

BLACK SHIPS & SAMURAI

COMMODORE PERRY AND THE OPENING OF JAPAN (1853-1854)

BY JOHN W. DOWER



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MIT VISUALIZING CULTURES

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION



Perry, ca. 1854

© Nagasaki Prefecture



Perry, ca. 1856

by Mathew Brady, Library of Congress

On July 8, 1853, residents of Uraga on the outskirts of Edo, the sprawling capital of feudal Japan, beheld an astonishing sight. Four foreign warships had entered their harbor under a cloud of black smoke, not a sail visible among them. They were, startled observers quickly learned, two coal-burning steamships towing two sloops under the command of a dour and imperious American. Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry had arrived to force the long-secluded country to open its doors to the outside world.



"The Spermacetti Whale" by J. Stewart, 1837

New Bedford Whaling Museum

This was a time that Americans can still picture today through Herman Melville's great novel *Moby Dick*, published in 1851—a time when whale-oil lamps illuminated homes, baleen whale bones gave women's skirts their copious form, and much industrial machinery was lubricated with the leviathan's oil. For several decades, whaling ships departing from New England ports had plied the rich fishery

around Japan, particularly the waters near the northern island of Hokkaido. They were prohibited from putting in to shore even temporarily for supplies, however, and shipwrecked sailors who fell into Japanese hands were commonly subjected to harsh treatment.



*Whale Chart, Japan in blue (detail, color added)
by M.F. Maury, US Navy, 1851*

New Bedford Whaling Museum

Nicknamed “Old Bruin” by one of his early crews (and “Old Hog” and other disparaging epithets by crewman with the Japan squadron), Matthew Perry was the younger brother of Oliver Hazard Perry, hero of the American victory over the British on Lake Erie in 1813. His own fame as a wartime leader had been established in the recent U.S. war against Mexico, where he commanded a squadron that raided various ports and supported the storming of Vera Cruz. Victory over Mexico in 1848 did not merely add California to the United States. It also opened the vista of new frontiers further west across the Pacific Ocean. The markets and heathen souls of near-mythic “Asia” now beckoned more enticingly than ever before. Mars, Mammon, and God traveled hand-in-hand in this dawning age of technological and commercial revolution.

This situation could not last. “If that double-bolted land, Japan, is ever to become hospitable,” Melville wrote in *Moby Dick*, “it is the whaleship alone to whom the credit will be due, for already she is on the threshold.” One of the primary objectives of Perry’s expedition was to demand that castaways be treated humanely and whalers and other American vessels be provided with one or two ports of call with access to “coal, provisions, and water.”

The message Perry brought to Japan’s leaders from President Millard Fillmore also looked forward, in very general terms, to the eventual establishment of mutually beneficial trade relations. On the surface, Perry’s demands seemed relatively modest. Yet, as his own career made clear, this was also a moment when the world stood on the cusp of phenomenal change.



*President Fillmore’s 1853 letter
to “The Emperor of Japan”*

New Bedford Whaling Museum

U.S. merchant firms had been involved in the China trade centering on Canton since the previous century. Indeed, “Chinoiserie”—elegant furnishings and objects d’art imported from the Far East, or else mimicking Chinese and Japanese art and artifacts—graced many fashionable European and American homes from the late-17th century on. Following England’s victory in the Opium War of 1839-1842, the United States joined the system of “unequal treaties” that opened additional Chinese ports to foreign commerce. Tall, elegant Yankee clipper ships engaged in a lively commerce that included not merely Oriental luxuries such as silks, porcelains, and lacquer ware, but also opium (for China) and Chinese coolies (to help build America’s transcontinental railway). Now, as Perry would ponderously convey to the Japanese, ports on the West Coast such as San Francisco were opening up as well. In the new age of steam-driven vessels, the distance between California and Japan had been reduced to but 18 days. Calculations concerning space, and time, and America’s “manifest destiny” itself had all been dramatically transformed.

For Americans, Perry’s expedition to Japan was but one momentous step in a seemingly inexorable westward expansion that ultimately spilled across the Pacific to embrace the exotic “East.” For the Japanese, on the other hand, the intrusion of Perry’s warships was traumatic, confounding, fascinating, and ultimately devastating.

For almost a century prior to the 1630s, Japan had in fact engaged in stimulating relations with European trading ships and Christian missionaries. Widely known as the “southern barbarians” (since they arrived from the south, after sailing around India and through the South Seas), these foreigners established a particularly strong presence in and around the great port city of Nagasaki on the southern island of Kyushu. Spain, Portugal, Holland, and England engaged in a lucrative triangular trade involving China as well as Japan.

Protestant missionaries eventually followed their Catholic predecessors and rivals, and by the early-17th century Christian converts in Kyushu were calculated to number many tens of thousands. (Catholic missionaries put the figure at around a quarter million.) At the same time, Japanese culture had become enriched by a brilliant vogue of “Southern Barbarian” art—by artwork, that is, that depicted the Europeans in Japan as well as the lands and cultures from which they had come. This new world of visual imagery ranged from large folding screens depicting the harbor at Nagasaki peopled with foreigners and their trading ships to both religious and secular paintings copied from European sources.

*The arrival of
“Southern
Barbarians,”
17th-century fold-
ing screen*

Nagasaki Prefecture



During these same decades, the Japanese themselves were venturing abroad. Their voyagers established footholds in Siam and the Philippines, for example, and a small delegation of Japanese Christians actually visited the Vatican. The country seemed poised to join in the great age of overseas expansion.

All this came to an abrupt end in 1639, when the ruling warrior government enforced a strict “closed country” (sakoku) policy: Japanese were forbidden to travel abroad, foreigners were expelled, and Christian worship was forbidden and cruelly punished.



17th-century Japanese portrait of Francis Xavier, the Spanish Jesuit who introduced Christianity to Japan in the mid-16th century

Kobe City Museum

“Hidden Christians” reluctant to recant were ferreted out by forcing them to step on pictures or metal bas-reliefs of Christian icons such as the crucifixion or the Virgin Mary known as *fumie* (literally, “step-on pictures”), and observing their reactions—a practice the Japanese sometimes forced American castaways to do as well.

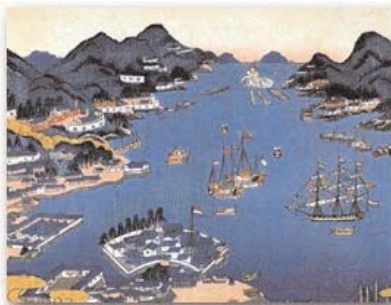
The rationale behind the draconian seclusion policy was both strategic and ideological. The foreign powers, not unreasonably, were seen as posing a potential military threat to Japan; and it was feared, again not unreasonably, that devotion to the Christian Lord might undermine absolute loyalty to the feudal lords who ruled the land.



Fumie of Virgin Mary with Christ child

Shiryo Hensanjo, University of Tokyo

The most notable small exception to the seclusion policy was the continued presence of a Dutch mission confined to Dejima, a tiny, fan-shaped, artificial island in the harbor at Nagasaki. Through Dejima and the Dutch, the now isolated Japanese maintained a small window on developments in the outside world.



The “fan-shaped” island of Dejima in Nagasaki harbor, where the Dutch were permitted to maintain an enclave during the period of seclusion

Nagasaki Prefecture (left), Peabody Essex Museum (middle, right)

Under the seclusion policy, the Japanese enjoyed over two centuries of insular security and economic self-sufficiency. Warriors became bureaucrats. Commerce flourished. Major highways laced the land. Lively towns dotted the landscape, and great cities came into being. At the time of Perry's arrival, Edo (later renamed Tokyo) had a population of around one million. The very city that Perry's tiny fleet approached in 1853 was one of the greatest urban centers in the world—although the outside world was unaware of this.

As it turned out, Perry himself never got to see Edo. Although his mission to open Japan succeeded in every respect, the negotiations took place in modest seaside locales. It remained for those who followed to tell the world about Japan's extraordinary capital city.

While the Japanese did not experience the political, scientific, and industrial revolutions that were sweeping the Western world during their two centuries of seclusion, these developments were not unknown to them. Through the Dutch enclave at Dejima, a small number of Japanese scholars had kept abreast of "Dutch studies" (Rangaku) and "Western studies" (Yogaku). And as news of European expansion filtered in, the feudal regime in Edo became alarmed enough to relax its anti-foreign strictures and permit the establishment of an official "Institute for the Investigation of Barbarian Books."

One of the earliest accounts of North America to appear in Japanese, published in 1708, reflected more than a little confusion: it referred to "a country cold and large...with many lions, elephants, tigers, leopards, and brown and white bears," in which "the natives are pugnacious and love to fight." As happens in secluded societies everywhere, moreover, there existed a subculture of fabulous stories about peoples inhabiting far-away places.

An 18th-century scroll titled "People of Forty-two Lands," for example, played to such imagination with illustrations of figures with multiple arms and legs, people with huge holes running through their upper bodies, semi-human creatures feathered head to toe like birds, and so on.



"People of Forty-two Lands" (details), ca. 1720

Ryosenji Treasure Museum

Such grotesqueries belonged to a larger fantasy world of supernatural beings that had countless visual representations in popular art. Throughout the period of seclusion, however, naturalistic depictions of Europeans in the tradition of the “Southern Barbarian” artwork continued to be produced, particularly depicting the daily life of the “red hairs,” as the Dutch in Dejima were commonly known.

Dutch dinner party
by Kawahara Keiga,
early-19th century

Peabody Essex Museum



Dutch family
by Jo Girin, ca. 1800

Peabody Essex Museum

Dutch “surgery”

Kobe City Museum

Concrete knowledge of the West, including the United States, deepened over time. The Japanese obtained Chinese translations of certain American texts, including a standard history of the United States, and the very eve of Perry’s arrival saw the publication of both a full-length “New History of America” (which, among other things, singled out egalitarianism, beef eating, and milk drinking) and a “General Account of America” that described the Americans as educated and civilized, and stated that they should be met “with respect but not fear.”



Illustrations from a Japanese book about the United States published on the eve of Perry's arrival included imaginary renderings of "Columbus and Queen Isabella" (left) and "George Washington and Amerigo Vespucci" (!)

Collection of Carl H. Boehringer

The most vivid and intimate information available to Japanese officials prior to Perry's arrival came from "John Manjiro," a celebrated Japanese youth who had been shipwrecked while fishing off the Japanese coast in 1841. Only 14 years old at the time, Manjiro was rescued by an American vessel and brought to the United States. He lived in Fairhaven, Massachusetts for three years, sailed for a while on an American whaler, and even briefly joined the gold rush to California in 1849. When Manjiro finally made his way back to Japan in 1851, samurai officials interrogated him at great length.

Manjiro praised the Americans as a people who were "upright and generous, and do no evil"—although he noted that they did engage in odd practices like reading in the toilet, living in houses cluttered with furniture, and expressing affection between men and women in public (in this regard, he found them "lewd" and "wanton"). Manjiro also regaled his interrogators with accounts of America's remarkable technological progress, including railways, steamships, and the telegraph. An account of his adventures prepared with the help of a samurai scholar in 1852 even included crude drawings of a paddle-wheel steamship and a train.



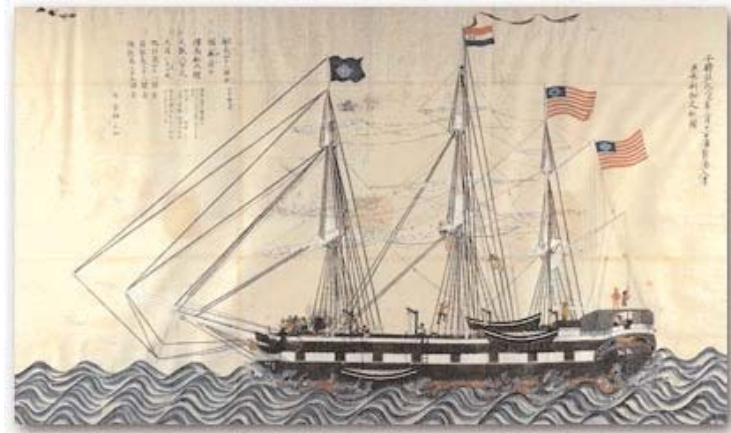
John Manjiro

When Perry's warships appeared off Uraga at the entry to Edo Bay, they were thus not a complete surprise. The Dutch in Dejima had informed the Japanese that the expedition was on its way. And John Manjiro had already described the wonders of the steam engine. As the official report of the Perry expedition later noted, "however backward the Japanese themselves may be in practical science, the best educated among them are tolerably well informed of its progress among more civilized or rather cultivated nations." Such abstract knowledge, however, failed to mitigate the shock of the commodore's gunboat diplomacy.

Perry was not the first American to enter Japanese waters and attempt to make that double-bolted land “hospitable.” Several American vessels flying Dutch flags had entered Nagasaki harbor around the turn of the century, intent on commerce. In 1837, the unarmed trading ship *Morrison* had approached Uruga on a private mission to promote not only trade but also “the glory of God in the salvation of thirty-five million souls.” At Uruga, and again at Kagoshima on the southern tip of Kyushu, the vessel was fired on and driven off. In 1845, the whaleship *Manhattan* was allowed to briefly put in at Uruga to return 22 shipwrecked Japanese sailors.

*The whaleship
Manhattan,
1845 watercolor by
an anonymous
Japanese artist*

New Bedford
Whaling Museum



The following year, two warships commanded by Commodore James Biddle entered Edo Bay and engaged in preliminary contact with Japanese officials. Biddle was not allowed to come ashore, however, and when ordered to “depart immediately” did precisely as he had been told—leaving no legacy beyond a few American and Japanese illustrations of his warships.



*Lithograph depicting
Commodore Biddle's ships
anchored in Edo Bay in
1846 and surrounded by
small Japanese boats*

Peabody Essex Museum

Perry possessed what his predecessors had lacked: grim determination, for one thing—and, still more intimidating, the steam-driven warships. He was not to be denied. And the erst-while warrior leaders in Edo, who had not actually fought any wars for almost two-and-a-half centuries, quickly recognized that they had no alternative but to submit to his demands. They lacked the firepower—and all the advanced technology such power exemplified—to resist.

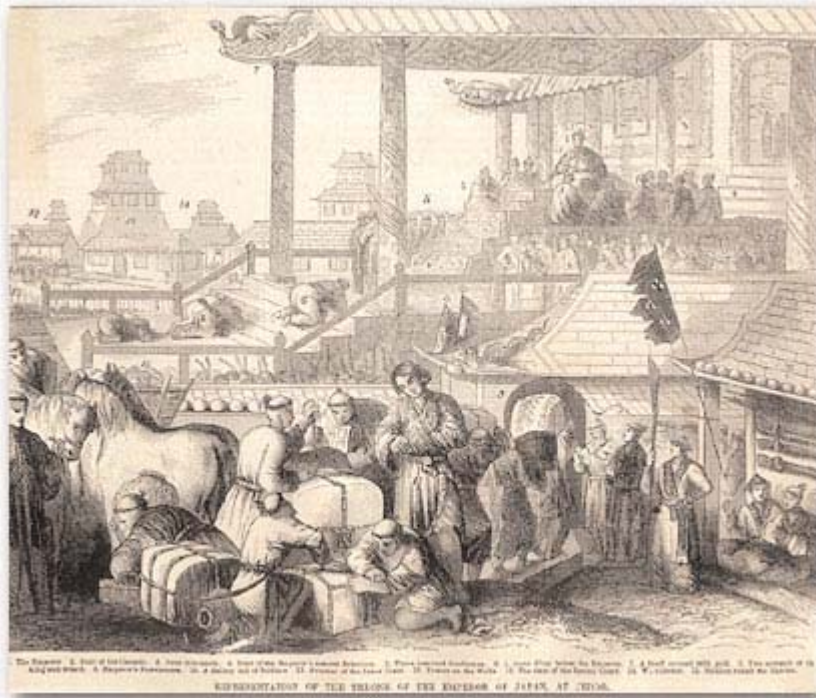
Perry prepared diligently for his mission, and immersed himself in the most authoritative foreign publications available on Japan. Some of these accounts, emanating from Europeans who had been stationed in Dejima, provided a general overview of political, economic, and social conditions. An American geography text described Japan in flattering terms as “the most civilized and refined nation of Asia,” while other accounts, dwelling on the persecution of Christians and inhospitable treatment meted out to castaways, spoke derisively of a land that had regressed “into barbarism and idolatry.”

