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REVIEWS

The Outside Perspective: The Treaty Port Press, the Meiji Restoration and the image of a modern Japan

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ABSTRACT

The Treaty Ports established by the Unequal Treaties in the middle of the nineteenth century were crucial spaces of interaction between Japan and the West. For a long time, they were the only places where foreigners were allowed to reside permanently in Japan. While the interior of the nation might be visited by Western travellers and globetrotters, the primary contacts, commercial as well as social and cultural, took place in the environment of the Treaty Ports, where the vast majority of foreigners resided and visited. Because of this exclusive role, the ports played a critical venue for the creation and formation of images of Japan, as well as their transmission abroad.

This article focuses on the image of Japan generated in these Treaty Ports around the time of the Meiji Restoration. It will look at how the Restoration and subsequent Japanese policies of modernisation were perceived and presented in the foreign language press in the Treaty Ports. This will be undertaken by examining two of the most important Treaty Port newspapers, the North China Herald*, published in Shanghai from 1850 to 1951, and* the Japan Weekly Mail*, published in Yokohama from 1870 to 1917. Both were amongst the most influential newspapers in their respective communities, but also the Treaty Port network in East Asia and even further abroad. Their pages reflect the understanding these communities had of Japan and reveal the development of the image of Japan during and after the Meiji Restoration. This paper argues that a positive image of a Japanese efforts at modern reform was formed and diffused via the Treaty Port Press almost immediately after the Meiji government took power, and therefore much earlier than commonly presumed.*

KEYWORDS

Image Creation; Meiji Restoration; Treaty Ports; Foreign Language Press; North China Herald; Japan Weekly Mail.

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"*It cannot be concealed, any longer, that the Land of the Rising Sun is taking rank among the nations of the world*." (North China Herald, 4.3.1868)

This quote, taken from an article in the *North China Herald* in March 1868, reveals the impact that the Meiji Restoration had on the perception of Japan in the Treaty Port communities in East Asia. It was heralded as the beginning of a new chapter of Japanese interaction with the rest of the world, the beginning of Japanese modernity. The Restoration, or revolution as it is also frequently called, was a major turning point in the history of Japan. Whether it was a radical break with the past or rather a continuation of developments

already in progress during the Bakumatsu era may be debated, yet it remains a symbol for the emergence of a 'new Japan' (Jansen, 1989: 308, and Osterhammel, 2009: n.p.).

The Restoration was especially important for the changes it brought in Japan's relations with the West, whose framework was created with the signing of the Unequal Treaties in 1858 and embodied in the Treaty Ports established in 1859 and after. The forced opening of Japan and internal turmoil, in part a product of the foreign intrusion, resulted in a reluctance to be a full participant in the international world order dominated by the West. Although changes in this attitude began in the middle of the 1860s, the Restoration of 1868 and proclamations such as the Imperial Charter Oath that was promulgated on 6 April, heralded the beginning of a transformation of Japanese foreign policy and its image in the Western community.

This will be looked at through a qualitative analysis of the so-called Treaty Port Press, the foreign language press published in East Asia at the time. This analysis was mainly done by examining the main articles and editorials that focused on Japan's modernisation and the image they created, with specific focus on Japan's image as a nation and its burgeoning industrialisation. In addition, key phrases such as 'progress' and 'modernity' were sought, as they are intrinsically linked to the subject matter in the newspapers and are key terms in discovering relevant articles. As a time-frame, the years from roughly 1867 to 1875 were chosen in order to provide a wider perspective on the creation of Japan's image and to analyse it, not just during, but beyond the time of the Meiji Restoration. Additionally, this article is strictly limited to the Western perspective on Japan, due to the selected sources. A Chinese understanding of Japan's development within the same time frame, for example, would be an interesting subject as an East Asian 'outside perspective', but goes beyond the scope of this particular article.

The reasons for this article are twofold. Firstly, the image of Japan and its creation in the late nineteenth century were important aspects of its interactions with the West, as foreign perception played a great role in the nation's international standing. Within the Western-dominated world order of the nineteenth century, nations and civilisations were only considered modern or advanced when compared to Western standards of civilisation. Therefore, the image of Japan as perceived by foreigners was an important factor in how far Japan had managed to gain acceptance and respect in the eyes of the West. And while much attention has been given to Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War, the struggle for recognition began much earlier, in the time of the

Meiji Restoration. This article will argue that an image of a 'modern Japan' emerged around the time of the Restoration and thus the seeds for recognising Japan's modernity were sewn much earlier than is often understood. In addition, the focus of research has often been on a national-diplomatic level, yet it is necessary to look at other non-state actors as well, such as the merchants, who made up the core of the Western communities in the Treaty Ports. They as much as Western diplomats helped mediate an image of Japan within East Asia and beyond, a view which may be uncovered through the study of the newspapers published in these communities, and whose views they reflected (Fält, 1990: 25). Furthermore, the inclusion of a newspaper published in Shanghai will allow the transforming image of Japan to be examined not just within Japan, but within a wider regional Treaty Port framework.

Secondly, this article aims to bring the Treaty Port newspapers to the attention of modern scholarship. They have been researched by scholars like James Hoare and Olavi Fält in the 1990s, but changing approaches to Japanese history in the past few decades make it necessary to take a new look at these sources, particularly as they have been neglected by current scholarship. They are, however, invaluable primary sources in the understanding of Japan, written as they were by inhabitants of the Treaty Ports. Therefore, the newspapers had a vested interest in observing and understanding the transformation taking place in Japan, as it directly affected their lives and livelihoods. In this, they allow Japan's modernisation attempts to be seen from different critical and mediated contemporary angles.

