an image of power and authority by receiving foreign envoys, whether it was the Koreans, the Ryūkyūans, or even the Dutch. As Ron Toby has famously argued, foreign relations played a critical role in the Edo Bakufu's efforts to prove its political legitimacy, a task that was especially important during the early decades of the seventeenth century. Whether the Koreans, the Ryūkyūans, or the Dutch were actually impressed by this image, which they had a hand in creating, was less important to the Edo Bakufu than the effect it had on Tokugawa society as a whole. In other words, the processions of foreign envoys functioned ideologically in a way that was accessible and comprehensible to anyone who saw them or even heard of them. Thus, the fact that the Edo Bakufu had to maintain foreign relations, even during an era when it otherwise closed Japan off from the outside world, was, in and of itself, insufficient to produce the desired ideological effect of political legitimation. Processions were the very embodiment of the Edo Bakufu's foreign relations and the best means of conveying that fact to a large swath of the country and to nearly all levels of Tokugawa society.

The popular esteem for Ryūkyū, it would seem, was an unintended consequence of this ideological performance. Were the leaders of the Edo Bakufu at all concerned with the growing fondness among the Tokugawa Japanese for Ryūkyūan culture? Did these attitudes somehow facilitate the larger ideological message inherent in the processions themselves?

Seifman

Mr. Seifman cautions us against reading too much into the analysis of graphic representations of Ryūkyūan processions. Analysis of these representations can yield a great deal of information, and Mr. Seifman masterfully demonstrated this in his presentation, but we should be aware of the limitations inherent in using them as primary sources. He notes how the Ryūkyūan envoys were dressed in decidedly foreign garb, but he questions the prevailing interpretation among historians that the Ryūkyūans were forced by the leaders of Satsuma, perhaps in league with Bakufu officials, to do this. He suggests that it was possible that the Ryūkyūans themselves had some “agency” in the selection of their clothing, so that their Ryūkyūan and/or Chinese appearance may have been more a matter

of choice than sartorial imperative. This is the kind of question that even a very close analysis of a graphic representation of a Ryūkyūan procession cannot begin to address.

Mr. Seifman astutely pointed out how the use of the *kago* and the horse in Ryūkyūan depictions seem inverted by comparison with their *sankin-kōtai* counterparts. Specifically, the daimyo who proceeded either to or from Edo as part of their *sankin-kōtai* processions preferred to make the journey on horseback rather than as a passenger in a *kago*, as Mr. Seifman, citing Constantine Vaporis, argues that travel via the latter was not as comfortable as the former. In the case of the Ryūkyūan processions, high-ranking officials seem to have traveled via *kago*, while their lower-ranking colleagues made the trip on horseback. This situation would seem to be the inversion of *sankin-kōtai*, since the daimyo was almost certainly the highest-ranking person in any *sankin-kōtai* procession, yet horseback seemed to have been the transportation mode of choice rather than the *kago*. If this is the case, I would like to offer a potential explanation, namely, that the daimyo preference for the horse may have had more to do with maintaining the appearance of a proper military leader than it did with matters of comfort, and if the two happened to coincide, then all the better.

It may have been more difficult to project the requisite image of warrior leadership while hidden inside a *kago*. By the same token, having high-ranking officials from Ryūkyū on horseback may have projected an overly martial image that conflicted with the model of civilian authority then prevalent in China, a model that the Ryūkyūans constantly sought to emulate. The preference among high-ranking Ryūkyūan officials for the *kago* over the horse may have symbolized the ideal hierarchy of civilian authority over military authority, a hierarchy that the Japanese began to reverse in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a process that was completed far in advance of the seventeenth century.

Szostak

Observations

_____ I have two general comments to make on the subject of processions and early modern Japanese history. The first deals with evolving perceptions of foreignness by the Tokugawa Japanese, and the other is

related to the ways in which these foreign interactions influenced Tokugawa society.

The word which is universally used to signify “foreign country” is *gaikoku*, and “foreigner” is *gaikokujin* or, more commonly, *gaijin*, one of the first words those new to the study of Japanese learn. A more literal translation of *gaikoku* would be something like “external realms,” or “realms on the outside,” translations which betray Japanese assumptions regarding foreignness, namely, that the Western binaries of foreign/domestic or foreign/native are different from the analogous Japanese binaries of internal/external or inside/outside. Although the usage of *gaikoku* is so ubiquitous in Japan today, the provenance of the term is likely quite ancient, when its cognate, *totsukuni* was used to refer to provinces outside of the Kinai region. Similarly, the word *tozama* was used to refer to daimyo during the Muromachi period whose lands fell outside of the provinces controlled either directly or indirectly by the Ashikaga, and its utility was such that it was adopted by the Tokugawa shoguns to refer to those great lords whose power represented any kind of challenge to their own. While a binary of center/periphery was certainly at work in the ways in which *totsukuni* was used in Japanese antiquity, this binary functioned in even

more robust ways during the Edo period, when all daimyo were required to undertake their *sankin-kōtai* processions to and from Edo. Indeed, the power and authority of the Shogun was enhanced in more profound ways when one analyzes *sankin-kōtai* as the practice of manifesting both the Shogun's political centrality as well as his position on the inside, in an analogous position to that of the emperor in the Kinai that the concept of *totsukuni* was intended to evoke.