In *Japan and the Japanese*, a small book published in America in 1852 as a send-off to the Perry expedition, a former employee of the British East India Company paired synopses of prior writings with a selection of illustrations that revealed how odd and exotic the little-known heathen still remained in the imagination of Westerners. These thoroughly fanciful graphics conjured up a world of bizarre religious icons commingled with sturdy men and women wearing Chinese-style robes, holding large and stiff fan-shaped implements, even promenading with folded umbrella-like tents draped over their heads and carried from behind by an attendant.



Illustrations in Japan and the Japanese (1852) included the worshipping of idols, “Habit of the Japanese Soldiers,” and “A Japanese Lady of Quality”

Such fantasy masquerading as informed commentary and illustration was typical. Just months before Perry's arrival in Japan, the popular U.S. periodical *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* published a dramatic engraving depicting "the emperor of Japan" holding public court in "Jeddo" (the old romanized spelling of Edo, the capital city later renamed Tokyo). Here, too—despite being annotated with 15 numbered details—the graphic was entirely imaginary. The emperor lived in Kyoto rather than Edo. His palace surroundings were not highly Sinified ("Chinese"), as depicted here. He never held public court. And Japanese "gentlemen" and "soldiers" did not wear costumes or sport hairstyles of the sort portrayed.



"Representation of the Throne of the Emperor of Japan, at Jeddo" from the April 12, 1853 issue of Gleason's Pictorial

In his private journals, Perry himself anticipated encountering "a weak and barbarous people," and resolved to assume the most forbidding demeanor possible within the bounds of proper decorum. Despite his diligent preparations, he (much like *Gleason's Pictorial*) never fully grasped where real power resided and with whom he was dealing. The letter he carried from President Fillmore was addressed "To His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor of Japan," and the report the commodore published after his mission was completed referred repeatedly to his dealings with "Imperial Commissioners." The hereditary imperial house in Kyoto was virtually powerless, however, having ceded de facto authority some seven centuries previously to warriors headed by a Shogun, or Supreme Commander. The "Imperial Commissioners" to whom Perry conveyed his demands were actually representatives of the warrior government headed by the Tokugawa clan, which had held the position of Shogun since the beginning of the 17th century.

In practice, none of this ambiguity mattered. Perry dealt with the holders of real authority, and through them had his way.



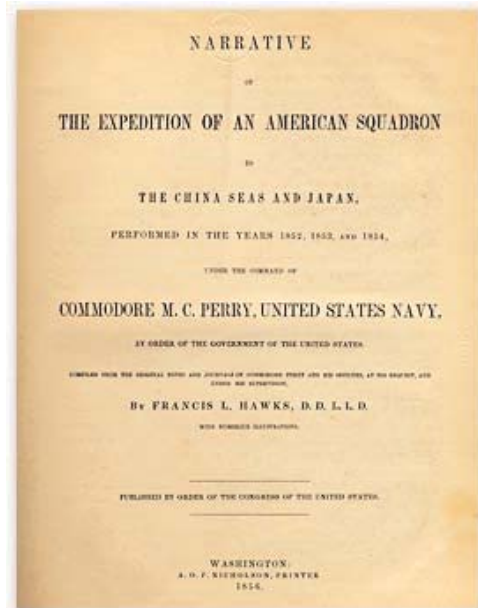
His 1853 visit was short. While the Japanese looked on in horror, the Americans blithely surveyed the waters around Edo Bay. On July 14, five days after appearing off Uruga, the commodore went ashore with great pomp and ceremony to present his demands to the Shogun's officials, who had gathered onshore near what was then the little town of Yokohama, south of Edo. Perry's entourage of some 300 officers, marines, and musicians passed without incident through ranks of armed samurai to a hastily erected "Audience Hall" made of wood and cloth. There Perry handed over President Fillmore's letter, explained that the United States sought peace and prosperity for both countries, and announced that he would return

shortly, with a larger squadron, for the government's answer. Three days later, the four American vessels weighed anchor and left.

Perry made good on his heavy-handed promise some six months later, this time arriving in early March of 1854 with nine vessels (including three steamers), over 100 mounted guns, and a crew of close to 1,800.

This second encounter was accompanied by far greater interaction and socialization between the two sides. Gifts were exchanged, banquets were held, entertainment was offered, and the Americans spent much more time on shore, observing the countryside and intermingling with ordinary Japanese as well as local officials. The high point of these activities was a treaty signed on March 31 in Kanagawa, another locale on Edo Bay, which met all of the U.S. government's requests. The Treaty of Kanagawa guaranteed good treatment of castaways, opened two Japanese ports (Shimoda and Hakodate) for provisions and refuge, and laid the groundwork for Japan's reluctant acceptance of an American "consul"—which, as soon transpired, broke down the remaining barriers to Japan's incorporation in the global political economy.

The Perry expeditions of 1853 and 1854 constitute an extraordinary moment in the modern encounter between "East" and "West." Japan was suddenly "opened" to a world of foreign influences and experiences that poured in like a flood and quickly seeped into all corners of the archipelago. And the Americans—and other foreigners who quickly followed on their heels (the British, Dutch, French, and Russians)—abruptly found themselves face-to-face with an "Oriental" culture that had hitherto existed primarily as a figment of imagination. On all sides—whether facing "East" or facing "West"—the experience was profound. Whole new worlds became visualized in unprecedented ways.



Title page of the official Narrative of the Perry mission.

This was true literally, not just figuratively. On the American side, Perry's entourage included two accomplished artists: William Heine and Eliphalet Brown, Jr. Their graphic renderings—particularly Heine's detailed depictions of scenic sites and crowded activities—were subsequently reproduced as tinted lithographs and plain woodcuts in a massive official U.S. account of the expedition (published in three volumes between 1856 and 1858, and cumulatively titled *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan, performed in the years 1852, 1853, and 1854, under the Command of Commodore M. C. Perry, United States Navy, by Order of the Government of the United States*). Additionally, a small selection of official illustrations was made available in the form of large, independent, brightly colored lithographs.

As it happened, the Perry expeditions took place shortly after the invention of daguerreotype photography (in 1839), and Eliphalet Brown, Jr. in particular was entrusted with compiling a photographic record of the mission. Although most of his plates were subsequently destroyed in a fire, we still can easily imagine what was recorded through the camera's eye, for the official narrative also includes woodcuts and lithographs of carefully posed Japanese that are explicitly identified as being "from a daguerreotype."

On the Japanese side, there was no comparable official visual record of these encounters, although we know from accounts of the time that boatloads of Japanese artists and illustrators rushed out to draw the "black ships" from virtually the moment they appeared off Uraga. What we have instead of a consolidated official collection is a scattered treasury of graphic renderings of various aspects of the startling foreign intrusion. The Americans were, of course, as alien to the Japanese as the Japanese were, in their turn, to the Americans. They were, depending on the viewer, strange, curious, fascinating, attractive, lumpish, humorous, outlandish, and menacing—frequently an untidy mixture of several of these traits.

Japanese artists, moreover, rendered their impressions through forms of expression that differed from the lithographs, woodcuts, paintings, and photographs that Europeans and Americans of the time relied on in delineating the visual world. Vivacious woodblock prints, cruder runs of black-and-white "kawaraban" broadsheets, and drawings and brushwork in a conspicuously "Japanese" manner constituted the primary vehicles through which the great encounters of 1853 and 1854 were conveyed to a wider audience in Japan. Some of this artwork spilled over into the realm of caricature and cartoon.

The complementary but decidedly contrasting American and Japanese images of the Perry mission and opening of Japan constitute a rare moment in the history of "visualizing cultures." This was, after all, an unusually concentrated face-to-face encounter between a fundamentally white, Christian, and expansionist "Western" nation and a reclusive and hitherto all-but-unknown "Oriental" society. It was also a moment during which each side produced hundreds of graphic renderings not only of the alien foreigner, but of themselves as well. It is tempting, and indeed fascinating, to ask which side was more "realistic" in its renderings—but this really misses the point. For it is only by seeing the visual record whole, in its fullest possible range and variety, that we can grasp how complex and multi-layered these interactions really were.

BLACK SHIPS & SAMURAI

COMMODORE PERRY AND THE OPENING OF JAPAN (1853-1854)

BY JOHN W. DOWER

CHAPTER TWO: PERRY



Perry, 1854

Ryosenji Treasure Museum



Perry, 1852

Library of Congress

Westerners following Perry's exploits from afar relied on photographs, or far more commonly lithographs or woodcuts based on photographs, to imagine what the commodore looked like. Around the time of the Japan voyages, we encounter him in several renderings: sour in civilian garb just before departing, for example, and posing in profile for a photo used in casting a commemorative coin soon after he had returned.



*Daguerreotype of Perry
1852*

New Bedford Whaling Museum



*Silver coin with Perry's profile, 1855
and the daguerreotype on which it was based*

US Naval Academy Museum



The most famous portrait, taken by the great photographer Mathew Brady after the completion of the Perry mission, portrays the commodore standing in full uniform.

In popular illustrated periodicals, where photographs were reprocessed as lithographs and the like, his features became somewhat softened.



*Daguerreotype by
Mathew Brady
ca.1856 (left)*

Library of Congress

*Lithograph from
a daguerreotype
by P. Haas*

Harvard University
Library



The best-known Japanese woodblock portrait of Perry seems, at first glance, almost a mirror image of the jowly, clean-shaven individual in Brady's famous photo.



*"Portrait of Perry,
a North American,"
woodblock print,
ca. 1854 (left)*

Nagasaki Prefecture



*Daguerreotype by
Mathew Brady (detail)
ca.1856*

Library of Congress

As sometimes happened with especially popular woodblock prints, this rendering of "Portrait of Perry, a North American" actually circulated in several versions, with subtle variations in detail and coloring. In some versions, the commodore's hair is reddish—clearly evoking the familiar depiction of the Dutch as "red hairs." And in some, the whites of Perry's eyes are blue.



Nagasaki Prefecture



Peabody Essex Museum



Ryosenji Treasure Museum



We can offer both a simple and a more subtle explanation for these somewhat startling eyeballs. In the popular parlance of feudal Japan, Westerners were sometimes referred to as “blue-eyed barbarians,” and it is possible that some artists were a bit confused concerning where such blueness resided. That is the simple possibility. It was also the case, how-

ever, that in colored woodblock prints in general—which only emerged as a popular genre during the era of seclusion—ferocious and threatening figures such as monsters and renegades were frequently stigmatized by the same strange blue eyeball. Whatever the explanation, popular renderings of Perry and his fellow “barbarians” drew on conventions entrenched in the indigenous culture.

Although commercial artists immediately rowed out in small boats to draw pictures of Perry’s fleet on the occasion of the first visit in July 1853, then and even thereafter few actually had the opportunity to behold the commodore in person. This was due, in no little part, to Perry’s decision to enhance his authority by making himself as inaccessible as possible. Indeed, he remained so secluded prior to the formal presentation of the president’s letter that some Japanese, it is said, took to calling his cabin on the flagship “The Abode of the High and Mighty Mysteriousness.”



Perry as a long-nosed tengu or goblin ca. 1854

Ryosenji Treasure Museum

Failing to see Perry personally left many artists with little but their imaginations to rely on in depicting His High and Mighty Mysteriousness, a situation that the majority of them serenely accepted and even relished. And, in more than a few cases, they leave us with lit-

tle guesswork concerning where (beyond “red hairs” and “blue-eyed barbarians”) their stereotypes were coming from. In one instance, for example, we find the commodore presented as “Tengu Perry”—alluding to the large, long-nosed goblin figures that folklore portrayed as possessing uncanny powers.



More common were prints and paintings that rendered Perry and his fellow Americans conspicuously hirsute. In several such portraits, we find him paired with Commander Henry A. Adams, his second-in-command.

Adams (left) and Perry

Ryosenji Treasure Museum

Perry (left) and Adams, from "The Pictorial Scroll of the Arrival at Kurihama" ca. 1854

Ryosenji Treasure Museum



In another print, Perry is paired with his young son (named after Perry's famous brother Oliver), who accompanied him to Japan—here sporting a trim mustache like his father, but lacking his father's goatee.



Perry and son, woodblock print 1854

Ryosenji Treasure Museum

A painting of Oliver Perry alone, on the other hand, portrays him not only clean-shaven, but looking remarkably like a delicate and romantic Japanese youth.

*Perry's son Oliver, painting
ca. 1854*

Ryosenji Treasure Museum



A well-known black-and-white *kawaraban* print of the commodore hoisting a sheathed sword and wearing a strange brimless cap features a thick mustache running parallel to bushy eyebrows.

*Perry, kawaraban (broadsheet)
1854*

Ryosenji Treasure Museum



A scroll painted in Shimoda in 1854, on the other hand, renders him with both bushy hair and beard and trim hair and beard—as if he had gone to the barber and returned while the artist was still at work.

Why all this facial hair? The explanation lies primarily in the power of imaginative language: ever since the distant 16th- and early-17th-century encounter, another derisive sobriquet for Westerners was “hairy barbarians” (*keto* or *ketojin*).



Two images of Perry from the "Black Ship Scroll," 1854

Honolulu Academy of Art

On rare occasion, the commodore's hairy visage was transparently barbaric and even demonic—as if the American emissary were truly one of the legendary demons or devils (*oni* and *akuma*) that old folktales spoke about as dwelling across the seas. The most vivid such renderings are to be found in some truly alarming close-ups of both Perry and Adams that also appear in the Shimoda scroll.

*Portrait of Perry
from the "Black Ship Scroll"*

Text: "True portrait of Perry, envoy of the Republic of North America. His age is over sixty, complexion yellow, eyes slanted upwards, nose impressive, lips red as if rouged. His hair is curled like rings and mixed with gray. He wears three gold rings. His uniform is white wool with raised crests woven in gold...."

Honolulu Academy of Art



*Portrait of Adams
from the "Black Ship Scroll"*

Text: "True portrait of Adams, Second in Command from the Republic of North America. His complexion is yellow with an earthy tone, eyes large, nose high-bridged. He is very tall. His uniform is black wool with raised crests woven with gold...."

Honolulu Academy of Art



Even this Shimoda scroll, however, suggests that appearances could be deceiving. The text that surrounds its ferocious “True Portrait of Perry” also includes the following poem, which the commodore was imagined to have composed on board his flagship:

*Distant moon that appears
over the Sea of Musashi,
your beams also shine on California.*

Apparently, even barbarians might have Japanese-style poetic souls. Indeed, when it came to painting and describing Adams’ 15-year-old son, who accompanied the mission, the “Black Ship Scroll” practically fell all over itself in portraying him as a paragon of polyglot virtues—delicate, aesthetic, muscular, martial, and a model of filial piety.

Portrait of Adams’ son from the “Black Ship Scroll”



Text: “This youth is extremely beautiful. His complexion is white, around his eyes is pink, his mouth is small, and his lips are red. His body, hands, and feet are slightly plump, and his features are rather feminine. He is intelligent by nature, dutiful to his parents, and has a taste for the martial arts. He likes scholarship, composes and recites poems and songs, and reads books three lines at a glance. His power exceeds three men, and his shooting ability is exceptional....”

As we shall see again in other renderings of interactions with the Perry mission, the commodore and his fellow Americans were also drawn from direct observation on occasion, and depicted as being simply people of a different race and culture. Their features were sharper than their Japanese counterparts. Their clothing differed. They comported themselves in occasionally peculiar ways. Clearly, however, they shared a common humanity with the Japanese.

An informal watercolor of Perry and Adams painted by Hayashi Shikyo in 1854, for example, conveys an impression of the two men as officers rather weary with responsibility.

Almost a half century later, Shimooka Renjo, who had actually participated in one of the conferences with Perry, painted the commodore's portrait in watercolor and ink and mounted this as a traditional hanging scroll (*kakemono*). Here was a Perry unlike those produced in the tumult of the actual encounter: carefully executed, formal, respectful, tinged with obvious Western painterly influence—and still distinctively “Japanese.”