The Treaty Port Press as a source

To understand the image that was formed by the Treaty Port Press, it is necessary to understand the background in and biases with which these newspapers were created and distributed, as they had an undeniable impact upon their views and reporting. Generally, the Treaty Port Press refers to the foreign-language newspapers published in the Treaty Ports of East Asia in the nineteenth century. Newspapers in the European style had been brought to Japan from Europe and the United States of America by the Western residents of the Treaty Ports, and there had been no equivalent of this newspaper tradition in Japan at the time (Westney, 1987: 147). In the West, however, newspapers played an important role in society as the first means of mass communication (Westney, 1987: 146), and it was something the new foreign resident

of Japan brought with them to East Asia. As a result, "there was scarcely a port which did not have its *Shipping List* or other similar paper" (Hoare, 1994: 141).

In general, the Treaty Port Press falls into three categories, first the *Shipping Lists*, then the weekly papers and lastly other magazines and periodicals such as the famous satirical *Japan Punch*. The *Shipping Lists* were daily newspapers, on average four to five pages long, most of which were advertisements, as well as the eponymous shipping lists, in which the arrivals and departures of ships at the port in question were listed. A one-page editorial with current news and other information usually completed the paper. The weekly papers, in contrast, were published once a week ranging from about fifteen to twenty pages, only a few pages of which were advertisements, the rest containing editorials, articles, letters from readers and detailed commercial statistics. It is these weekly papers, which are the main interest of this article, as they contain not only lengthy accounts of contemporary events in Japan, but insights into Western understanding and detailed views on them. Finally, the other magazines and periodicals were not regular newspapers. They came in a variety of formats and covered a wide range of topics from satire to academic articles about Asia (Hoare, 1994: 164-66).

In this article, two principal newspapers of the Treaty Ports will be examined, the *Japan Mail* and the *North China Herald*. The former was first published in Yokohama as the *Japan Times*, including a daily, a weekly and an overland version[1] It was founded in 1865 by Charles Rickerby, formerly the manager of the Yokohama branch of the Central Bank of India and, allegedly, a close friend of the British diplomatic corps in Japan (Hoare, 1994: 56-57). In 1870, Rickerby was forced to sell the newspaper due to financial difficulties and it was bought by a British merchant, W.G. Howell, under whom it was renamed to the *Japan Mail* (Fält, 1990: 17-19). Howell would serve as its owner and editor until 1877, after which the paper changed hands several times, but continued to exist until 1917. The *Japan Mail* remained one of the major Treaty Port newspapers throughout its existence and is an invaluable source today, due to the fact that it is still largely extant. Unlike many other papers, whose editions were lost or destroyed, the *Japan Weekly Mail* is fully preserved from 1870 onwards, while the years from 1865 to 1869 are partially available.

[1] Overland versions of the Treaty Port Press were usually intended to be sent abroad, that is, to other Treaty Ports, but sometimes even further, for example to the United States of America. Thus, they represent an interesting factor in the shaping of images abroad, as they were created in the ports but intended for readership abroad.

The second newspaper is the *North China Herald,*[2] published in Shanghai, the most prominent Chinese Treaty Port, from 1850 to 1951. Although it was published in a Chinese Treaty Port, it is highly relevant for the formation of an image of Japan because the Treaty Ports across East Asia formed a closely interconnected network. They did not only form an economic and social network, moving commodities and people, but an information network as well. It is almost unheard of for any newspaper issue not to report news from the other Treaty Ports, whether in Japan or China. Moreover, the *North China Herald* is particularly noteworthy for this cross-national connection, as from the late 1860s onwards each edition included a section dedicated to the 'Outports', i.e. the other Treaty Ports in East Asia. Yokohama was, for the most part, the most prominent of these 'Outports'. This is especially valuable in regards to this article, as the *Japan Times* issues from 1865 to 1869 are only partially extant today; however, they were often quoted in the Chinese paper, allowing us to fill in some gaps in the news coverage about Japan.

Throughout the existence of the Treaty Ports, the resident press thus provided a continuous exchange of information, images and ideas amongst themselves and beyond. The interest for news from across East Asia was not limited to Shanghai, but was reciprocated by the newspapers in Japan such as the *Japan Mail*, which regularly included not only mentions of Shanghai and the other ports, but extensively copied articles from the newspapers published there. As the *Japan Weekly Mail* declared in its mission statement: "We shall not omit to chronicle regularly the news from Hiogo, Nagasaki, and the other ports, and a fair share of our space will be apportioned to their representation", further promising to represent the interests and views of "the foreign Communities in China and Japan" (*Japan Weekly Mail*, 22.1.1870). Although intended mainly for the foreign communities, the papers were avidly read by Japanese officials, who translated them in order to obtain information and gauge how Japan's image was perceived by the foreigners (Westney, 1987: 152). Their readership and audience were thus not limited just to their own ports. It is this central role as transmitter of

[2] The *North China Herald*'s name changed several times throughout its publication and also included daily, weekly and overland versions, the weekly version serving as source for this article. For simplicity's sake, it will be merely referred to as *North China Herald* in this article, as this is the name by which it is best known, although it ran under the names of *North China Herald Market Report* from 1867 to 1870 and *North China Herald* and *Supreme Court* and *Consular Gazette* from 1870 to 1911.

information and shaper of perceptions, as leaders of a media discourse on Japan that makes the Treaty Port Press eminently worth studying.