Citing the work of Bitō Masahide, Ron Toby has argued that the decline of the Ming dynasty inspired some Japanese Confucians, notably Yamazaki Ansai, Yamaga Sokō, and Asami Keisai, to claim the title of Chūka (“central efflorescence”) or Chūgoku (“central realm”) for Japan.¹ It is the concept of the center inherent in these terms that undergirded the Chinese tributary system, and which honed the semiotic effectiveness of later Japanese concepts like *totsukuni* and *tozama*. In fact, one could argue that the *sankin-kōtai* and foreign envoy processions of the Tokugawa period derived their ceremonial and ritual meanings from this Chinese concept of the center. The practical experience of Chinese imperial authority, its Japanese counterpart, or that of the Tokugawa Shogun began from their

¹ Ronald Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 222.

conceptual positions of centrality, which was created and re-created via processions of peoples.

For Yamaga Sokō, Japan did not simply displace China from the center; it was always at the center, despite the fact that no one seemed to have been aware of this situation. For Sokō, the proof of this fact was fundamentally cosmological and geographical. Writing in 1669, he states,

The earth is in the center of the heavens. The center is [bounded by] the four directions, [thus,] it is the center. The Central Realm means the realm in the center of Heaven and earth. What does the center of Heaven and earth mean? It means that the seasons change [as they should] and there are no extremes of cold or heat, and its land and people are both very beautiful...There are many realms in the world, but only the Central Realm [Japan] and the Outer Imperial Realm [China] are in the center of Heaven and earth.²

In this passage, Sokō uses the name Central Realm to refer to Japan and Outer Imperial Realm or *gaichō* to refer to China, a term that resonates with

² Yamaga Sokō, *Chūchō jijitsu*, in *Dai Nihon shisō zenshū*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Dai Nihon Shisō Zenshū Kankōkai, 1933), pp. 80-81.

gaikoku and *totsukuni*. Citing its geographic position in particular, Sokō believed that Japan's climate and natural environment made it superior to China, so that referring to Japan as the Central Realm was naturally fitting and appropriate.

The significance of Japan's centrality was of cosmic proportions for Sokō. For the Confucians, the concept of the center was foundational for both their metaphysical view of the world and their moral teachings which grew out of it; it would not be an exaggeration to say that the center made a Confucian epistemology possible. Rather than analyze the link between Confucian epistemology and a concept of the center, Jacques Derrida has examined the ways in which the center makes meaning possible in a Western context. He observed how the Western esteem for structural thinking, which gave rise in the modern era to Marxism and to Structuralism, betrayed a structural character all its own, one that needed a concept of the center in order to function:

[S]tructure -- or rather the structurality of structure -- although it has always been at work, has always been neutralized or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a center or of referring it to a point of presence, a fixed

origin. The function of this center was not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure -- one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure -- but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the *play* of the structure. By orienting and organizing the coherence of the system, the center of the structure permits the play of its elements inside the total form. And even today the notion of a structure lacking any center represents the unthinkable itself.³

Derrida, of course, did not seek to praise such an epistemology so much as indicate how it operated to produce meanings that seemed fixed and inviolable, such that the destabilization of meaning could only be accomplished via play, specifically, the play of the signifier. However, his observations about the center apply equally well to the Confucian concept of the center, which was also intended to produce epistemological stability and make signification possible. The chief difference between the two concepts of center is that the Confucians overtly assigned a series of signifieds to the center's signifier, of which China itself was one. In the

³ Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 351-352.

Western tradition, there is seemingly no signified for the center; it is function without substance. As Derrida pointed out in his writings, a concept with no signified, yet from which emerged the unproblematic couplings of signifiers and signifieds, was itself a kind of signified that transcended all others; it was the transcendental signified. Among the attempts to come to grips with the transcendental signified in the Western tradition, Derrida observed, was God. Derrida's identification of logocentrism made the connection between the concept of the center and God, while Confucian scholars in East Asia had long made the association between the center and the cosmos a foundational part of their teachings.