*Perry (left) and Adams,
by Hayashi Shikyo, 1854*

Peabody Essex Museum



*Kakemono (hanging scroll)
of Perry, by Shimooka Renjo
1901*

Peabody Essex Museum

BLACK SHIPS & SAMURAI

COMMODORE PERRY AND THE OPENING OF JAPAN (1853-1854)

BY JOHN W. DOWER

CHAPTER THREE: BLACK SHIPS



"Carrying the 'Gospel of God' to the Heathen"

Ryosenji Treasure Museum



American warship, ca. 1854

© Nagasaki Prefecture

On the 1853 voyage, Perry's fleet consisted of two steam-driven frigates (the *Mississippi* and *Susquehanna*) and two sloops, with a total complement of 65 guns and a little less than 1,000 men. When he returned the following year, his armada had grown to nine vessels, with the new flagship *Powhatan* joining the other two paddle-wheel warships. The crew had almost doubled to around 1,800, and mounted cannon now numbered over 100.

In Japanese parlance, the American vessels quickly became known as the "black ships"—probably from the color of their hulls, although it is sometimes said that the label derived from the clouds of smoke that hovered over the coal-burning ships.

Perry himself had played a major role in mechanizing the U.S. Navy, and the new steam technology persuaded all who saw it that the world had entered a new era. When his oldest steamer, the *Mississippi*, was launched in 1841, its huge engines were described as "iron earthquakes." On the 1854 mission, the *Mississippi* consumed 2,336 pounds of coal per hour, while the corresponding figures for the less efficient *Susquehanna* and *Powhatan* were 3,310 pounds and 3,248 pounds respectively. To conserve fuel, all of the steamers hoisted sail as well.

Japan's adoption of the "closed country" policy in the early-17th century involved not merely keeping foreigners out, but also keeping Japanese in. Thus, severe restrictions were placed on shipbuilding, and maritime activity was restricted to sailing small vessels in coastal waters. An illustration in the official narrative of the Perry mission depicted one of the single-sail "junks" that patrolled the waters outside Edo.



Japanese "junk" as recorded by the Perry mission in the official Narrative

Even as pure sailboats, such modest vessels obviously could not compare with the great multi-mast ships of the foreign powers. Add steam engines and a battery of cannon, and it was all the more painfully apparent how far behind Japan had fallen during its long seclusion.

Ships captivate artists, and the visual record of Perry's mission is no exception. Although Perry first arrived in Japan in 1853 with a fleet of only four vessels (and returned in 1854 with nine), in May 1852 *Gleason's Pictorial* featured a stirring illustration of seven vessels it was originally anticipated would be "composing the Japanese Squadron." In its Valentine's Day edition of the following year, Gleason's gave Commodore Perry a spectacular send-off with a two-page engraving of an even larger armada readying for departure. Titled, "A Superb View of the United States Japanese Squadron, Under the Command of Commodore Perry, Bound for the East," this now well-known illustration included twelve vessels. Here, the artist merely expanded and rearranged the already imaginary earlier rendering. (Hand-tinted versions of both of these magazine illustrations often appear on the rare books and prints market.)

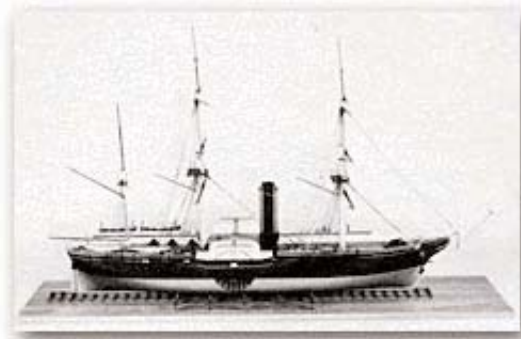


This dramatically imagined rendering of Perry's squadron appeared in the February 12, 1853 issue of Gleason's Pictorial. Perry is being rowed to his flagship on the first voyage, the steamer Mississippi. In fact, the 1853 mission was comprised of only four ships.



*Photograph of the Powhatan,
which remained in service until 1887*

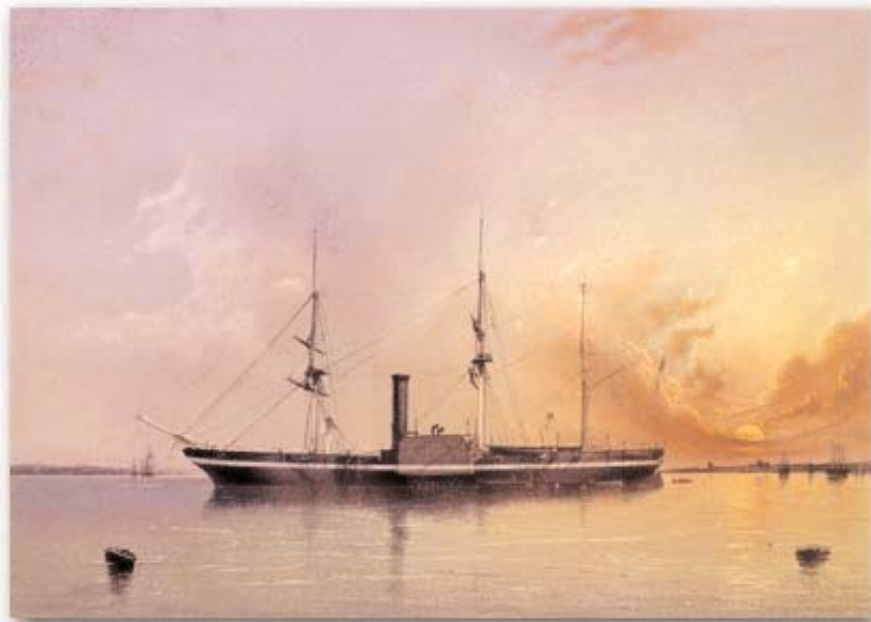
US Naval Academy



*Model of the Powhatan,
flagship on the second voyage*

Smithsonian Institution

The *Powhatan*, Perry's famous flagship on the second voyage, survives in photographs, small-scale models, and—most spectacularly—the romantic frontispiece of a now classic 1853 book by Charles Beebe Stuart titled *Naval and Mail Steamers of the United States*. This luminescent, painterly rendering breathes romance and even mystery into this rather stolid warship through the filtered light and near-mystic ambiance associated with the “Turner school” of high-art painting (named after the British artist Joseph Turner, who died in 1851).



*Oil painting of the Powhatan from C. B. Stuart,
Naval and Mail Steamers of the United States, 1853*

Yokohama Archives of History

Perry's own artists captured the fleet both at rest and in turbulence, but the most provocative rendering of the black ships at sea came from a painter back home, who added a banner legend to his own imaginary artwork to remind Americans that the commodore's true mission was literally divine. Perry himself usually spoke in terms of showing the flag, opening the doors of commerce, and spreading "civilization" to a backward people.



Perry's fleet at anchor and in turbulent seas, as depicted in the official Narrative

At the same time, it was widely understood that he was also returning Christianity to a heathen society that had driven out such teachings over two centuries previously. Accordingly, in this graphic rendering, we behold both steamship and sailship plowing through frothy seas above a large caption reading "U.S. JAPAN FLEET. Com. PERRY carrying the 'GOSPEL of GOD' to the HEATHEN, 1853."



"U.S. JAPAN FLEET. Com. PERRY carrying the 'GOSPEL of GOD' to the HEATHEN, 1853" by James G. Evans, oil on canvas

Chicago Historical Society

One person's god may be another's demon, of course. In this regard, Japanese artists also gave free rein to their imaginations by depicting the steam-driven black warships, almost literally, as Darkness Incarnate. In the best-known print of this sort, the ship's hull is pitch black, smoke belches from its funnel, the figurehead on the bow is a leering monster, port-holes high in the stern glower like the eyes of an apparition, the ship's sides bristle with rows of cannon, and gunfire streaks like a searchlight from a gun near the bow as well as from another, unseen, at the stern.



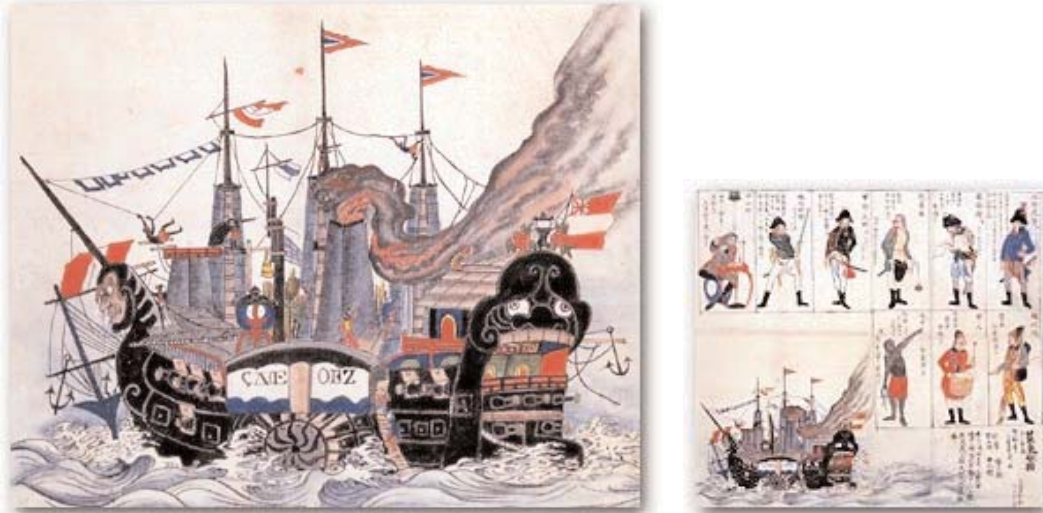
*American warship,
woodblock print
ca. 1854*

Nagasaki Prefecture



Although woodblock prints as a genre were popular illustrations never intended to be confused with fine art, the detail of this demonic rendering reveals several aesthetic touches characteristic of traditional Japanese design. We see this in the stylized curves of the waves and filigreed rendering of whitecaps and splashing water, for example, as well as in the distinctive pattern of the ship's paddle-wheel.

In a demonic sister ship that was part of a larger painted montage, many of the same features are present—and a touch more. Here smoke from the coal-burning engines is streaked with forked tongues of flame. To knowledgeable Japanese, these might well have evoked classic artistic depictions of the fires of hell and the conflagrations that consumed palaces and temples in an earlier era of civil wars.



"Black Ship and Crew," watercolor on paper, ca. 1854

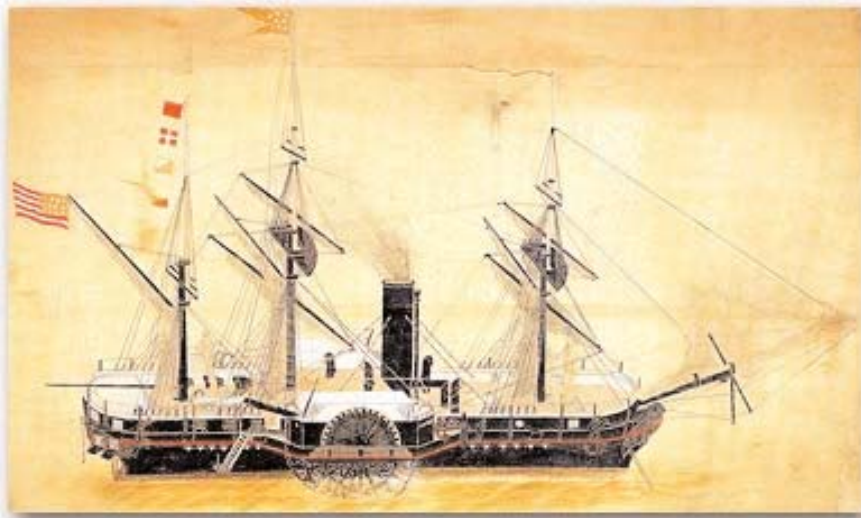
Honolulu Academy of Art

Like the blue eyeballs seen in occasional renderings of Perry and other "barbarians," however, even the demon ships are more complicated and nuanced than they appear to be at first glance. Take, for example, the rendering of the stern of the vessel: in each of these graphics, this clearly has been turned into the eyes, nose, mouth of a monster. Is it not obvious that this is meant to reflect the monstrous nature of those who came with the ship? In fact, this is not so obvious—for Asian seafarers of the time sometimes placed huge demonic faces



on the sterns of their vessels to ward off evil spirits and ensure safe passage. Despite the seclusion policy, a number of delegations from Korea visited Japan during the Tokugawa

period, for example, and we know from Japanese scrolls depicting these missions that the Koreans themselves protected their fleet with fearsome markings of this nature. Could this have influenced these particular Japanese artists who sought to tell the populace about Perry's black ships? We cannot say.



*The Powhatan,
hanging scroll
1854 or later*

Peabody Essex Museum

Most Japanese renderings of the black ships were more straightforward, in any case, and provide a small but compelling example of how pictorial “realism” may vary depending not only on the viewer, but also on the medium of expression used. The handsome oil painting of the *Powhatan* in Charles Beebe Stuart’s book, for example, was almost a mirror image of the formal photograph of that vessel—and yet worlds apart in its ambiance.

Japanese artists also portrayed the *Powhatan* and other black ships “realistically,” from the same perfect-profile perspective—and yet conveyed an entirely different impression.

*“Black Ship at
Shimoda,”
painting
1854*

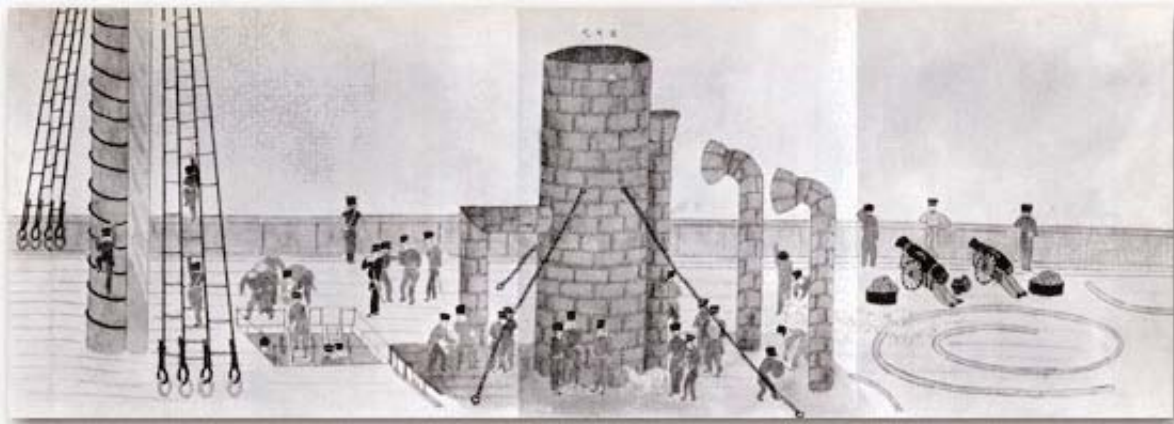
Ryosenji Treasure Museum



Perry's strategy of simultaneously impressing and intimidating the Japanese included inviting some of their representatives to tour his flagship. This made possible a small number of on-deck and below-deck depictions of the details of the black ships.



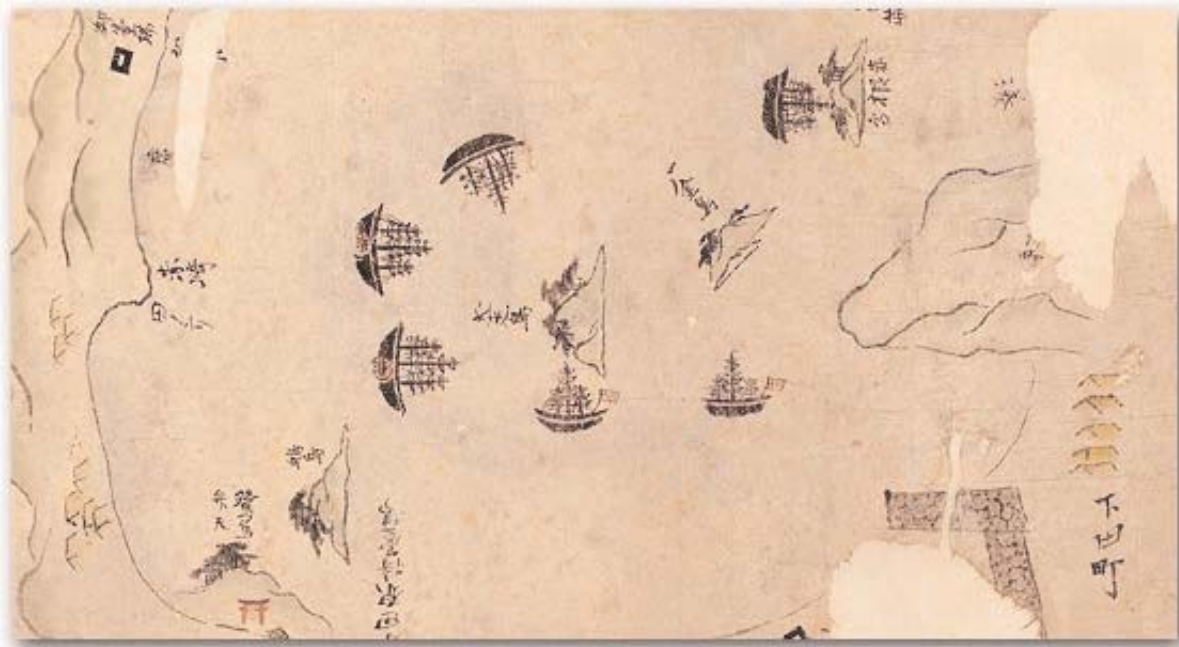
*Japanese official on board
the Susquehanna from
the official Narrative.*



*Japanese sketches
from on board
the Powhatan
1854*

Peabody Essex
Museum

Other artists, meanwhile, rendered the foreign intrusion from afar with panoramic views of the American squadrons anchored in Japanese waters. Such graphics, done in both color and black-and-white, often were designed to convey detail concerning not only the black ships but also the surrounding terrain.