The *North China Herald* was initially founded and owned by the British auctioneer Henry Shearman and passed through several hands after his death in 1856, until it was bought by Edwin Pickwoad in 1860. It later remained with his widow Janet Pickwoad after his death in 1866 until it was sold to her son-in-law Henry Morriss in 1881 (*North China Herald*, 5.8.1930). The main influence on its articles, however, were its editors, which from 1865 to 1878 was Richard S. Gundry, a man of journalistic background and also the China correspondent for the *London Times* (King, 1965: 128). Detailed information about editors and contributors is, however, often difficult or impossible to find as the authors within the newspapers are rarely, if ever, given. In general, it was the editor who wrote most articles and managed the final content. One exception is articles quoted directly from other papers, as well as letters from correspondents and readers, although even these are often signed under a pseudonym. The newspapers differentiated their own views from those of others, the *Japan Times* going as far as stating beneath the heading of its Correspondence column, "We are not responsible for the sentiments or opinions of Correspondents" *(Japan Times Overland Mail*, 27.1.1869). One can assume therefore, that other articles, not marked in this fashion, did in fact represent the views of the paper.

This lack of clear authorship is one of the more difficult aspects of the newspapers as a source. Nonetheless, it can be said that the newspapers were representative of their communities, as they set out to "reflect as fully as possible the sentiments, the wishes, and the wants of the foreign Communities" (*Japan Weekly Mail*, 22.1.1870). There were differences in opinions within the community and amongst the various newspapers, yet it is nevertheless true that they represented a sizeable and prominent part of the Treaty Port communities. Nonetheless, the *North China Herald*'s motto "Impartial, not neutral" (*North China Herald*, 5.8.1930) might better reflect the agency of the papers and their particular biases. For one, their editors and writers remained citizens of the nations from which they hailed; in the case of the newspapers showcased here, British ones. Inevitably, they viewed the world from the perspective of British citizens. It often proved difficult to separate their perspective from their identity as British citizens and their background had an influence upon their observations, demands and the articles they published. In the case of the British merchants, this is

perhaps best reflected in their continuous demands and unquestioned endorsement of free trade (Osterhammel, 2009: n.p.).

It is no surprise that the Treaty Ports in East Asia were dominated by the British, the British Empire being at the height of its power. The British did not only dominate diplomatically, but demographically and commercially amongst the Western residents, and in regards to the publication of newspapers. The majority of newspapers in the Treaty Ports were British-owned and edited, including the ones analysed for this article. Their articles and editorials reflect their national bias with a special British brand of what Jürgen Osterhammel calls 'Imperial-nationalism' (Osterhammel, 2009: n.p.). It is a fact that the newspapers often did not even attempt to deny, but instead emphasised such bias (*Japan Times*, 5.1.1866). This occasionally resulted in different views when compared to, for example French or US nationals. However, there remained a commonality across national boundaries due to the shared framework in which these different Westerners lived, that of the Treaty Ports, in which all foreigners formed one community, identifying themselves, at least on some level, in contrast to the Japanese. It is further important to note that these views did not include the Chinese, who were the majority of the foreigners then residing in Japan, but who were not considered part of the 'Western' foreign community or represented by its newspapers.

The foreigners in Japan, with very few exceptions, regarded themselves as separate from the nation in which they resided, their spatial framework contained within the Treaty Ports. They lived segregated in the foreign quarters of the ports (Hoare, 1994: 9 and Partner, 2017: n.p.), often with little opportunity to even travel inland, a situation which changed only after the Meiji Restoration. Their physical presence in Japan only played a role for their daily lives in as much as Japanese policies affected them; in other ways, they saw themselves as completely distinct from their host nation (Hoare, 1994: 26). Furthermore, extraterritoriality removed them from Japanese jurisdiction and at the same time allowed an unmatched freedom of press (Munson, 2013: 3), resulting in frank commentary on Japan and the Japanese. Their sojourns in East Asia rarely included closer contact with the local population, except when connected to their commercial enterprises. As such it is not peculiar for the *Japan Weekly Mail* to claim that "the commercial interests of all the Treaty Powers are identical, and [therefore] we trust to make this Journal as acceptable to the American, German, and French, as to the British Residents." (*Japan Weekly Mail*, 22.1.1870). Their principal identification as a single Western community was

promoted by the separation from the Japanese, and enabled them to overcome nationalist divisions amongst themselves, although this was on occasion upset.

Another restriction in regard to who the Treaty Port Press represented is that of its interests and clientele. The newspapers mainly represented the merchants living in the Treaty Ports. "It is as a new market that we seek to open the country, we come as traders and traders only" (*Japan Times Overland Mail*, 28.10.1869). While they might share some commonality with other foreigners in the Treaty Ports, such as sojourning sailors, missionaries, the military garrisons and others, the views espoused by the press were those of commerce. Their main focus was the promotion of trade and the success of their specific communities, more principally the merchants therein (Fält, 1990: 25). Although their desires and the image of Japan they held often aligned with those of other Western observers of Japan at the time, they also differed on numerous accounts. Friction often arose with their own diplomatic representatives, if they felt that the diplomats failed to represent or enforce their interests, which did not necessarily align with those of the diplomats. "*La haute politique*, [...] its hopes or ambitions have little concern for us. They are important only indirectly" *(Japan Weekly Mail*, 9.9.1871.) According to Ernest Satow, this attitude saw the diplomats often treated more as servants of the Treaty Port community than as representatives of their nation with refusal to comply to the wishes of the merchants being followed by mistreatments (Satow, 2006: 13), such as condemnations in letters and articles published in the newspapers.