While the utility of *gaikoku* in modern parlance is clear, it had to share space during the Edo period with another word with a similar meaning yet which evoked a different set of binaries, *ikoku*. The word *ikoku* can be rendered as "different realm" or "exotic realm," translations which produce binaries such as exotic/familiar and different/same. By referring to the processions of the Koreans, the Ryūkyūans, and perhaps the Dutch, as those of peoples from *ikoku*, the ideological emphasis on the political authority and ritualistic centrality of the Edo Bakufu converged with an emerging sense of cultural sameness on the part of those viewing the

processions, whether in person or not. In other words, these processions had the effect, perhaps unintended, of creating images of nation and *ethnie* at the same time, making the task of distinguishing between the two very difficult. In a complementary way, the *sankin-kōtai* processions reinforced these images on nearly a constant basis for more than two hundred years, since political centralization was the very *raison d'être* for *sankin-kōtai* in the first place. Moreover, the residency requirement in Edo for daimyo and their families contributed to the awareness of belonging to a common *ethnie*, which the development of an Edo dialect of Japanese facilitated to a great degree.

The seventeenth-century designation of Korea and Ryūkyū as *ikoku*, and likely the Portuguese and the Spanish in the sixteenth century, endured until the end of the Edo period. The utility of *ikoku* as a general designation for foreign countries was such that Sakamoto Ryōma used it to refer to the United States in the 1850s and 1860s. In a letter to his father which he brushed shortly after the arrival of Matthew Perry and the US Navy in 1853, Ryōma refers to the Americans as the people of an *ikoku* several times:

Concerning my brother's rumor about America [having arrived in Japan], you can judge for yourself. First of all, regarding this urgent matter [before us], [though] you may have a hard time with [my] hasty and messy handwriting, how can we avoid having to deal with [these] foreign ships? I know that, by next spring, the numbers [of foreigners] will have grown...I am certain that foreign ships will keep coming [to Japan], [which means] that [foreign] armies will soon follow. When that time comes, I will take [me some] foreign heads and return home with them.⁴

What is significant in Ryōma's late Tokugawa usage of *ikoku* was not the commonalities he saw between the Americans and the Koreans and the Ryūkyūans, but the commonalities he believed existed among the Japanese people. While *ikoku* functioned as a signifier of difference, the effect it produced was a signification of cultural sameness.

My final observation regarding processions is related to the ways in which nativism is understood in the field of anthropology. One of the seminal works in the area of what I call anthropological nativism is Ralph Linton's 1943 article, "Nativistic Movements." In this essay, Linton describes

⁴ Sakamoto Ryōma, letter dated 9/23 of Kaei 6 [1853], reproduced in *Sakamoto Ryōma kankei monjo*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Nihon Shiseki Kyōkai, 1921), p. 38.

the arrival of colonizers and their interactions with the natives as paradigmatic for the emergence of nativism. In these encounters, the culture of the colonizers influences cultural developments among the colonized, and the cultural institutions of the colonized have a similar influence on the attitudes of the colonizers, and he labels these developments and attitudes as comprising nativism.⁵ In the case of processions, we see a similar interaction between foreigner arrivals and the natives, with the exception that the former are not bent on the colonization of the latter. In fact, the power dynamic is reversed between the context of these foreigner envoy processions and the case of nativism, as Linton's colonial paradigm operates on the assumption that the foreigner arrivals have more technological and military prowess than the natives do, while this was certainly not the case with the foreigner envoy processions of the Tokugawa period.

Rather than argue that these processions represented instances within which nativistic attitudes emerged among the Japanese, I believe that the images of authority and paternalism which they evoked, one at the behest of the Edo Bakufu and the other among the commoners who viewed

⁵ Ralph Linton, "Nativistic Movements," *American Anthropologist*, vol. 45, no. 2 (1943), p. 237.

them, were different aspects of the same phenomenon, namely, exceptionalism. As one Americanist has observed, exceptionalism is a way of thinking based on ideas of either a nation's "exempt" status or its "exemplary" status.⁶ A nation is exceptional when it is exempt from forces that otherwise affect all other nations; it is also exceptional when it is qualitatively exemplary in ways that other nations are not, in other words, superior. It is easier to make a case for exceptionality when one's nation is the recipient of foreign processions and exempt from having to undertake them, and this was the case with China and its tributary states, of which Ryūkyū was one. By not submitting to this tributary system, the Edo Bakufu was able to foster an image of itself and of Japan as exceptional by virtue of an exemption from the Chinese tributary system. At the same time, the very reasons for undertaking the journeys to pay homage either to the Chinese emperor or to the shogun could be construed as a recognition of that nation's cultural superiority, an observation that Toby made regarding the Edo Bakufu's need to maintain at least some level of foreign relations with the outside world. Consequently, rather than fostering one type of exceptionalism over the other, these foreigner envoy processions derived

⁶ Jack P. Greene, *The Intellectual Construction of America: Exceptionalism and Identity From 1492 to 1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), p. 201.

their ideological power from both. Much the same could be said for China and its tributary system, such that Japanese exceptionalism during the Tokugawa period must be examined alongside China's. One could say that the strength of Japanese efforts to prove Japan's exceptionality was likely inversely proportional to that of the Chinese, and this could be a reason why these foreigner envoy processions were as prominent as they were during the Tokugawa period.