Map of the harbor at Shimoda, from the “Black Ship Scroll,” 1854

Six of Perry’s gunboats rest at anchor. Place names (and ships) appear rightsideup, upsidedown, and sideways—a convention that developed from maps being rotated as they were read.

Honolulu Academy of Art

BLACK SHIPS & SAMURAI

COMMODORE PERRY AND THE OPENING OF JAPAN (1853-1854)

BY JOHN W. DOWER

CHAPTER FOUR: FACING "EAST"



"Delivery of the President's Letter"

Detail, from the official Narrative



"Perry Taking a Bow"

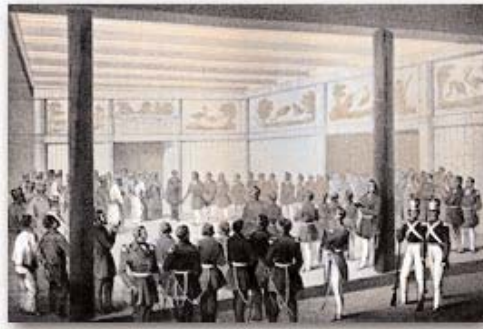
Ryosenji Treasure Museum

By far the greatest single source of American illustrations of the Perry expedition is to be found in volume one of the three-volume official Narrative published between 1856 and 1858. The most numerous and accomplished of these illustrations were done by William Heine, a German-born artist who was only 25 years old when he first accompanied Perry to Japan.

Heine, who worked primarily with sketchpad and watercolors, brought a gentle, panoramic, romantic realism to both the selection and execution of his subjects. His landscapes were invariably scenic. Where people were concerned, he preferred them in substantial numbers. He rarely lingered on the "exotic," did not dwell much (as happened later) on various social "types," did not seek out the sensational. So enraptured was Heine by the opportunity to immerse himself in new landscapes and cultures that, now and then, he even painted himself painting the scene being depicted.



Heine sketching in the Ryukyu Islands, 1853, from the official Narrative



*Shui Castle, Ryukyu Islands,
with two artists sketching the
scene, from the official Narrative
(detail below)*



*Entrance to Shinto shrine in Shimoda,
from the official Narrative (detail below)*



“Temples” attracted Heine (he, or whoever captioned the reproductions of his artwork, made no distinction between Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines), but he depicted them with the same appreciative regard that he brought to trees, mountains, skies, crowds, individuals, and other natural and human phenomena. He turned his brush (and also his drawing pencil) to a few religious statues and monuments, but again with restraint and respect—a striking contrast to the more garish renderings of imagined heathen deities that had appeared in Western publications prior to Perry’s arrival.

Since the Perry expedition never visited Edo or any other huge urban center, the illustrations in the official report conveyed the impression of a placid, rustic land of quiet villages and modest towns.

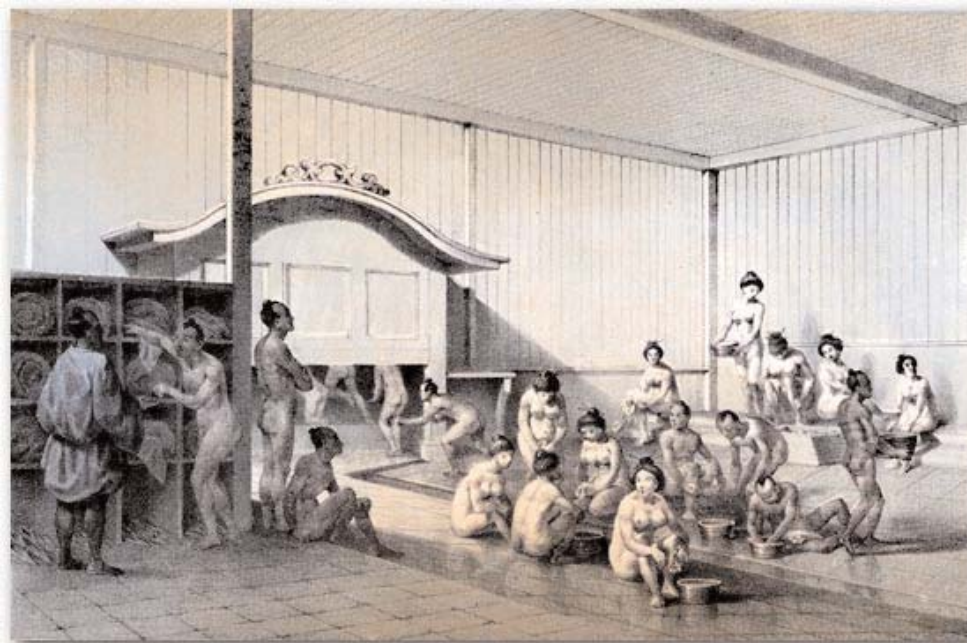
Heine and his colleagues gave only passing attention to commercial activities, and only rarely entered behind closed

doors. With but one exception, they chose not to illustrate subjects that provoked moral indignation among some members of the mission (and delighted more than a few crewmen), such as prostitution, pornography, and public baths.

The only illustration in the Narrative that subsequently provoked shock and condemnation among Americans depicted a public bathhouse in Shimoda. Men, women, and children bathed together in these establishments, and good Christians found them appalling. Dr. James Morrow, the mission's botanist, denounced the bath in Shimoda as one more example "of the licentiousness and degradation of these cultivated heathen," for example, while a ship's clerk sourly observed that "their religion might encourage cleanliness," but it did so in a "repulsive and indecent manner." The official report itself recorded that "a scene at the public baths, where the sexes mingle indiscriminately, unconscious of their nudity, was not calculated to impress the Americans with a very favorable opinion of the morals of the inhabitants."



Entrance to Shinto shrine in Shimoda, from the official Narrative (detail below)



Heine's controversial rendering of a public bath in Shimoda

Heine's illustration of the bathhouse in Shimoda was removed from later editions of the Narrative. Where intercultural relations are concerned, morality obviously was a two-way mirror in this case. For the manner in which the Americans pointed to mixed bathing as evidence of Japanese lewdness and wantonness was strikingly similar to John Manjiro's response, only a few years earlier, to the shocking spectacle of American men and women kissing in public.

The original artwork by Heine and his colleagues was seen by very few individuals. Rather, it reached the public in several different forms. Some 34,000 copies of the official three-volume Narrative were published (at the substantial cost of \$400,000), of which over half were given to high government officials, members of Congress, and the Navy Department.



*Chapter heading drawing
from the official Narrative*

The first and most pertinent volume of the set included some 165 handsome woodcuts and tipped-in lithographs depicting not only Japan but other stops on the two voyages—including China, the Bonin islands, and, of greatest interest, Okinawa in the Ryukyu (“Lew Chew”) islands.

In addition, this first volume also featured many small reproductions of pencil drawings by Heine, particularly at the beginnings and ends of chapters. Mid-century Western voyagers, artists, and scientists were intent on “mapping” literally all aspects of the little-known world, and in volume two several-score brilliantly colored plates were devoted to natural life, particularly fishes and birds. (Additional plates

depicting the plants of Japan failed to be published due to vanity and obstreperousness on the part of Dr. Morrow, who collected and drew illustrations of hundreds of specimens, but held these back in the hopes of seeing a separate publication devoted solely to his own findings. This failed to materialize, and his work has been lost.) The third volume of the Narrative, of little interest today, reproduced charts of the stars recorded over the course of the two long voyages.

The official publication was expensive, however, and the general public only encountered this handsome visual record indirectly. An affordable trade edition of volume one was published in 1856, with fewer lithographs and color throughout reduced to black and white. At the same time, a small number of illustrations (including some that did not appear in the official or commercial publications) were reproduced as large brightly colored “elephant” lithographs. One could thus encounter “Perry's Japan” in various tones and formats.



Illustration from the 1856 commercial edition



Tinted lithograph from the official printing of 1856



Independent large-format lithograph, ca. 1855-56



It also happened that, in moving from one form of printing to another, the details of the original rendering were slightly altered—as seen, for example, in the famous depiction of Perry's landing in Yokohama that appears in the official and trade editions.



Two versions of Commodore Perry meeting officials at Yokohama

The trade edition of the Narrative (detail, above left)

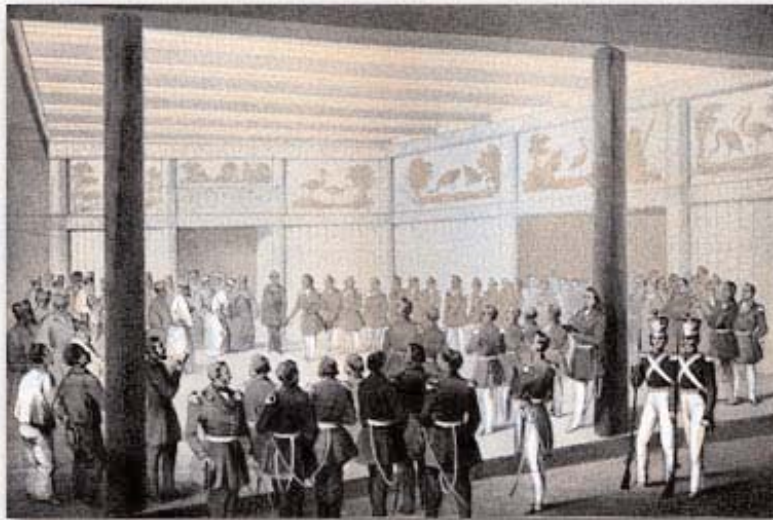
The official government edition (detail, left)

From the 1853 Expedition

The artwork in the Narrative (and independent lithographs) begins with impressions of ports of call en route to Japan (including scenes from Ceylon, Singapore, Canton, and Hong Kong), and then presents a record of major interactions between Perry and officials in “Lew Chew” and Japan.



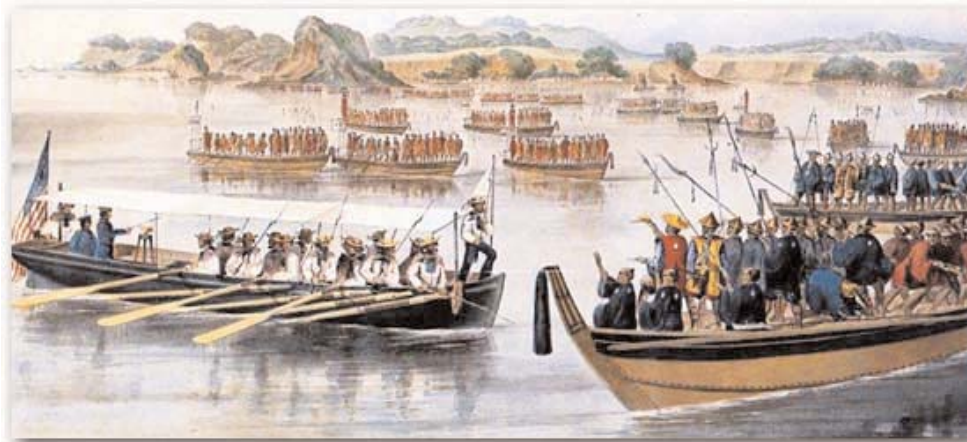
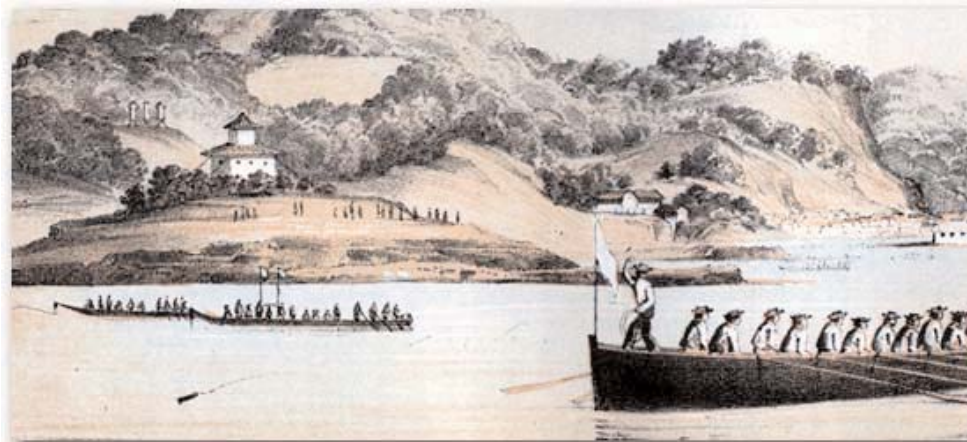
On the first visit to Okinawa, we move from the “exploring party” mingling with native peoples in bucolic settings to the castle in Naha, where Perry and his entourage paused by the imposing “Gate of Courtesy” and then attended a crowded formal reception.



*Gate of Courtesy
at the castle in Okinawa
(above, left)*

*Reception at Shui Castle,
Okinawa (left)*

Moving on to Edo Bay, the artists recorded a tense moment when the Americans began to survey the harbor and were briefly challenged by Japanese in small boats—a dramatic confrontation, referred to as “Passing the Rubicon,” that was inexplicably only made available as an independent print.



The White House Collection

The Americans sounding and surveying Edo Bay (detail, top, from the official Narrative)

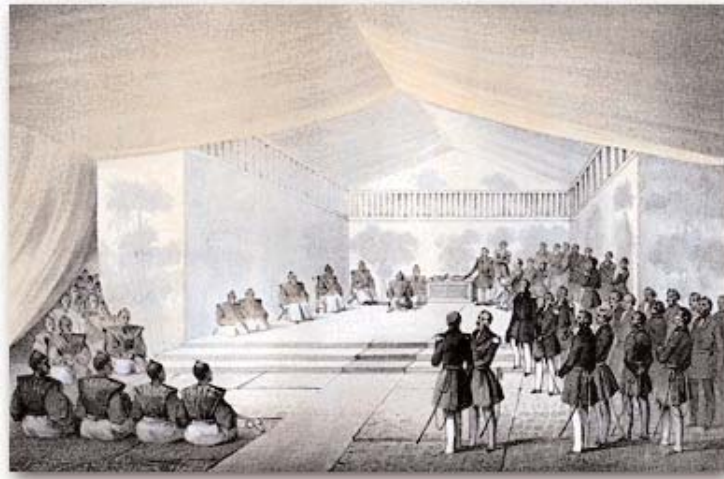
"Passing the Rubicon": Japanese officials confront the surveying party (detail, bottom)

Thereafter, all becomes decorous again. From the brief 1853 mission come iconic paintings of Perry coming ashore in Japan for the first time (on July 14, at Kurihama) and delivering President Fillmore's letter requesting the end of the policy of seclusion.