These obvious biases do not detract from the newspapers as invaluable sources on these communities, but nonetheless have to be kept in mind. The newspapers were shaped by the framework in which they were created and represented the voice of a specific part of the Treaty Port community, the merchants. While the diplomatic accounts, such as those of Sir Ernest Satow or Sir Rutherford Alcock, are famous, the views of the Treaty Port Press and the Treaty Port merchants are less well known but certainly worth studying.

The Bakumatsu Period and the Foreign Perspective

During the first decade of operation, as the Treaty Ports were establishing themselves on the coast of Japan, the newly resident foreigners had to deal with some resistance to their new commercial ventures. They regarded their presence as part of a larger belief that

international exchange, led, of course, by the Western powers, would result in mutual improvement of all involved nations and the world (Osterhammel, 2009: n.p.). Thus, the foreigners and their tools, including the Treaty Port Press, justified their demands of open and free trade with Japan (Fält, 1990: 36). Japan, of course, regarded the matter in a different light and only reluctantly participated in the new foreign relations, which is to not say individual Japanese people did not eagerly engage in the trade and were not more than willing to take advantage of the new opportunities provided by the creation of the Treaty Ports. Simon Partner's recent book *A Merchant's Tale* offers valuable insight into the perspective of a Japanese merchant, who migrated to Yokohama in search of opportunity and profit. On a wider national level, however, there remained much resistance to the foreign intrusion, which the Treaty Port communities resented and heavily condemned later (*Japan Times Overland Mail*, 10.3.1869).

The main suspect, who the foreigners held responsible for their trouble, was the Bakufu with whom they had signed the Unequal Treaties. The first years after the opening of Yokohama had not brought the fulfilment of the merchants' dreams of commercial success, and they blamed the Tokugawa, who were said to have put into place "a system of annoyance, evasion and delay" which had stifled trade (*Japan Times Overland Mail*, 10.3.1869). This, it was argued, was not only to the detriment of the foreigners, but of the Japanese themselves, as growing trade would be a mutually beneficial affair (*Japan Times*, 17.11.1865).

Meanwhile, the Bakufu was caught between foreign and domestic pressure. On the one hand, it faced domestic demands from influential *daimyō* and even the Emperor himself to expel the 'barbarians'. On the other, there remained the necessity of appeasing the foreigners, who harshly condemned any anti-foreign violence and held the Bakufu responsible for any such incidents (Jansen, 2000: 303). These tensions exacerbated the internal situation, while the failures of its foreign policy undermined the legitimacy of the Tokugawa regime, contributing to its downfall (Auslin 2006, 3).

The Treaty Port Press followed domestic affairs closely, and the internal troubles were deemed a result of the weak position of the Bakufu (*Japan Times*, 1.12.1865). They were far from enamoured with the Bakufu, but unlike the diplomatic representatives such as Ernest Satow, they did not necessarily favour a regime change just yet (Fält, 1990: 39). This was especially the case during the last few years of Bakufu rule, as the government undertook several reform programs, such as allowing Japanese citizens to

travel abroad, steps which met the approval of the newspapers, who saw them as beginnings of a positive development towards a more open Japan (*Japan Times*, 30.5.1866). However, the internal pressure eventually proved too strong, and the ensuing crisis culminated in the abdication of the Shōgun and the restoration of Imperial power in late 1867 and early 1868.

Thus, the foreign community and merchants found themselves facing a new and uncertain political situation, which provided some worries (*North China Herald*, 16.1.1868), but also a new opportunity for a better intercourse. Almost immediately after the declaration of the restoration of Imperial power on 3 January 1868, it was understood that this new government was, or at least would become, a better partner for the foreigners than the Bakufu had been (*North China Herald*, 24.1.1868). Thus, rose a new image of a Japan which had shed its past aversions to foreign intercourse and now was readily opening a dialogue with the West.

The Restoration and its appreciation by the press

The abdication of the Shōgun in November 1867 and the Imperial proclamation declaring the restoration of Imperial rule on 3 January 1868 were major stepping stones in the Meiji Restoration. Yet for the foreigners it was the opening of Kōbe-Hyōgo as a Treaty Port on 1 January 1868 which was of immediate importance (*North China Herald*, 16.1. and 24.1.1868). The entire foreign diplomatic corps was present at the newly opened port and nearby Ōsaka, just as the Restoration was happening. As a result, the foreigners were able to follow the political situation from a close distance, the news reaching China within a short time.[3] Therefore, the *Herald* could report by the end of January that "the party that is in favour of opening the whole of Japan is now to all appearances in power" (*North China Herald*, 24.1.1868). While they were not particularly happy about the fact that trade in newly opened Kōbe remained limited, if not entirely prohibited by the new government, the transition of power within Japan seemed to continue relatively peacefully and give way to a promising future (*North China Herald*, 31.1.1868).

[3] The *North China Herald* regularly featured a list of the latest dates on which news arrived from other ports in East Asia and England, which given the regular steamship service between Yokohama and Shanghai meant that news from Japan generally arrived within five days to a week.

