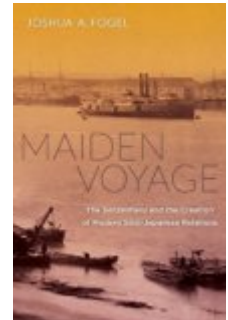




Joshua A. Fogel. *Maiden Voyage: The Senzaimaru and the Creation of Modern Sino-Japanese Relations.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014. 320 pp. \$60.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-520-28330-5.



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Joshua A. Fogel's numerous and significant contributions to the study of Sino-Japanese relations make any new work by him required reading for those interested in the historical relationship between these two entangled societies. Both Japan and China import more from one another than they do from any other country in the world. [1] Ongoing disputes over territory, the historical memory of Japan's invasions of China, and how to honor those who died or suffered as a result of war continue to negatively impact how Japanese and Chinese citizens view one another. In *Maiden Voyage: The Senzaimaru and the Creation of Modern Sino-Japanese Relations*, Fogel stakes out a new vantage point from which to view Sino-Japanese relations by recounting the first shogunal commercial and fact-finding mission dispatched to Shanghai, which arrived aboard a purchased British vessel in 1862. This thoroughly researched and engagingly written narrative focuses primarily on the members of the mission and those they encountered during their sojourn, and provides a wide range of intriguing evidence concerning

how Japanese and Chinese officials perceived one another, and understood themselves, within the context of a significant moment in the history of international systems.

In what sense was 1862, and the *Senzaimaru's* voyage, so significant? As Fogel argues, the former was "much like any other year, only different" (p. 1). *Maiden Voyage* opens with a quick summary of well-known events already unfolding that year, with particular attention given to the American Civil War and, on the other side of the world, the best-known and most major of the several internal upheavals already facing the Qing empire: the Taiping Rebellion. In and around Japan, 1862 was a year of increasing foreign contact and related maritime activity, and of the beginning of the end for the *bakumatsu* period and Tokugawa regime. (Though, as Fogel notes, there was no widely shared sense that Japan's then-current government would soon be swept aside in 1868 by the Meiji Restoration.) Most significant for Fogel, however, is that the shogunal mission members transported to Shanghai by the *Senzaimaru* did not

carry with them views understandable as “Japanese denigration of China and the Chinese” (p. 6). This assertion is based upon two supporting arguments, also drawn from the evidence as well as from Fogel’s prior work on Sino-Japanese relations. The first is that, prior to the Meiji Restoration, “Japan” referred to a complex political and cultural idea, but did not yet fully connote the sense of a modern nation-state. The second holds that for Japanese familiar with China, “China” itself designated a mature, idealized model of civilizational achievement—an “older brother”—which Sinologists, Confucians, Buddhists, and others sought in various ways to emulate.

At the heart of Fogel’s story, then, is a narrative detailing how members of the shogunal mission made sense of a Qing dynasty (this term, and China, are used somewhat interchangeably) whose trade was dominated by Western empires as a result of defeats in the two “Opium Wars” (1839-42, 1856-60), and whose internal security was being sorely tested by anti-dynastic Taiping forces. Chapter 1 covers the acquisition of the ship that would become the *Senzaimaru* and general context of East Asian trade, as well as the biography of a Dutch businessman and vice consul, Theodorus Kroes, who briefly served as the mission’s representative in Shanghai. (Kroes’ aid, and Dutch facilitation generally, were important to Qing acceptance of the mission as a trading enterprise at a time when no formal trade relations between Japan and the Qing empire yet existed.) Chapter 2 and chapter 3 detail the planning and logistics of the mission, as well as those participating. Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 highlight Japanese perceptions of China, as evidenced by personal records and “brush talks”—written conversations between the Japanese envoys and Qing officials. Chapters 8, 9, and 10 address the mission’s many afterlives, including its immediate impact on Japan-Qing relations and representation in fiction, film, and historiography.