The landing at Kurihama (detail)

*Delivery of President
Fillmore's letter*



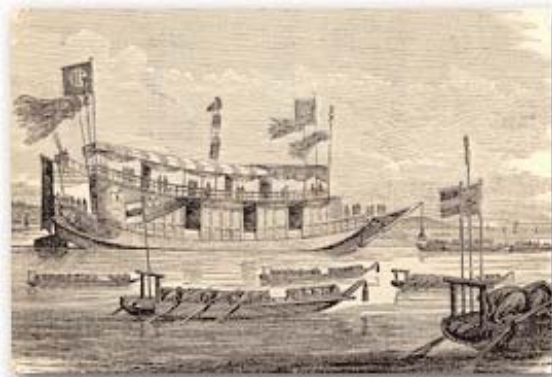
From the 1854 Expedition

The commodore's return visit in 1854, which lasted for several months and saw the opening of Shimoda and Hakodate to foreign vessels, provided the occasion for more extended artwork. Perry's landing in Yokohama on March 8 inspired a crowded scene of troops on parade before a horizon prickled with the masts of the black ships, as well as a solemn rendering of the commodore greeting the Japanese commissioners.



The landing at Yokohama (detail)

Yokohama Archives of History



"Imperial barge" at Yokohama



Japanese officials greet Perry at Yokohama



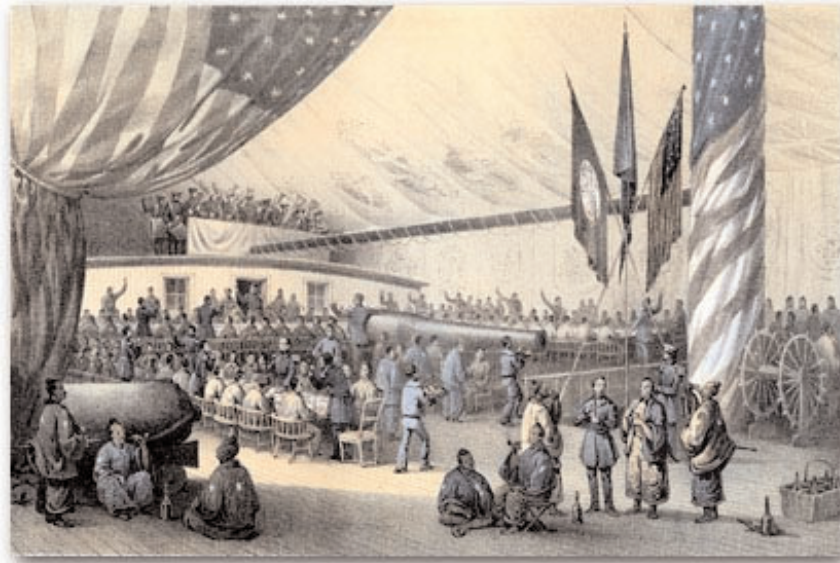
In another illustration, armed samurai were depicted clustered together, some mounted and some on foot (a rare close-up of the thousands of warriors mobilized for defense).

Samurai defense forces (detail)

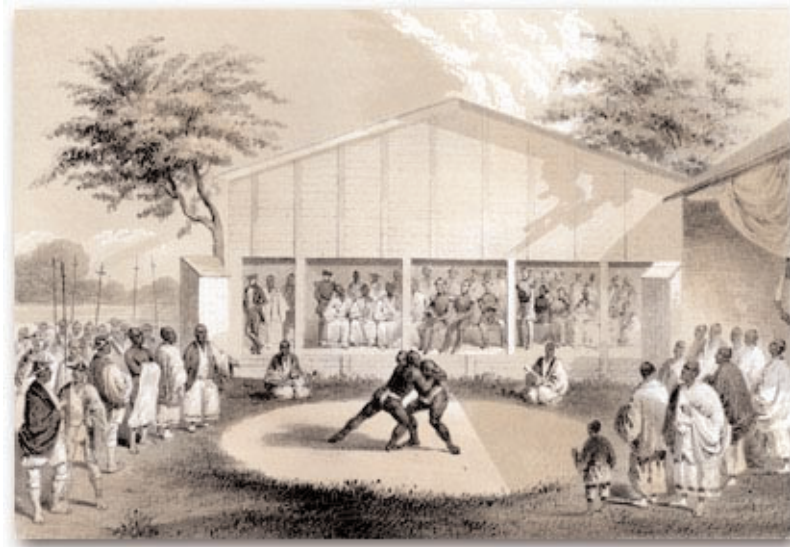
Formal occasions—the presentation of American gifts, a banquet on Perry's flagship, a performance of sumo wrestling—were duly recorded.

Delivery of the American presents at Yokohama





*Banquet on board
the Powhatan*



*Sumo wrestler
at Yokohama*

Yokohama, and subsequently the newly designated “treaty ports” of Shimoda and Hakodate, provided the Americans with more intimate access to the countryside and the ordinary people who lived there.

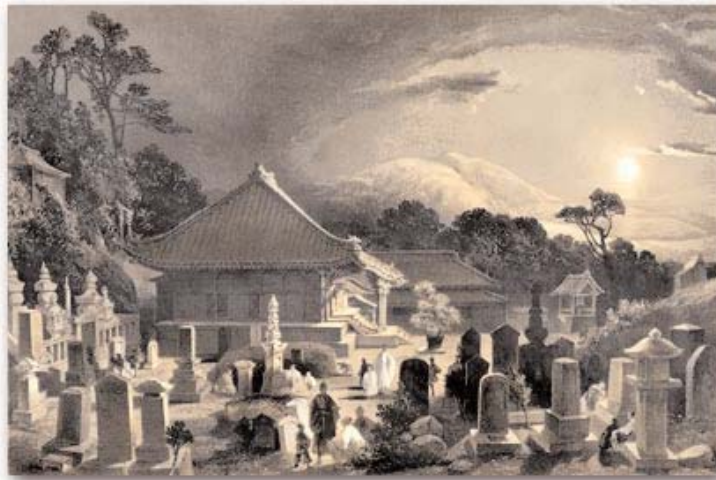
The rugged vistas in these areas inspired Heine to new heights of scenic romanticism, and he and his fellow artists also took advantage of their excursions onshore to depict the local people and their places of worship and daily activities (including the scandalous public bath in Shimoda). Although these detailed scenes are usually crowded with people, often with foreigners and natives intermingling, there is little sense of tension or strangeness. The atmosphere is serene. Everyone, native and foreigner alike, is comely. In the American record, these first encounters come across as almost dream-like.



Shimoda "from the American Grave Yard"

Moonlit graveyard at Ryosenji Temple, Shimoda

Harvard University Library



A Gallery of Images from the Expedition



Perry's troops in formation at Ryosenji Temple, Shimoda

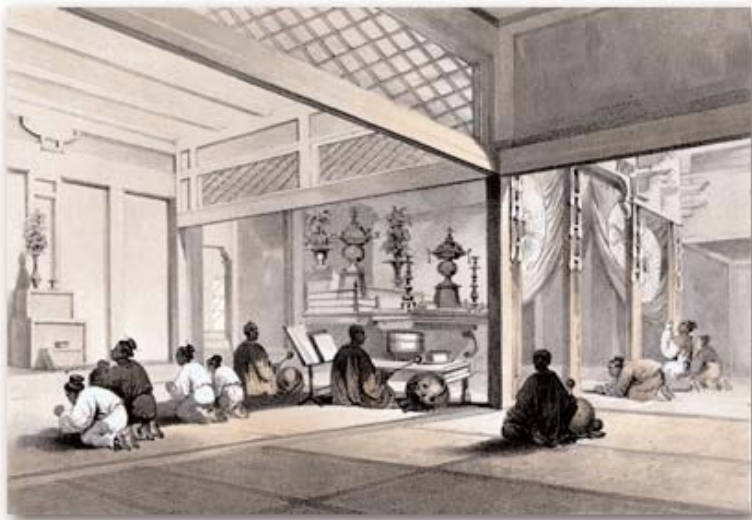
US Naval Academy Museum



Hachiman shrine, Shimoda

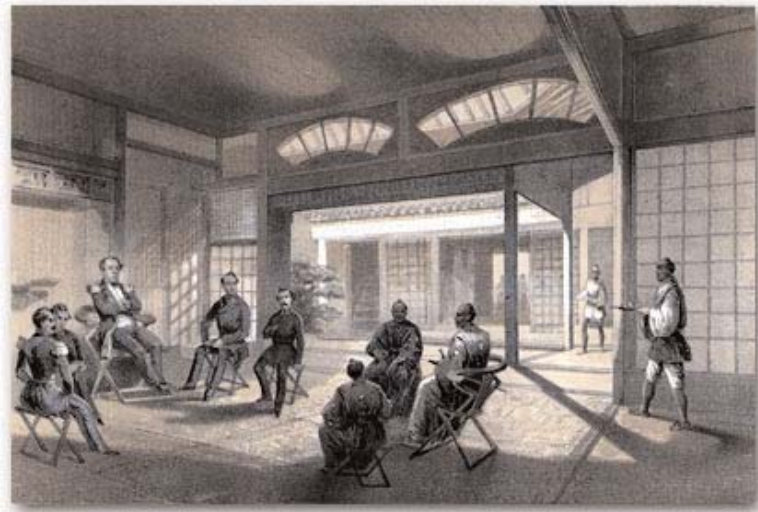


Mariner's temple, Shimoda (detail)



*Devotions in a
Buddhist temple,
Shimoda*

*Perry conferring
with local officials
in Hakodate*





*Hakodate
“from Telegraph Hill”*



*Street by a temple in
Hakodate*



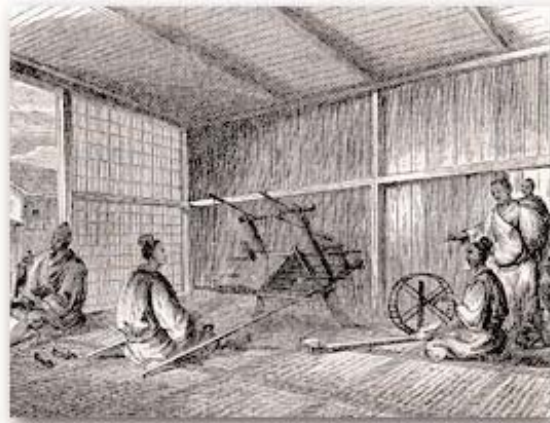
“Imperial barge” at Yokohama



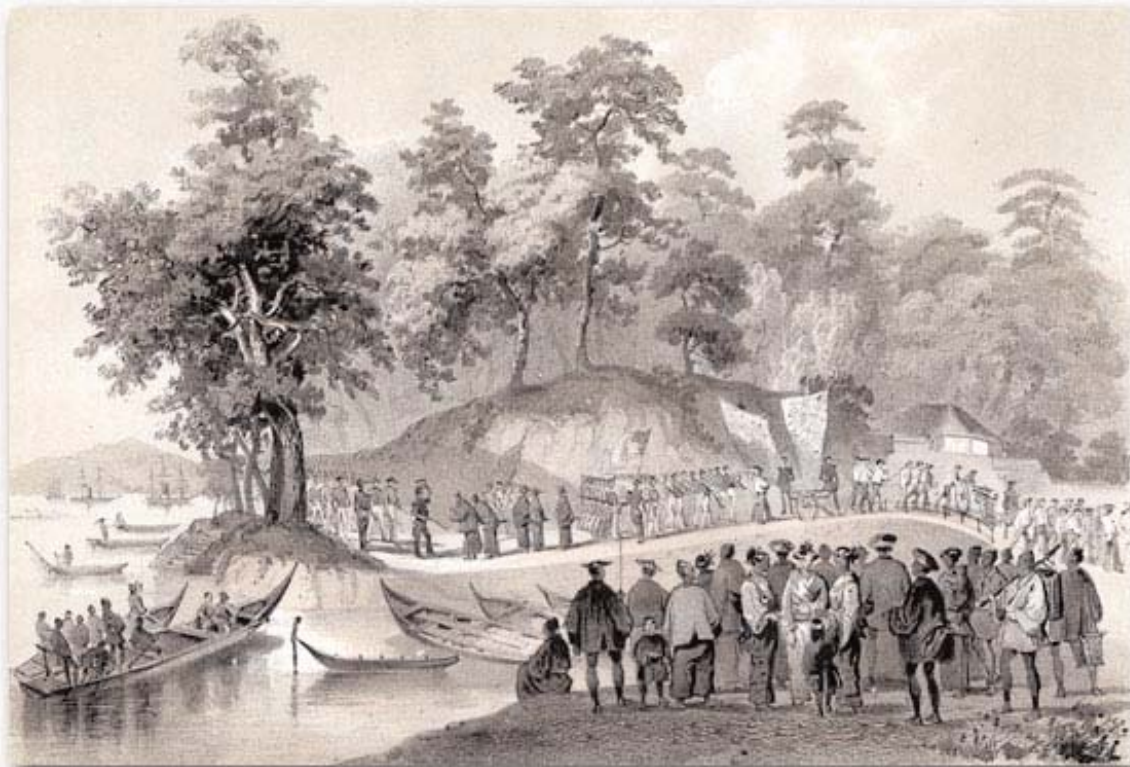
Japanese officials greet Perry at Yokohama



Japanese kago (palanquin)



Spinning and weaving



Commodore Perry bids farewell to officials in Shimoda

BLACK SHIPS & SAMURAI

COMMODORE PERRY AND THE OPENING OF JAPAN (1853-1854)

BY JOHN W. DOWER

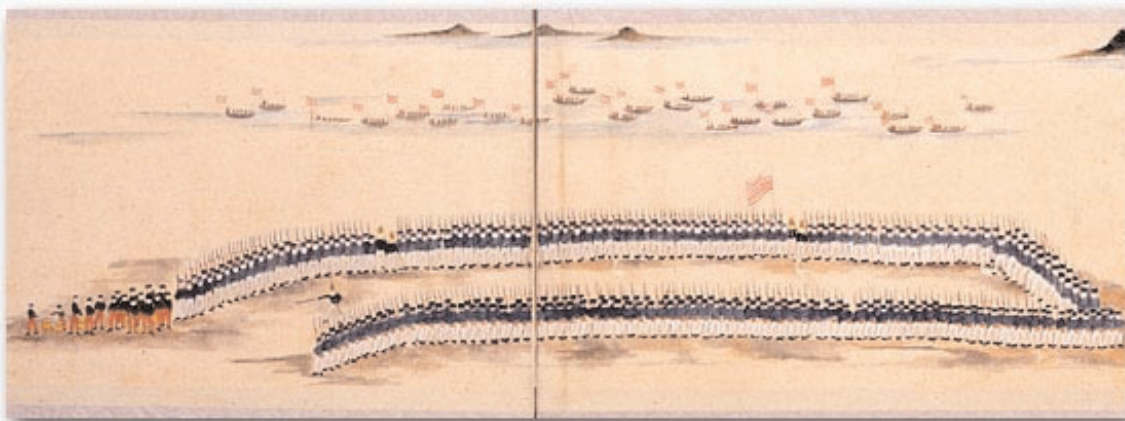
CHAPTER FIVE: FACING "WEST"

The Japanese visualization of these first encounters presents a different world. This is true not only of artwork churned out at the time, but also of evocations of the Perry mission that artists produced in later years. It mattered greatly, of course, that whereas the Americans were observing the Japanese in their native milieu, the Japanese were confronting intruders far from home.

For the Japanese, that is, the foreigners who suddenly materialized in their waters and descended upon their soil had no context, no tactile background. They existed detached from any broader physical and cultural environment. Whereas Heine and his colleagues could attempt to present "Japan" to their audience, the Japanese had only a small number of "Americans" and their artifacts upon which to focus.

There was, moreover, no counterpart on the Japanese side to the official artists employed by Perry—and thus no Japanese attempt to create a sustained visual (or written) narrative of these momentous interactions. What we have instead are representations by a variety of artists, most of whose names are unknown. Their artistic conventions differed from those of the Westerners. Their works were reproduced and disseminated not as lithographs and engravings or fine-line woodcuts, but largely as brightly colored woodblock prints as well as black-and-white broadsheets (*kawaraban*).

They also painted in formats such as unfolding "horizontal scrolls" (*emaki*) that had no counterpart in the West. It was common for such scrolls to be 20 or 30 feet long, and in some cases they inspired variant copies. Many of these artists drew no boundary between direct observation and flights of imagination. On occasion, tension permeated their images—and no wonder. Their insular way of life, after all, had been violated and would never be the same. Although one might (and some did) pretend otherwise, it was obvious where the preponderance of power lay.