The foreign observations were of course quickly upset by the outbreak of war between the followers of the Shōgun and the Satsuma-Chōshū alliance, yet from January 1868 it was clear to the editors of the Treaty Port Press that a fundamental shift had taken place in Japan. Although they had previously regarded the prospect of commerce in Japan as positive, the political situation had been regarded with much more pessimism (Fält, 1990: 37). This now changed drastically in the new year 1868, with the general tenor being that the new government was a force which would prove advantageous for the foreign residents of Japan. This change of perception happened in spite of several incidents of anti-foreign violence taking place within months of the Restoration. The most immediate cases occurred when troops from Hizen fired upon foreigners while passing near Kōbe on 4 February and the murder of eleven French sailors, the bloodiest incident, in Sakai on the 8th of the same month. For the *Japan Times*, however, these incidents were not regarded as being supported by the new Japanese government, but by individual anti-foreign elements, with the additional justification that the Japanese had in this instance been provoked by the French (*North China Herald*, 18.3.1868 and *Japan Times Overland Mail*, 13.1.1869). The seemingly unexpected rationalisations of French provocation by the *Japan Time*s are in fact not too far-fetched as they must be seen with the background of the contemporary Anglo-French rivalry. In the last years of the Bakumatsu period, the French had openly supported the Bakufu, while the British had maintained ties with the opposition to the Tokugawa (Fält, 1990: 52). It is also one of the clearest signs that, while the newspapers often claimed to express a united European view, the nationalistic tendencies of Europeans in the late nineteenth century were present within the Treaty Port Press, and on occasion openly expressed in their writings. At the same time, the *North China Herald* was more critical of the violence, reporting that "the recent massacre, for the word is not too large a one to apply to so sanguinary an outrage, has no pretext that we can reasonably allow". Yet even the China paper claimed the incidents were a result of "individual hostility" (*North China Herald*, 18.3.1868).

In addition to the justifications the newspapers gave, these instances of anti-foreign incidents were quickly smoothed over by the new Japanese government with the execution of the officers involved. The same happened after the failed attack on Sir Harry Parkes, the British Minister in Japan, while on his way to an audience with the Emperor in Kyōto. Although regarded as unfortunate according to the newspapers, it

resulted in something positive, namely an Imperial declaration against the murder of foreigners (*North China Herald* 24.4.1868). While the uncertain political situation in Japan was seen as an immediate threat to foreign lives, and in this case to their own diplomatic representative in Japan, the British newspapers deemed the Japanese responses an appropriate compensation. Unlike under the Bakufu, which was seen as unable to protect foreigners from violence, the Imperial proclamation was taken at face value and accepted as insurance against future incidents.

This belief and trust in the new government and the Imperial authority was further strengthened by the Emperor's agreement to maintain the existing treaties (*North China Herald*, 4.3.1868), always the main interest of the merchant communities whom the newspaper represented. This led the *North China Herald* to proclaim:

> "It cannot be concealed, any longer, that the Land of the Rising Sun is taking rank among the nations of the world. The times are over when she was an outside nation. She has a place to occupy amongst the peoples, and she is girding herself to occupy it. We must no longer think of Japan as being caressed into following the dictates of other more advanced Powers. She will henceforth hold her own amongst the foremost na-tions of the East." (North China Herald, 4.3.1868)

This is a remarkable statement, as it represents a complete shift in attitude compared to the negative outlook expressed about the political future under the Bakufu. Now Japan was regarded as being on its way to becoming a modern, though not equal, partner in the international and, of course, Western world order. And this came just a few months after the Restoration had been declared, long before the new structures of the Japanese government were formulated.

Although it is impossible to tell where the newspapers received their information, the reasons for this positive commentary are most likely a genuine belief in the permanence of the changes affecting Japan. The events in Japan from January to April 1868 received almost weekly coverage in the *Herald*. The Treaty Port Press, despite its biases and agencies, honestly reflected the understanding these editors and communities had of the situation, its developments and the transformation happening in Japan at the time (Fält, 1990: 25). As for the language of the above-cited paragraph, it is entirely in line with the other regular articles published within the paper and certainly not exceptional or unique. If seemingly overly dramatic to a reader today, it is nonetheless no different to the wording and expression used by other contemporary

newspapers and editors. So, while given to a certain hyperbole, the sentiment expressed is genuine.

After the first few months however, the initial enthusiasm for the Restoration faded to some extent, even if the sense remained that ongoing events were beneficial for the foreign community (*North China Herald*, 3.7. and 11.7.1868). The continued fighting in Japan was little remarked upon, in contrast to the coverage of the first months of 1868, which had been reported in detail as the conflict had unfolded right next to the foreigners in newly opened Kōbe-Hyōgo. A certain lack of interest set in as the fighting moved away from the Treaty Ports and dragged on. There remained speculation about the result of the struggle and the future role of the Shōgun, who was still held in high regard by the newspapers (*North China Herald*, 3.7. and 11.7.1868). In the end, however, these were Japanese matters, as a *Japan Times* article copied in the *North China Herald* states candidly: "Writing chiefly in a foreign point of view, it is immaterial to us how peace is restored to the country, so that it be restored" (*North China Herald*, 3.7.1868).

It was perhaps also a boon that the foreigners were little affected directly by the fighting of the Boshin War, with few exceptions such as a naval duel between a Tokugawa and a Satsuma ship in the harbour of Yokohama in January 1868, which was regarded as more of a spectacle than a threat (*Japan Times Overland Mail*, 13.1.1869). The Treaty Ports quickly came under Imperial control[4] and business continued, if not always "as flourishing as could be desired" (*North China Herald*, 3.7.1868). There was a return to more mundane problems affecting the ports and their communities, such as complaints about the inexperienced new customs agents from the southern domains now in power which had replaced the previous Bakufu agents with whom interaction had been tolerable in the last few years (*North China Herald*, 22.8.1868). The end of the year 1868 and the fierce resistance by the Northern domains, especially Aizu, further caused the *Japan Gazette* to doubt the stability of the Satchō alliance and perhaps even expect a revival of the Shogunate. The *Japan Times* on the other hand remained firmly behind the new government (*North China Herald* 5.9. and 19.9.1868).

This proved a short interlude, as the Northern Alliance was defeated in October effectively ending the conflict save for Enomoto Takeaki's holdouts who withdrew to

[4] The exception being Niigata, the smallest and least important Treaty Port, which only came under Imperial control in October 1868 (*North China Herald*, 31.10.1868).