In terms of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Qing empire, the *Senzaimaru* voyage was thus significant because it led to a revision of Japan’s status within existing Qing frameworks for managing foreign relations, culminating with the Treaty of Amity in 1871 which recognized Japan’s equality with China—a modern break with the previous Sinocentric order.[2] Indeed, by the 1860s Japan was already a “rising” state, having expanded northward through the archipelago to claim the Ainu territories of present-day Hokkaido, Sakhalin, and the Kurils.[3] Fogel argues convincingly that despite concurrent tensions between the *bakufu* and subordinate domains, most notably those of Chōshū and Satsuma, the chief concern of those selected for the mission was not primarily trade but, rather, gaining insight into two issues of potential significance for Japan: how Western dominance over the Qing empire had been achieved, and whether the Taiping Rebellion would succeed in overthrowing the power of the Qing court. A wide range of quoted sources establishes that both Chinese and Japanese observers believed that the dual threat of the West and the Taipings was attributable mainly to the ineffectuality of Qing rulers. However, as Fogel maintains, the lamentable state of Qing defenses and of the Taiping-besieged Chinese residents of Shanghai became a source of Japanese concern for China, rather than of denigration. Moreover, the 1862 shogunal mission was significant insofar as, confronted with the sight of a Shanghai encircled by rebels and dominated by foreign ships and houses of commerce, Japanese officials gained firsthand validation of what might occur to their own domains should the Western-imposed treaty port system be allowed to spread unchecked throughout the crumbling Sinosphere.

Maiden Voyage might be read profitably as a cross-cultural history of the origins of the Meiji ideology itself, in which trade and empire were inevitably entangled, and how acute fear of conflict, discord, and disintegration led to expansive

policies of national integration.[4] The implied question of whether Japanese denigration of China was a necessary precondition of empire is largely beside the point. In other words, what mattered was not that China was superior or inferior to Japan, but that the Manchu Qing were able to govern in a manner that complemented and secured Japan's rapidly expanding geopolitical horizons. They were not, and as Japan's military and commercial power in East Asia increased, so too did the notion of China as a country to be saved and culture to be revived through external intervention become increasingly influential—within Japan, but also amongst a small but historically significant coterie of Chinese nationalists.[5]

The book is particularly distinguished by its openness to interpretation. Every chapter includes numerous, lengthy, and expertly translated passages, and at the back of the book is a twenty-plus-page appendix of Japanese and Chinese texts. Readers will have the opportunity to judge for themselves how members of the shogunal mission viewed Qing-governed China and, conversely, how Qing officials viewed and represented the mission through internal correspondence. (Or, reading even more closely between the lines, whether emerging proto-national chauvinism evident among Japanese mission members signaled a sea change in the history of Sino-Japanese relations.) Certainly 1862 was one year among many during which the geopolitics of East Asia were in flux and, as understood through the microcosm of Shanghai, the main agent for such instability was a toxic compound of Qing internal weakness and Western imperial expansion—on this both Japanese and Chinese observers agreed. *Maiden Voyage* therefore provides a compelling case that even amidst these twin challenges to the structure and legitimacy of the Sinosphere, Japanese officials held out hope of fashioning new relations with the Qing empire based on principles of kinship, trade, and a shared culture which transcended that of the supercilious West. This vision of modern regional relations—pan-Asianism—

would prove highly influential for future architects of “new order” in Asia.

Notes

[1]. “China,” *Observatory of Economic Complexity*, <http://atlas.media.mit.edu/profile/country/chn/>; “Japan,” *ibid.*, <http://atlas.media.mit.edu/profile/country/jpn/>.

[2]. See also Joshua A. Fogel, *Articulating the Sinosphere: Sino-Japanese Relations in Space and Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

[3]. Brett L. Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590-1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). On inward expansion, see Kären Wigen, *The Making of a Japanese Periphery, 1750-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[4]. On trade and empire see, for example, see J. W. Dower, *Empire and Aftermath: Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience, 1878-1954* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1979). On national integration, see Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985); Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). On conflict see Tetsuo Najita and J. Victor Koschmann, *Conflict in Modern Japanese History: The Neglected Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982).

[5]. See Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

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