Perry's troops landing in Yokohama, 1854

Shiryo Hensanjo, University of Tokyo

Some of these artistic responses reflected bravado and an attempt to rally domestic support against the foreign threat. In anticipation of Perry's arrival, the Shogun's government had mobilized its own samurai forces and ordered *daimyo* (local lords) throughout the land to send troops to defend the capital. Thousands of armed warriors manned the shoreline when Perry landed on his two visits. In the renderings of the Narrative, these soldiers and officials appear calm and unruffled, even when mounted on horseback or challenging the American crew that was surveying Edo Bay. And while tension inevitably accompanied these encounters, discipline and order did prevail. No violent incidents occurred, and Japanese renderings of the first meetings of the two sides also convey a sense of formality.

There were even unanticipated occasions where each side had the opportunity to observe and record a common solemn moment on the part of the other—a funeral, in this instance—and did so with differing styles, to be sure, but also with a shared respectfulness. Thus a lithograph in the Narrative depicting a Buddhist funeral procession in Shimoda has an interesting counterpart in a Japanese sketch of the American funeral procession for marine private Robert Williams, who died of illness during Perry's second visit. After brief and courteous negotiation, the Japanese not only agreed to allow the deceased to be buried on Japanese soil, but also had Buddhist priests participate in the funeral service. The respect the Americans showed to the dead clearly helped weaken the familiar stereotypes of "southern barbarians" and "foreign devils." At the same time, the American tolerance of Buddhist participation in the rites of interment offers a striking contrast to more invidious popular evocations of the Japanese as "heathen."



Japanese funeral in Shimoda, from the official Narrative



Funeral procession of Private Williams, by Tohohata (Osuke) 1854

Shiryō Hensanjo, University of Tokyo



Inscription from Robert Williams's gravestone in the 1854 "Black Ship Scroll"

Honolulu Academy of Art

So great was the impression left by the death of Williams that the long "Black Ship Scroll" painted in Shimoda in 1854 included a drawing of the inscription on his tombstone.

In all, four Americans with the Perry mission died and were buried in Japan. Private Williams, originally buried in Yokohama, was reinterred in Shimoda. One of Heine's most evocative illustrations depicts Americans and Japanese, including a Buddhist priest, in a hillside cemetery in Shimoda, the American fleet visible at anchor in the harbor.



Heine's 1854 rendering of the harbor at Shimoda "from the American Grave Yard" (detail), from the official Narrative

By rare good fortune, we have a daguerreotype of the four American graves, most likely taken the following year. Evocative in its own way, the photograph also highlights the romanticism of Heine's vision of these historic encounters.

Four American gravestones in the cemetery of Gyokusenji temple in Shimoda. Daguerreotype attributed to Edward Kern, ca. 1855

George Eastman House



In ways absent from the American graphics, however, Japanese artists also succeeded in conveying a tense willingness to fight if need be on the part of the Japanese defenders. Colored as well as black-and-white prints depicted samurai crouched in readiness for imminent battle.



Samurai guards at Edo Bay, detail from a kawaraban broadsheet, 1854

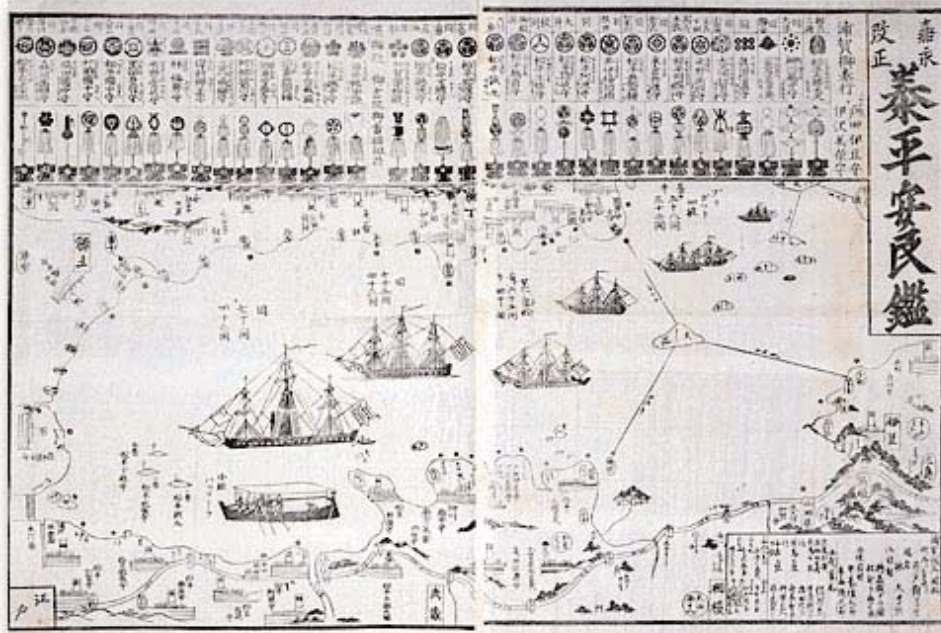
Ryosenji Treasure Museum

*Detail from a montage titled
"Pictorial Depiction of American
People and Steamship"
ca. 1854*

Ryosenji Treasure Museum



In some cases, the massive mobilization of samurai was conveyed in a traditional "heraldic" manner. Here, depiction of the foreign fleet sitting offshore was paired with a row of tiny drawings of the distinctive crests, decorated staffs, and other insignia that identified different *daimyo* and their retainers.



Japanese deployment against U.S. black ships at Edo Bay, 1854 kawaraban

Ryosenji Treasure Museum

Even decades later, after Japan's new leaders had dismantled the feudal system and embarked on a policy of ardent "Westernization," the image of heroic warriors bristling to take on Perry's imperialist intruders had an avid audience. The most flamboyant woodblock print of the imagined samurai defenders in Edo Bay, for example, dates from 1889 and conveys a sense of both peril and gritty determination that could still rouse the fervor of new nationalists in a new nation.



Samurai from various fiefs mobilize to defend the homeland against Perry's intrusion, 1889 woodblock print by Toshu Shogetsu

Shiryō Hensanjo, University of Tokyo

The most audaciously fictional rendering of Perry and the Japanese was circulated as a *kawaraban* broadsheet around 1854. This depicts the commodore prostrating himself before an official in full samurai armor seated on the traditional camp stool of a fighting general.



Perry prostrating himself before a samurai official, kawaraban (detail) ca. 1854

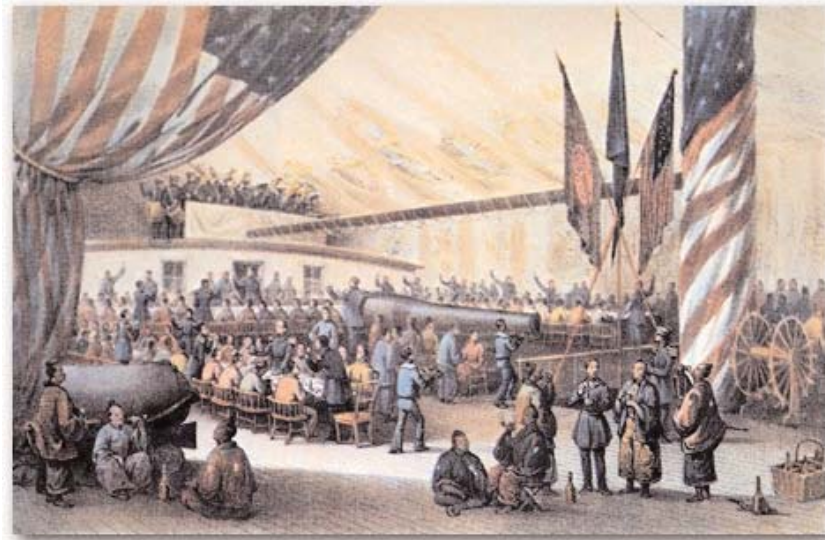
Ryosenji Treasure Museum

Widely known for his haughty demeanor even before the Japan expedition, Perry took extraordinary care never to display the slightest sign of subordination or obsequiousness in his dealings with Japanese officials. Had he seen this little pearl of propaganda, it surely would have made his hair curl.

More than a few Japanese graphics had a cartoon quality, and some were deliberately humorous—again, something never seen in the sober American illustrations. One of the liveliest episodes that took place during the second visit, for example, was a banquet on the *Powhatan*.

As it happens, we know from various sources that this evolved into less than formal behavior. In an entertaining letter to his wife, one of Perry's officers (Lieutenant George Henry Preble) recounted that, "in accordance with the old adage that if they eat hearty they give us a good name," he and his comrades took care to keep the plates and glasses of their guests full. "Doing my duty therefore, in obedience to orders," he continued, "I plied the Japanese in my neighborhood well, and when clean work had been made of champagne, Madeira, cherry cordial, punch and whisky I resorted to the castors and gave them a mixture of catsup and vinegar which they seemed to relish with equal gusto." Both sides interspersed their libations with friendly toasts.

*Banquet on board
the Powhatan*



The band played, and American officers danced with Japanese officials in formal robes. One of the commissioners was so carried away by the end of the evening that he threw his arms around Perry's neck, embraced him rather sloppily, crushed his epaulettes, and (in a subsequently often-quoted phrase) burred "Nippon and America, all the same heart." As Preble recounted the story, when asked how he could tolerate such behavior, the commodore replied, "Oh, if he will only sign the Treaty he may kiss me." Gunboat diplomacy was a demanding business.

One could never imagine any of this from Heine's entirely decorous rendering of the event in the official Narrative, and unfortunately no irreverent Japanese artists were present to record the scene.

When the Japanese reciprocated with a banquet of their own, on the other hand, we have not only a somber rendering of this (sketched at the time but published as a woodblock print many years later), but also an anonymous and quite disorderly print that suggests the Westerners, although not required to sit Japanese style on the floor, clearly had a difficult time swallowing the native cuisine.



*Japanese reception for
the Americans, late-
19th-century wood-
block print from a
sketch done at the time*

Ryosenji Treasure Museum



“Entertainment Held in the Reception Hall at Yokohama” (detail), ca. 1854

Peabody Essex Museum

Frequently, Japanese artists resorted to montage to convey a sense of the multifaceted nature of the Perry encounter. The landing at Yokohama in March 1854, for example, inspired a number of prints combining views of the black ships at anchor with drawings of the commodore and his crew marching in parade.

One elaborate montage, titled “Pictorial Depiction of American People and Steamship,” featured a map of the world in the center (with Japan in the center of the map), surrounded by depictions of the curtained-off Japanese shore defenses, a gunboat belching smoke, Perry and his attendants in rather untidy parade (the Americans had better posture when their own artists drew them), the samurai in full armor we already have seen, and crewmen from the black ships gaping at the sight of two giant sumo wrestlers.



“Pictorial Depiction of American People and Steamship” ca. 1854

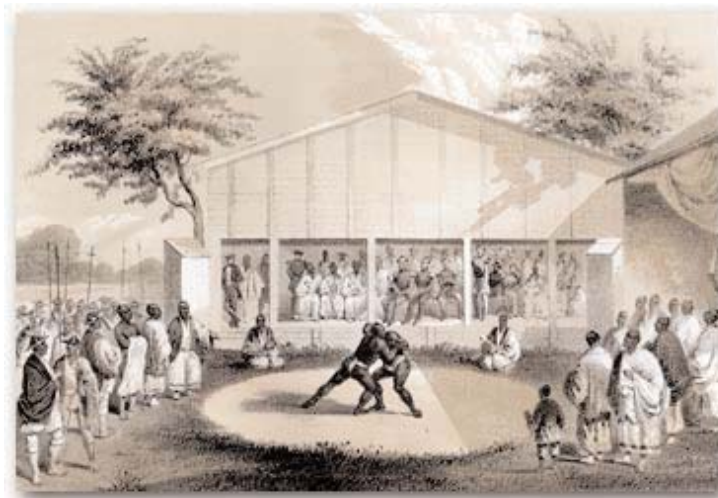
Ryosenji Treasure Museum

The most spectacular assemblage of graphics, completed at a later date, took the form of a dramatic eight-panel standing screen, now known as the "Assembled Pictures of Commodore Perry's Visit." On this were affixed depictions of the black ships, Perry and other members of his mission (including ordinary crew), troops in formation, entertainments, artifacts the Americans brought with them, and the official gifts they proffered (including a telegraph apparatus and a small model train).



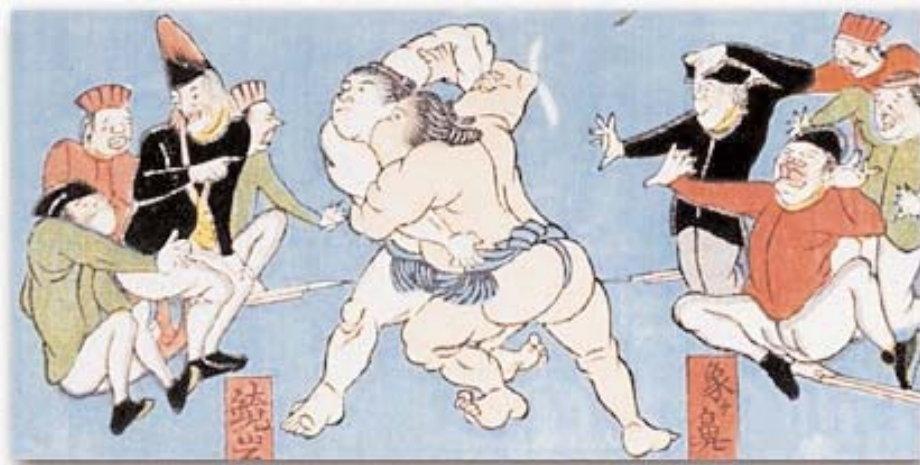
"Assembled Pictures of Commodore Perry's Visit"
eight-panel folding screen

Shiryo Hensanjo, University of Tokyo



Sumo, as it turned out, attracted artists on both sides. The Narrative featured a lithograph (by W. T. Peters) of an outdoor sumo match observed by a crowd of Japanese and Americans including Perry himself, as well as a pencil drawing of two sumo champions by the always respectful Heine.

The sumo wrestlers did not impress everyone favorably, however. The Narrative described them as “over-fed monsters” and found the wrestling matches themselves “disgusting”—a mere “show of brute animal force.” In his personal journal, Perry dismissed the bouts as a “farce” and referred to the eventual winner as “the reputed bully of the capital, who seemed to labor like a Chinese junk in chow-chow water.” The sight of some twenty-five or thirty of these brawny men grouped together struck him as “giving a better idea of an equal number of stall-fed bulls than human beings.”



Sumo detail from 1854 montage

Ryosenji Treasure Museum

By contrast, in Japanese eyes these same figures became an almost irresistible vehicle through which to intimate Japan’s formidable strength, against which the foreigners were puny and powerless. In the “Pictorial Depiction of American People and Steamship” montage, the American spectators appear small, ludicrous, and astonished at the sight of two of these giants grappling with each other.

In the same spirit, the spectacle of these strongmen hefting huge bales of rice the Americans were unable to budge (they weighed over 125 pounds) became another witty way of suggesting that the intruders were no match for Japanese. A scroll of first-hand sketches of the foreigners prepared by a retainer of the *daimyo* of Ogasawara included skillful line drawings of awed marines examining the bulk of a sumo champion.

Even Perry was given the opportunity to feel the muscles of one of these giants. The artists naturally portrayed him as duly impressed, although the official report tells us he was merely expressing surprise “at this wondrous exhibition of animal development.”

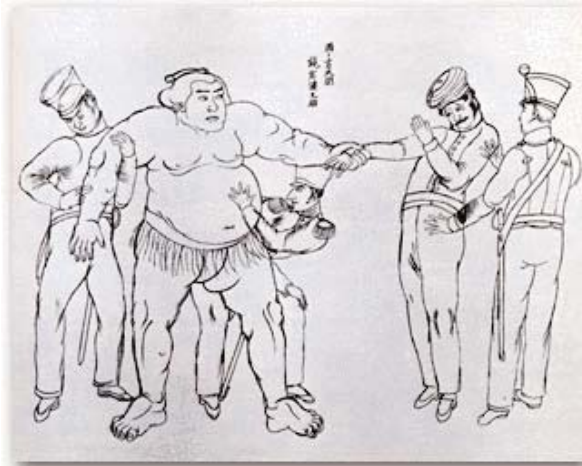


*Sumo wrestlers carry rice bales,
1854 (above, left)*

Collection of DeWolf Perry

*Perry and a Japanese wrestler,
1854 (above, right)*

Collection of DeWolf Perry



*Marines examining a sumo
wrestler, 1854 (left)*

Smithsonian Institution

In the decade following the Perry expedition, the larger-than-life sumo wrestler continued to provide a small vehicle for iconographic bravado. After a new commercial treaty was signed in 1858 and foreigners began to flood into the country, woodblock artists portrayed these native heroes tossing around, not bales of rice, but the hairy barbarians themselves.