Ezo.[5] There, they took over the Treaty Port Hakodate and began to be referred to as "Tokugawa pirates" in the press. The remnants of the Shōgun's forces, "the only obstacle to a complete restoration of public confidence", now became something of an annoyance, as they occupied the Treaty Port and allegedly interrupted trade there (*Japan Times Overland Mail*, 27.1.1869). The condemnation of the remnants even included a demand to the foreign representatives to enforce the treaty clause which prevented the sales of arms to anyone but the legitimate, now Meiji, government (*Japan Times Overland Mail*, 27.1.1869). As Steven Ivings' study of Hakodate reveals, however, this high-minded rhetoric in the newspaper was undermined by the fact that the sale of arms and provisions to the Tokugawa remnants was by far the most lucrative period of foreign trade in Hakodate's history, the majority of foreign vessels at that time being British (Ivings, 2017: 127-32). It also shows that while the newspapers generally reflected the attitude of the Treaty Port communities, they did so in an official and respectable manner, which on occasion was at odds with the actual illicit practices of the community.

Aside from these minor issues, around early 1869, the British newspapers remained content with the new government being in power. It was not perfect and there were frequent complaints, especially about the customs. However, in attitude at least, the new government was far superior to the previous one. For, the *Japan Times* exclaimed, "in no case have they delayed to redeem their errors immediately on their being pointed out to them" (*Japan Times Overland Mail*, 24.2.1869). This willingness of accepting Western standards and superiority, and seemingly to listen to complaints and implement remedies, was for the newspapers the real change which had happened in the year 1868. The Bakufu had shown signs of change by the end of its rule, but still bore the stigma of past obstinacy. Therefore, the new Japanese attitude of accepting Western models was primarily deemed a phenomenon of the Meiji Restoration and its actors. "They have seen the futility of attempting to stop the march of progress" (*Japan Times Overland Mail*, 26.6.1869).

Whether in regards to custom enforcement or dealing with anti-foreign violence, the Meiji Restoration proved a turning point. For while it was true that anti-foreign sentiments remained located, allegedly, within the ranks of former court advisors (*Japan Times Overland Mail*, 26.6.1869), the newspapers remained optimistic due to

[5] The historical name of modern-day Hokkaidō.

their "belief in the thorough good faith of the MIKADO's [sic] government" (*Japan Times Overland Mail*, 6.11.1869).

It is this faith which is a striking feature of the news reporting of the Treaty Port Press from the Meiji Restoration onwards. Despite the trade interruptions caused by the conflict within Japan, anti-foreign violence or bureaucratic problems, which had in past years resulted in harsh criticism of the Bakufu, the newspapers never wavered from their belief that the Meiji Emperor and his government represented a fundamental change. Whereas attitudes near the end of the Bakumatsu period had been ambiguous, with the last Shōgun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu, having been held in high esteem (*North China Herald*, 11.7.1868), the Meiji Restoration saw all doubts about Japanese obstinacy and resistance vanish. Minor complaints remained, but were justified and accepted as inexperience, minority opinions, or other mitigating circumstances. This attitude was generally shared by both newspapers, but they did not completely agree on matters. Despite the *Herald*'s claims that the *Japan Times's* opinions on Japanese questions "are always worthy of respect" (*North China Herald*, 15.2.1868), it maintained its own opinion, as seen during the Sakai incident, when they did not excuse the anti-foreign attack on grounds of alleged French provocation.

Perception of Modernity

The generally positive outlook on the transformation of Japan after the Meiji Restoration was not only found in regards to the new government, but also to Japan's progress as a nation. The 'Retrospect of 1869' on Japan in the *North China Herald* began with the words: "It is [a] pleasant turn from a record of stolid immobility to one of active progress" (*North China Herald*, 8.2.1870). 'Progress' was the key term within the Treaty Port Press in reference to modernisation and civilisation, with the Restoration being the starting point at which Japan began to embrace this Western concept. These changes, unsurprisingly, drew the attention of the newspapers, which began to report and comment on the Japanese developments, most often in reference to technology such as the railroad, but also to institutional changes such as the structure of government, as well as the general image of the nation. "No one can watch the present of Japan or speculate upon its future without the deepest interest" (*Japan Weekly Mail*, 1.10.1870).

In addition, "the interest in these events is greatly enhanced to us, by the contrast they offer with the lethargy of China" (*Japan Weekly Mail*, 22.2.1872). As already

mentioned, the interconnectedness of the Treaty Ports across East Asia once again, began to show in the reporting, as now direct comparisons were drawn between the developments taking place in Japan and China. After all, one of the main self-justifications of the British presence in the region remained its civilising mission for the betterment of the world (Osterhammel, 2009: n.p.).

For the Treaty Port Press, which regarded itself as one of the transmitters of civilisation, an educator of the "benighted East" (*Japan Weekly Mail*, 9.8.1873), it was impossible to ignore the growing dichotomy between China and Japan without commentary. The two nations were frequently and intentionally contrasted with each other in articles and columns. For the *North China Herald*, China now had an example by which it could orient itself in regards to its own progress, whereas in the *Japan Weekly Mail* the comparison was used to boast of its own successful influence. The idea of the 'mutual advantage' of the exchanges offered by the West had always been presented and now, as Japan had accepted these 'teachings', it was undoubtedly to the credit of its 'teachers', such as the *Japan Weekly Mail*.