*"The Glory of Sumo
Wrestlers at Yokohama,"
1860 and 1861*

Ryosenji Treasure Museum



When it came to promoting human curiosities, however, Perry was not to be outdone. The American counterpart to the sumo wrestler was white men in black-face, as well as flesh-and-blood Negroes.



Minstrel show on the Powhatan

Chrysler Museum of Art
(above)

Shiryo Hensanjo,
University of Tokyo
(right)

“Ethiopian Concert” program from minstrel show on the Powhatan



In Japan (as well as elsewhere on the voyage to and from Japan), Perry's favorite entertainment was an "Ethiopian concert" featuring white men playing the roles of "Colored 'Gemmen' of the North" and "Plantation 'Niggas' of the South," and singing such songs as "Darkies Serenade" and "Oh! Mr. Coon." Although the Narrative dwells on the "delight to the natives" these performances gave, it remained for Japanese artists to preserve them for posterity.

From the moment he first stepped on Japanese soil in 1853 to present the letter from President Fillmore, Perry also sought to impress the Japanese with authentic black men. "On either side of the Commodore," the Narrative tells us, "marched a tall, well-formed negro, who, armed to the teeth, acted as his personal guard. These blacks, selected for the occasion, were two of the best-looking fellows of their color that the squadron could furnish." Here again, it is the Japanese side that has left a graphic impression of these stalwart aides.

In other Japanese renderings, however, blacks who accompanied the mission were less than handsome and well-formed. When Perry and his men visited the two treaty ports designated by the Treaty of Kanagawa, artists in both Shimoda and Hakodate drew unflattering portraits of black crewmen who came ashore. They would never be confused with the stalwart standard bearers who flanked Perry when he presented the president's letter.



Perry, accompanied by a "tall, well-formed negro," delivering President Fillmore's letter, 1853

Chrysler Museum of Art



Crewman "hired from a country of black people," from the watercolor "Black Ship and Crew" ca. 1854 (left)

Ryosenji Treasure Museum

"Black man" from the "Black Ship Scroll" 1854

Honolulu Academy of Art





Two images of Perry and black crew members in Hakodate

Hakodate Kyodo Bunkakai

At the time Perry was engaged in opening Japan to “civilization,” slavery was still widespread in the United States and minstrel shows were an enormously popular form of entertainment. (The Narrative dwells at some length on their appealing combination of “grotesque humor and comic yet sentimental melody.”) The Japanese, whose prior contact with dark-skinned peoples was negligible, responded to these encounters with undisguised curiosity. As filtered through the eyes of popular artists, however, this interest emerges more as bemusement about the human species in general than any clear-cut prejudice toward foreigners, or toward blacks in particular.

This seems, at first glance, an unlikely response from a racially homogeneous society that had lived in isolation for so long. It was, however, a logical response when seen from the perspective of the mass-oriented popular culture of late-feudal Japan. Whereas Heine and his colleagues exemplified restrained “high art” traditions of representation, Japanese artists catering to a popular audience had long engaged in exaggeration and caricature. Their purpose was to entertain, and in the tradition of woodblock prints in particular, every conceivable type of subject, activity, and physical appearance was deemed suitable for representation—whether it be scenery, the “floating world” of actors and courtesans, mayhem and grotesquerie, or outright pornography. This protean fascination with the human comedy carried over to artistic renderings of the various types of foreign individuals who came ashore with the commodore in 1853 and 1854.

It is in this spirit that the bare-chested black sailor in Shimoda was introduced as but one of many characters in a popular scroll that treated virtually all members of the expedition as rather odd but essentially entertaining. The larger scene in which he appears includes two “Chinese” who accompanied the expedition, as well as a white man with a telescope.



Chinese members of the Perry expedition with black crewman and white man with a telescope

"Black Ship Scroll" (detail)

Honolulu Academy of Art



This version of the "Black Ship Scroll" (beginning section shown here) is approximately 30-feet long and is read from right to left.

This "Black Ship Scroll" (which came to exist in several variant copies) also featured witty renderings of crewmen engaged in activities that Perry's artists never dreamed of recording: inebriated sailors dancing, for example, and a seaman surrounded by prostitutes. In a nice representation of foreigners making their representations, the Shimoda scrolls also included such scenes as Heine making sketches, Dr. Morrow collecting and recording his specimens of plants, foreigners surveying the countryside, and three aroused Americans (the tongue of one is protruding) making a daguerreotype of a courtesan to present to the "American king."

Inebriated American crewmen dance, while others do their laundry



An American sailor ingratiating himself with prostitutes in Shimoda (together with a long and amusing account of how he succeeded in doing so)



However exaggerated such renderings may have been, they conveyed a playfulness and vitality fully in keeping with the practices of Japanese popular art—and conspicuously different from the high-minded “realism” of Heine and company. From this perspective, the great cultural encounter was genuinely amusing.



Botanist James Morrow and artist William Heine

Surveying the Shimoda countryside



*Eliphalet Brown, Jr.
and assistants making
a daguerreotype of a
courtesan*

A bemused Japanese woman watches American sailors attempting to hull rice



An American crewman grimaces after tasting hair oil he mistook for an edible delicacy



A variant version of the "Black Ship Scroll"

BLACK SHIPS & SAMURAI

COMMODORE PERRY AND THE OPENING OF JAPAN (1853-1854)

BY JOHN W. DOWER

CHAPTER SIX: PORTRAITS



S. Wells Williams

Shiryō Hensanjo, University of Tokyo



Okinawan official

from the official Narrative

As already seen in their diverse renderings of Commodore Perry, Japanese artists did not hesitate to resort to outright fantasy when drawing portraits of the foreigners. Even when they were ostensibly drawing “from life,” their attempts to capture the spirit or personality of their subjects gave a touch of caricature to the resulting portrait. We see this in an ostensibly realistic pair of paintings of Perry and Commander Henry Adams, his second-in-command, for example, as well as in anonymous woodblock portraits of a decidedly fop-pish Adams and an alarmingly sharp-visaged “American Chief of the Artillery-men.”



Perry (right) and Adams, ink and color on paper, 1854

Ryosenji Treasure Museum



Left: “American Chief of the Artillery-men”

Right: “The North American Adjutant General (Adams)”
woodblock prints, ca. 1854

Peabody Essex Museum

Full-figure renderings of the foreigners as they were observed in Kurihama or Yokohama or Shimoda or Hakodate followed the same free style. Often these figures were lined up in a row like a droll playbill for a cast of characters who had chosen to strut their stuff on the Japanese stage.



“Pictorial Scroll of Black Ships Landing at Shimoda” (detail)

Ryosenji Treasure Museum

“Pictorial Record of the Arrival of Black Ships” (detail) ca. 1854

Ryosenji Treasure Museum



A particularly dramatic cast of characters accompanied one of the monstrous black ships introduced earlier, in the form of a gallery of nine individuals. In addition to Perry, the accompanying text identified them (right to left) as an interpreter, the crewman who sounded the ocean's depth, a high officer, the chief of the "rifle corps" (marines), a navigator, a marine, a musician, and a crewman from a "country of black people," usually called upon "to work in the rigging or dive in the sea." Colorful and idiosyncratic, they comprised a motley crew indeed.



*Detail from
"Black Ship and Crew"
ca. 1854*

Ryosenji Treasure Museum



Some sketches by Japanese artists were clearly drawn from direct observation, with close and annotated attention to every article of attire and piece of equipment.



From an artist's sketchbook, 1854

Shiryo Hensanjo, University of Tokyo

The most “realistic” run of portraits of the Americans dates from March 8, 1854, when Perry landed in Yokohama to initiate his second visit. Commissioned by the *daimyo* of Ogasawara, the original sketches were drawn by Hibata Osuke, a performer of classical Noh drama who studied under the famous woodblock artist Utagawa Kuniyoshi. With some difficulty, Hibata managed to situate himself in the midst of that day’s activities and record a great variety of subjects and events.

Other artists subsequently copied his keenly observed renderings of the commodore and five others: Commander Adams; Captain Joel Abbott; S. Wells Williams, a missionary from China who knew some Japanese; a Dutch-Japanese interpreter named Anton Portman (communication often required using Dutch as an intermediary language between English and Japanese); and Perry’s son Oliver, who served as his personal secretary. The posing was highly stylized—all in half-profile—and each subject possessed the prominent nose that set Caucasians apart in Japanese eyes. At the same time, each was unmistakably imbued with individuality.



Two colored renderings based on Hibata Osuke's 1854 sketches of Perry and five others. From right to left (above): Commodore Perry, Commander Adams, English-Japanese translator S. Wells Williams, translator Anton Portman, Captain Joel Abbot, and Perry's son Oliver

Shiryō Hensanjō, University of Tokyo (above) Chrysler Museum of Art (below)

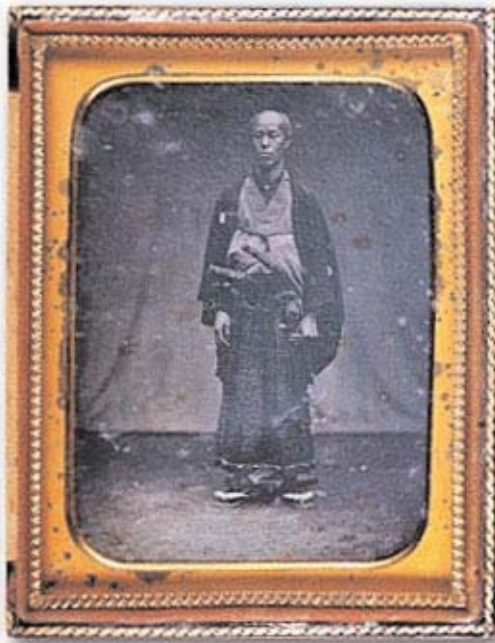


The Americans brought a very different—and very recent—perspective to their individual portraits. Where Japanese depictions of the foreigners essentially came out of well-established rhetorical and pictorial conventions, the Americans brought the eye of the camera. Two different photographic processes—calotype and daguerreotype—had been introduced in the West in 1839, and the latter dominated the world of photography into the 1850s.

Daguerreotypes were distinguished by their grainless and exceptionally sharp images, but had the disadvantage of producing a single, fragile, non-reproducible original. There was no negative, and thus no possibility of making multiple copies. Producing one of these plates involved a complex (and toxic) chemical process, and was exceedingly time-consuming. Although a daguerreotype camera was obtained by an enterprising Japanese as early as 1848, it was the Perry mission that actually made the first photographic portraits of Japanese.

The entertaining “Black Ship Scroll” rendering of three Americans photographing a courtesan (seen in the previous section) actually depicts the mission’s chief photographer, Eliphalet Brown, Jr., and his assistants. Although Brown is known to have taken more than 400 daguerreotypes of scenery and individuals, all but a handful have been lost. Some were given to the individuals who were photographed, and those brought back to the United States were destroyed in a fire while the official report was being prepared for publication.

The few originals that have come down to us—mounted in the heavy gilt frames that commonly enhanced and protected these precious images—portray samurai. Among them are depictions of Namura Gohachiro, an interpreter summoned from Nagasaki; Tanaka Mitsuyoshi, a low-ranking guard in Uruga; and officials in the new treaty ports of Hakodate and Shimoda.



Tanaka Mitsuyoshi, a low-ranking guard in Uruga. Daguerreotype by Eliphalet Brown, Jr., 1854

Collection of Shimura Toyoshiro



Namura Gohachiro, an interpreter summoned from Nagasaki. Daguerreotype by Eliphalet Brown, Jr., 1854

Bishop Museum of Art

The posed portraits of Namura and Tanaka, similar at first glance, have subtle stories to tell. Barely visible behind Tanaka’s feet, for example, is the foot of some sort of wooden stand—believed to be a prop used to assist subjects in holding steady for the long exposure that the daguerreotype process demanded. Additionally, whereas Tanaka appears as the eye would see him (kimono folded left over right, and swords carried on the left), Namura confronts us in reverse image (kimono folded right over left, and swords on the right—where a samurai, trained to fight right-handed, would be unable to draw quickly). Since the daguerreotype produced a mirror image, it is Tanaka who is the anomaly. To appear properly in the photo, he folded his garment and mounted his sword improperly. Namura did not do this.

Another of Brown's surviving "magic mirror" daguerreotypes exposes, in and of itself, this same issue of how to pose. In this daguerreotype, which has deteriorated over time, the seated *bungo* or prefect of Hakodate holds center stage, while two retainers stand behind him. Like Tanaka, the prefect maintained proper appearance by reversing his sword and garment for the camera; and, like Namura, his attendants did not bother to do so. As fate would have it, however, the prefect's fastidiousness did not carry over to the wider world of publishing. The official Narrative contains a lithograph of the same three men—apparently based on another daguerreotype taken at the same sitting—in which the two aides have changed sides, but so have the prefect's sword and kimono-fold. Somewhat inexplicably, all three men now appear to be improperly dressed and armed.



Endo Matazaemon, a local official in Hakodate, and his attendants. 1854 daguerreotype by Eliphalet Brown, Jr. and a near mirror-image lithograph of the three men from the official Narrative of the Perry mission published in 1856

Yokohama Museum of Art

Despite the loss of Brown's original work, the official record actually contains a number of woodcut and lithograph portraits that are explicitly identified as being based on his daguerreotypes. Thus, the camera's eye remains, even though the photographs themselves have disappeared. Its focus falls not just on samurai, but on anonymous commoners as well—and not just on the Japanese, but also on residents of the Ryukyu ("Lew Chew") Islands, which did not formally become part of Japan until the 1870s.



Like the official illustrations that included artists sketching and painting, the Narrative actually gives us a subtle “double exposure” of the photographer at work. Thus, close scrutiny of a bucolic illustration by Heine titled “Temple at Tumai, Lew Chew” reveals Brown at stage center preparing to photograph several seated figures.

*“Temple at Tumai, Lew Chew”
with Eliphalet Brown, Jr.
preparing to take a daguerreo-
type portrait (detail at right)*



*“Afternoon Gossip, Lew Chew”
lithograph based on Brown’s daguerreotype*

Some twenty-plus pages later, we are treated to a charming, tipped-in lithograph titled “Afternoon Gossip, Lew Chew,” depicting three men—surely these very same subjects—seated on a mat beneath a tree, smoking and seemingly at perfect peace with the world.

While dignity pervades the individual portraits that grace the Narrative, informality such as this is rare. Usually, those who held so still for so

long—as the slow daguerreotype process demanded—tend to seem immobilized, almost frozen. They inhabit a world far removed from the animated, colorful, half imagined or even entirely imagined “Americans” we encounter on the Japanese side.

In subsequent years, the verisimilitude of photography and technical ease of both shooting and reproducing pictures would gradually render paintings, woodblock prints, lithographs, woodcuts, and the like outdated and even obsolete as ways of visualizing other peoples and cultures for mass consumption. And, indeed, immediately following Perry’s opening of

Japan, both native and foreign photographers hastened to produce a rich record of the people and landscapes of the waning years of the feudal regime (the Shogun's government was overthrown in 1868). In this regard, Eliphalet Brown, Jr.'s daguerreotypes and the portraits copied from them were a harbinger of what was to come.

A Gallery of Portraits from the Official Narrative



Court interpreter, Ryukyus



Chief magistrate, Ryukyus



Buddhist priest



Mother and child, Shimoda



Prefect of Shimoda



Women, Shimoda



"Priest in Full Dress," Shimoda



"Prince of Izu"



Interpreters



Women in Shimoda

BLACK SHIPS & SAMURAI

COMMODORE PERRY AND THE OPENING OF JAPAN (1853-1854)

BY JOHN W. DOWER

CHAPTER SEVEN: GIFTS



Gifts from the Japanese

Collection of Carl H. Boehringer



Gifts from the Americans

from the official Narrative

Material culture encapsulates national culture, and this was certainly the case in Japan's encounter with Commodore Perry's America. Even as his gunboats were forcing the Japanese to abandon their seclusion policy, Perry was introducing them—and very deliberately so—to the technologies essential for survival in this challenging new world. He invited them to examine the awesome engines and gunnery on his vessels. His officers and civilian aides took pleasure in demonstrating Colt "six shooters," as well as daguerreotype photography.