In contrast to its neighbour, "the key to the great change now coming over the national mind of Japan is the fact, that it is discarding as rapidly as possible the Chinese mode of thought", which was responsible for Japan having been stuck in a barren waste "making no progress and arriving no nearer to the land of promise" (*Japan Weekly Mail*, 15.10.1870). It was only the coming of the European civilisation which "has opened their eyes, stimulated their faculties, and not only quickened their motions, but entirely altered their course [towards a brighter, i.e. European, future]" (*Japan Weekly Mail*, 15.10.1870). Japan had acknowledged its backwardness but was now striving for more, while China retained its "sulky stolidity" and refused the opportunities offered by the West (*North China Herald*, 8.2.1870). It was again the willingness to accept Western civilisation as a model and to participate in development and progress as the Treaty Port Press defined them, which set Japan apart, although actual advances remained limited. In other words, "instead of allowing itself to be crushed by the march of progress it [Japan] proposes to keep step with it" (*Japan Weekly Mail*, 2.9.1871). In contrast, China's refusal to play by Western rules or even acknowledge their validity was condemned. The Chinese have shown "reluctance to advance, though advance is advantage" (*Japan Weekly Mail*, 2.7.1870), an inexcusable affront to Western minds.

This clear picture painted in the press is perhaps a bit surprising, as actual progress in Japan, including industrialisation, remained very much in its earliest stages. An example is the construction of a railway line between Tōkyō and Yokohama, which began in April 1870, headed by British engineers (Cortazzi, 1987: 317-18). It was widely hailed as a step forward in the newspapers, but with some reservations, as they remained unsure if the Japanese could manage and operate such advanced technology and argued that perhaps it should be staffed by Europeans instead (Japan Weekly Mail, 7.5.1870). Another piece of technology which found its way to Japan was the telegraph, which not only improved communication but could serve as tool of enlightenment. Again, the first line was opened between Yokohama and Tōkyō in 1870, and was then in the process of being extended to Ōsaka. Here, while also uncertain of the skills and ability of Japanese to handle this new machinery, the *North China Herald* nonetheless expressed its firm belief that the same minds, which had accepted these innovations could be counted upon to work out any problems. In contrast stood China, where "telegraphs would flash light through the mental darkness amid which the mandarins shine with the false light of superior learning" (*North China Herald*, 21.12.1870). It was mere superstition which caused the Chinese to turn against "both the gifts and their bearers, and stagnation is preserved" (*North China Herald*, 21.12.1870).

It is a notable contrast which arises in the reporting about the two nations and becomes all the more noteworthy as it is one of the beginnings of the dichotomy of a 'backwards China' and a 'progressive Japan', which remained one of the prevalent images of East Asia in the minds of the West until the late twentieth century, and perhaps even beyond. In the view of the *North China Herald*, a "violent contrast, not illustrative similarity, marks the efforts of the Chinaman and the Japanese to find the more excellent way" (*North China Herald*, 15.2.1871). This perhaps better than any other example illustrates the formation of an image through the press, with its calculated evocation of images of light and darkness, progress and stagnation. It is consistently portrayed within the Treaty Port Press both in China and Japan from 1870 onwards, and although its impact is difficult to trace, it is likely to have been received by its readers and beyond the Treaty Ports. As already mentioned in passing, the then-editor of the *North China Herald* was a correspondent for the London-based *Times*, and although it is beyond the scope of this article to look at the image of China formed in

The Times, it is likely that his correspondence to England reflected the views espoused in his own paper.

That is not to say a monolithic picture of Japanese progress emerged in the newspapers, as there was criticism on the process of Japanese modernization as well. While the "sudden and agile advance of Japan" was applauded, it was also cautioned in as far as "we prefer the natural process of steady growth" and not drastic and unpredictable change (*Japan Weekly Mail*, 1.10.1870). After all, "the plant that springs up, in a night usually has rather a dejected appearance before next sundown" (*Japan Weekly Mail*, 1.10.1870). These admonitions were also part of an attitude of superiority and polemic present in the newspapers, which believed that only they held the right ideas about Japan's development and plans. Japanese fervour was to be acknowledged, but best tempered with European experience and wisdom. For example, while one of Japan's primary goals was to strengthen its own military, having seen its lack of development in this field as a major reason for the unwelcome foreign intrusion and the conclusion of the Unequal Treaties, the commercially oriented newspapers saw any efforts in this regard as foolish. They had the luxury of arguing from the standpoint of the strong, and they did, criticizing the Yokosuka arsenal which was under construction from 1866 as "one of the most wanton and pernicious [ideas] ever put into the mind of a nation in such an early step of its progress" (*Japan Weekly Mail*, 8.10.1870). The money and resources 'wasted' in this project should rather have been spent on productive commercial programs. This is furthermore one of the few areas, were China was regarded as superior, as labourers in Chinese arsenals proved better workers than the Japanese (*Japan Weekly Mail*, 8.10.1870).

The *Japan Weekly Mail* further warned Japan of "Unsound Progress" and the potential loss of its national identity and traditions, which would be abhorrent. They urged the nation to maintain its national dress, virtues and sentiments and its modes of thoughts (*Japan Weekly Mail*, 30.12.1871), for these were important parts of its national identity and should not be lost. While Japan's backwardness had been lamented, its exoticness was, and had always been, a source of fascination (Fält, 1990: 14). In the *North China Herald*, it was not the loss of identity but the rapidness of progress which was cause for concern. "The fault with Japan is not that she stops, but that she goes too fast. The Japanese have been so long in darkness, that they naturally err in the flood of light so suddenly let in upon their seclusion" (*North China Herald*, 8.2.1870).

The general criticism grew more pronounced towards the mid-1870s, as the enthusiasm for Japan's first strides faded and it became clear that the industrialisation and modernisation, not to mention the social and political changes would take longer to implement in society and the nation. In 1875, "progress [was] not as satisfactory as might be wished", with the developments of the first years after the Restoration having "inspired some unreasonable hopes" (*Japan Weekly Mail*, 27.3.1875). Yet, despite some disillusionment Japan remained a remarkable nation destined, due to its geostrategic position and talented people, to become a "Britain of the Far East" (*Japan Weekly Mail*, 27.3.1875).

Another criticism was the lack of progress in regards to a more representative form of government, which was considered a major hindrance to Japan's development. "Japan was trying to follow the examples of the Western nations, but she still retains the besetting sin of Eastern despotism" (*North China Herald*, 22.1.1874). Furthermore, Japan was still lacking in the translation and implementation of laws equal to the West. For all its progress, Japan was still far from attaining a system of laws that would ensure equitable justice for all, and it was therefore impossible to even consider the abolition of the extraterritorial clause of the Unequal Treaties (*North China Herald*, 5.2.1874). This was perhaps one of the most significant criticisms as it directly affected the newspapers themselves. They lived and operated under extraterritoriality and thus were its fiercest defenders. It remained the most problematic clause of the Unequal Treaties and one that Japan repeatedly sought to revise from the Meiji Restoration onwards, albeit without success until the abolition of the treaties in 1899. Revision attempts were usually met with no sympathy from the Treaty Port Press, revealing once again that the positive attitude towards Japan lasted as long as none of the primary interests of the newspapers and their communities were targeted.

Despite reservations and concerns, the image that emerged of Japan in the Treaty Port Press was clearly a new one, one that was different from the previous decade of interaction with the Japanese. It was one of progress and advancement, of a nation that had accepted the superior position of the European civilisation and mightily strove to emulate the West. There might have been some squabbles about how this process went about exactly, but in the end, it took place with a vigour and strength that surprised and pleased the observers in the newspapers. Even when progress began to slow by the mid-1870s, it was not necessarily a great disadvantage, and the general image of Japan remained excellent. An

image stood in marked contrast with that of China: "We had nothing to hope for from Japan twenty years ago and now we have everything that we can possibly wish. We had everything to hope for from China twenty years ago, and now we have nothing that her Rulers can possibly keep us out of" (*North China Herald*, 16.7.1870).

General conclusion

The Meiji Restoration was a watershed in the formation of an image of Japan within the Treaty Ports, as it was then, and the years in its immediate aftermath, that we see the image of a modern Japan emerging. Whereas the image had been ambiguous during the last years of the Bakufu, the Restoration was unequivocally viewed with great favour. Within the first weeks and months of 1868, it was accepted by the Treaty Port Press in Japan that a 'new Japan' had emerged, which espoused policies and ideas different from its predecessor and was remarkably open towards Western civilisation and its benefits. Even a wave of anti-foreign violence did not deter this basic advocation of the Restoration, the *North China Herald* being markedly more critical, while the *Japan Times Overland Mail*, in a display of European rivalry and nationalism blamed the French victims for the attacks. Later, problems with inexperienced officials were also downplayed, as for the newspapers the new attitude of accommodating the foreigners remained paramount.

By 1870 the newspapers had become firm supporters of the 'new Japan', leading to the formation of a new image of a 'progressive Japan' which was perpetuated by the Treaty Port Press. Although actual progress from the import of foreign technology to a representative government was slow, the perception of modernisation appeared almost immediately. Thereon this image was spread and perpetuated by the newspapers. Their reports were not blind to this dichotomy of intention and outcome with regards to modernisation, but again it was the attitude and the desire to modernise that won over the editors. Despite this, they remained critical judges of Japan's development, unhesitant in pointing out their own beliefs and concepts as to how Japanese progress should look and take place. This became more marked as the initial enthusiasm of the early 1870s faded, but never turned into disappointment. Thus, this article shows that an image of Japan as a modern, or at least modernising, nation was created much earlier than generally presumed. Although it would take several more decades until Japan was truly recognised as an equal by the West, the foundations were laid during and

immediately after the Meiji Restoration. In part, this might be ascribed to the nature of the analysed sources, i.e. newspapers, which tended towards hyperbole and eye-catching articles, leading to the possible interpretation that these articles were merely meant to boost sales. This is however unlikely, as the frequency and consistency with which this subject is discussed in the newspapers reveal that the reports carried the press's deep-seated belief that Japan was modernising.

It also stands in stark contrast to its neighbour, China, which was most frequently featured, in both papers, revealing not only the interconnectedness of the Treaty Ports, but the exchange of information and ideas that took place. China was remarked upon quite differently and a sharp contrast to Japan emerged in the image created by the *North China Herald* and *Japan Weekly Mail*. The colourful metaphors and language of the time, progress and stagnation, light and darkness, advances and immobility, helped evoke these images and certainly contributed to a specific image of Japan, and China, emerging from their pages.

Throughout, the newspapers remained agents of their creators and their communities, biased by the prevalent prejudices of the time, but they nonetheless portrayed an image of modern Japan as it emerged during and after the Meiji Restoration. The writers and editors of the papers were keen observers and their articles, for the most part, honestly and candidly reflected their understanding of the unfolding events and enabled them to create their own perception of Japan and its historic changes. Future research may continue in chronological order, analysing Japan's image while the nation was struggling with a revision of the Unequal Treaties and the inequality ascribed to them in the 1880s and 1890s. Alternatively, other Treaty Port newspapers, perhaps from French or German editors, may be analysed in order to compare the various Western perspectives.

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