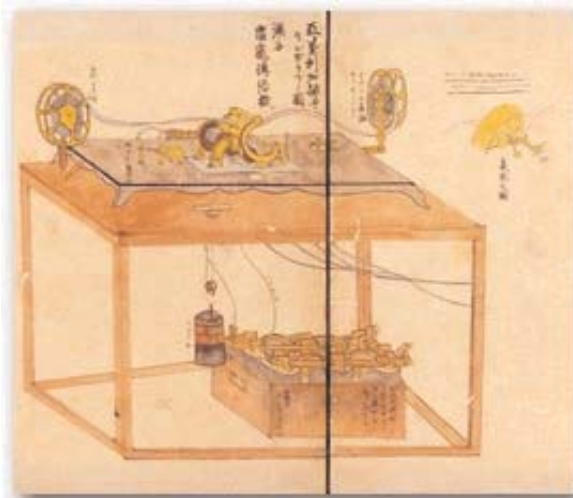


*Revolver from the time
of Perry's mission*

Tokyo National Museum

In a dramatic ceremony on March 13, 1854, the commodore presented his reluctant hosts with a variety of official gifts that ranged from the literally tasteful (including a large quantity of liquor, as well as "8 baskets of Irish potatoes") to the elegantly instructive (various books, including multi-volume sets of Audubon's costly *Birds of America* and *Quadrupeds of America*) to the technologically unfamiliar and imposing.

The latter presents, which naturally attracted greatest attention, included agricultural implements, a stove, a small printing press, a daguerreotype camera, a variety of firearms, two telegraph instruments (with three miles of wire), and a quarter-size locomotive and tender with passenger car and some 370 yards of track.



Perry's gifts, as depicted here by Japanese artists, included a telegraph apparatus, tools, casks of liquor, firearms, headgear, umbrellas, a stove, and a daguerreotype camera

Shiryō Hensanjo, University of Tokyo

The lithograph depicting these presents being delivered to the Japanese in March 1854 may well be the best known of all of the official artwork associated with the Perry expedition. (Somewhat ironically, this is one of the few major graphics not done by Heine. It is attributed to W. T. Peters, a little-known New York artist who did not accompany the mission but apparently worked from one of Brown's now lost daguerreotypes.)

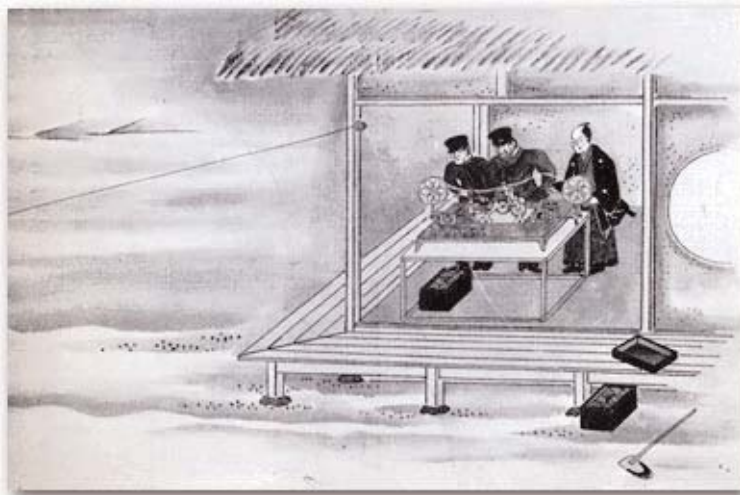


Delivery of American presents at Yokohama, March 13, 1854.

Note the telegraph wires in the right background.

The viewer's eye is immediately drawn to the locomotive, surrounded by Japanese officials dressed in kimono and short *haori* jackets. Its diminutive size makes it appear to be almost a toy. Closer examination reveals a keg of whiskey in the foreground, an American-style "Francis' copper lifeboat" in the rear—and, in the far distance, poles carrying the telegraph wire.

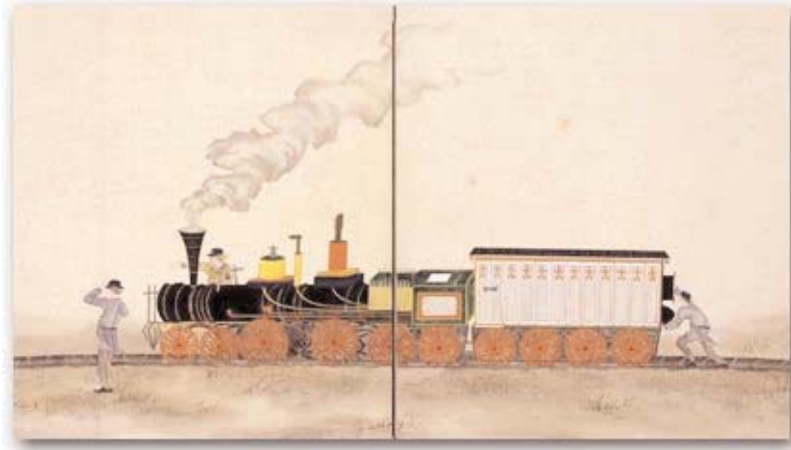
Samuel Morse, the inventor of the telegraph, personally instructed one of Perry's lieutenants in Morse code so that the instruments could be set up and demonstrated in Japan.



*A samurai official
observes two Americans
operating the telegraph*

Shiryo Hensanjo,
University of Tokyo

As might be expected, the small-scale train attracted particularly keen attention. By the 1870s, Japan had built its own first full-scale railway, and real smoke-spouting passenger trains had become one of the favorite subjects of wood-block artists of the new Japan.



*Three Japanese renderings
of the miniature train*

Shiryo Hensanjo, University of
Tokyo (top and bottom)

Ryosenji Treasure Museum (left)



The Japanese reciprocated with gifts of their own, albeit in a manner that served primarily to impress the Americans with the quality of traditional crafts, the exceptional care with which the Japanese packaged and presented things (the American gifts came in crates), and—clearly the strongest impression—the rather curious and even coarse nature of a great deal that was received.

The better Japanese presents included lacquered ware, porcelain, and numerous bolts of silk (virtually all of which quickly disappeared into the bowels of a warehouse in Washington). This was accompanied by bowls, pipes, fans, dolls, bamboo ware, writing paper, and other commonplace articles—as well as a number of brooms, 35 bundles of oak charcoal, 70 or so ordinary umbrellas, 200 bales of rice, and 300 chickens.



Presentation of silk to American officers, March 24, 1854
painting on paper

Collection of Carl H. Boehringer

Several small dogs of a breed that reminded the Americans of English spaniels were given for presentation to the U.S. president, but although they made an appearance in the Narrative, their subsequent fate remains unclear.

Lieutenant Preble, indefatigable chronicler of the inside story, noted in his diary that the Japanese presents also included "a box of obscene paintings of naked men and women, another proof of the lewdness of this exclusive people." These did not appear in the official report, and their fate, too, remains unknown.



Dogs presented to Commodore Perry
by the Japanese commissioners

Preble's tepid response to the Japanese gifts was typical. He found them to be a "pretty display," but concluded that "one of our presents of Audubon's Great Work on American birds was worth more than all we saw there, and our miniature railroad engine and car cost several times their value."

Everyone, the Commodore included, remarked on "the meager display and the lack of rich brocades and magnificent things always associated with our ideas of Japan.... I think these presents will prove a great disappointment to our people, whose ideas of Japan have been so exaggerated."



Japanese gifts to the Perry expedition included various artifacts and art objects, among them fans, dolls, ceramics, and decorated writing paper.

Smithsonian Institution

List of American Presents
Brought Ashore in Japan on March 13, 1854

For the Emperor:

Miniature steam engine, 1/4 size, with track, tender, and car
2 telegraph sets, with batteries, three miles of wire, gutta percha wire, and insulators
1 Francis' copper lifeboat
1 surfboat of copper
Collection of agricultural implements
Audubon Birds, in nine volumes
Natural History of the State of New York, 16 volumes
Annals of Congress, 4 volumes
Laws and Documents of the State of New York
Journal of the Senate and Assembly of New York
Lighthouse Reports, 2 volumes
Bancroft's History of the United States, 4 volumes
Farmers' Guide, 2 volumes
1 series of United States Coast Survey Charts
Morris, *Engineering*
Silver-topped dressing case
8 yards scarlet broadcloth, and scarlet velvet
Series of United States standard yard, gallon, bushel, balances, and weights
Quarter cask of Madeira
Barrel of Whiskey
Box of champagne and cherry cordial and maraschino
3 boxes of fine tea
Maps of several states and four large lithographs
Telescope and stand, in box
Sheet-iron stove
An assortment of fine perfumery
5 Hall rifles
3 Maynard muskets
12 cavalry swords
6 artillery swords
1 carbine
20 Army pistols in a box
Catalogue of New York State Library and Postoffices
2 mail bags with padlocks

For the Empress:

Flowered silk embroidered dress
Toilet dressing-box, gilded
6 dozen assorted perfumery

For Commissioner Hayashi:

Audubon Quadrupeds
4 yards scarlet broadcloth

Clock
Stove
Rifle
Set of Chinaware
Teaset
Revolver and powder
2 dozen assorted perfumery
20 gallons of whiskey
1 sword
3 boxes fine tea
1 box of champagne
1 box of finer tea

For Abe, Prince of Ise, first councilor:

1 copper lifeboat
Kendall War in Mexico and Ripley History of the
War in Mexico
1 box of champagne
3 boxes fine tea
20 gallons whiskey
1 clock
1 stove
1 rifle
1 sword
1 revolver and powder
2 dozen assorted perfumery
4 yards scarlet broadcloth

For each of the other five councilors:

1 book*
10 gallons of whiskey
1 lithograph
1 clock
1 revolver
1 rifle
1 sword
12 assorted perfumery

* The books thus distributed were Lossing, *Field Book of Revolution*; Owen, *Architecture; Documentary History of New York*; Downing, *Country Houses*; and Owen, *Geology of Minnesota*. The source for this list is Roger Pineau, editor, *The Japan Expedition, 1852-1854: The Personal Journal of Commodore Matthew C. Perry*, (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1968).

List of Articles Received from the Japanese
Government on March 24, 1854

1. For the Government of the United States, "from the Emperor":

- 1 gold lacquered writing apparatus
- 1 gold lacquered paper box
- 1 gold lacquered book-case
- 1 lacquered writing table
- 1 censer (cow-shape) of bronze, supporting silver flower and stand
- 1 flower holder and stand
- 2 braziers
- 10 pieces fine red pongee
- 5 pieces flowered crepe

2. From Hayashi, 1st commissioner:

- 1 lacquered writing apparatus
- 1 lacquered paper box
- 1 box of paper
- 1 box flowered note paper
- 5 boxes stamped note and letter paper
- 4 boxes assorted sea shells, 100 in each
- 1 box of branch coral and feather in silver
- 1 lacquered chow-chow box
- 1 box, set of three, lacquered goblets
- 7 boxes cups and spoons and goblet cut from conch shells

3. From Ido, 2d commissioner:

- 2 boxes lacquered waiters, 4 in all
- 2 boxes, containing 20 umbrellas
- 1 box 30 coir brooms

4. From Izawa, 3rd commissioner:

- 1 piece red pongee
- 1 piece white pongee
- 8 boxes, 13 dolls
- 1 box bamboo woven articles
- 2 boxes bamboo stands

5. From Udono, 4th commissioner:

- 3 pieces striped crepe
- 2 boxes porcelain cups
- 1 box, 10 jars of soy

6. From Matsuzaki, 5th commissioner:

- 3 boxes porcelain goblets
- 1 box figured matting
- 35 bundles oak charcoal

7. From Abe, 1st Imperial councilor:

14 pieces striped-figured silk (taffeta)

8-12. From each of other 5 Imperial councilors:

10 pieces striped-figured silk (taffeta)

13. "From the Emperor" to Commodore Perry:

1 lacquered writing apparatus

1 lacquered paper box

3 pieces red pongee

2 pieces white pongee

2 pieces flowered crepe

3 pieces figured dyed crepe

14. From commissioners to Capt. H.A. Adams:

3 pieces plain red pongee

2 pieces dyed figured crepe

20 sets lacquered cups and covers

15-17. From commissioners to Mr. Perry, Mr. Portman, and Mr. S.W. Williams, each:

2 pieces red pongee

2 pieces dyed figured crepe

10 sets lacquered cups and covers

18-22. From commissioners to Mr. Gay, Mr. Danby, Mr. Draper, Dr. Morrow, and Mr. J.P. Williams:

1 piece red dyed figured crepe

10 sets lacquered cups and covers

23. "From the Emperor" to the squadron:

200 bundles of rice, each 5 Japanese pecks

300 chickens

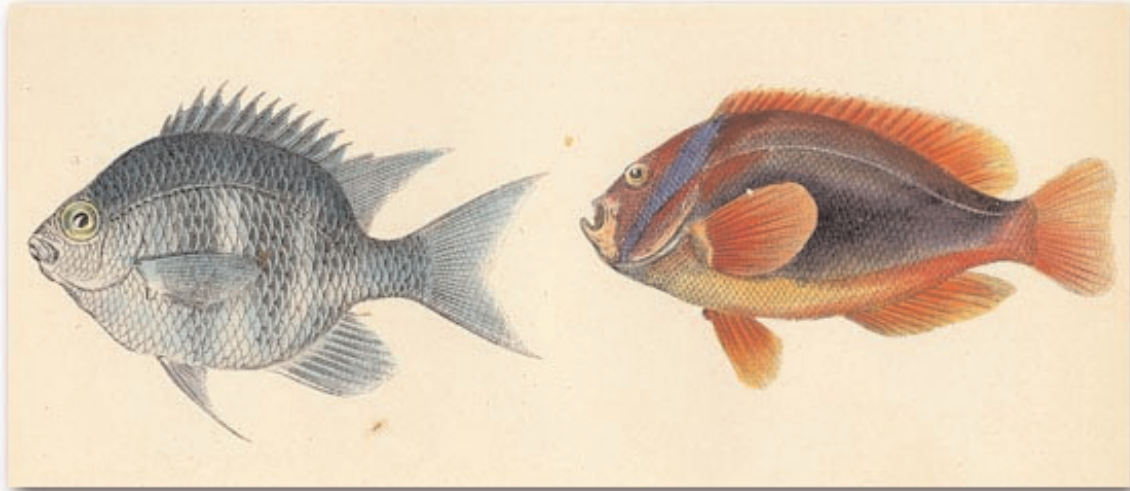
The source for this list is the official Narrative of the Perry mission.

BLACK SHIPS & SAMURAI

COMMODORE PERRY AND THE OPENING OF JAPAN (1853-1854)

BY JOHN W. DOWER

CHAPTER EIGHT: NATURE

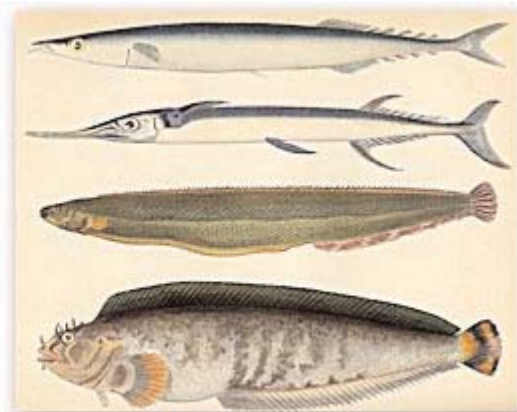
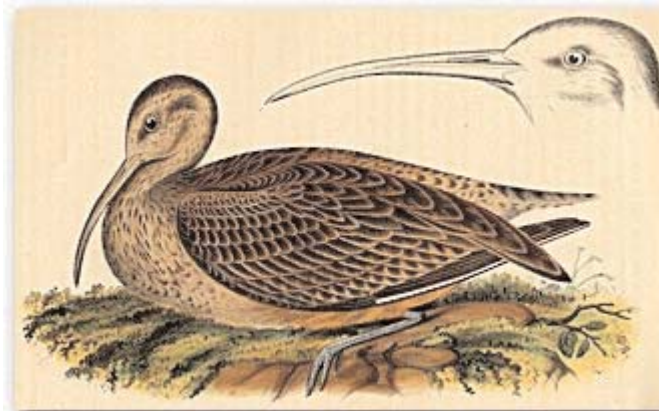
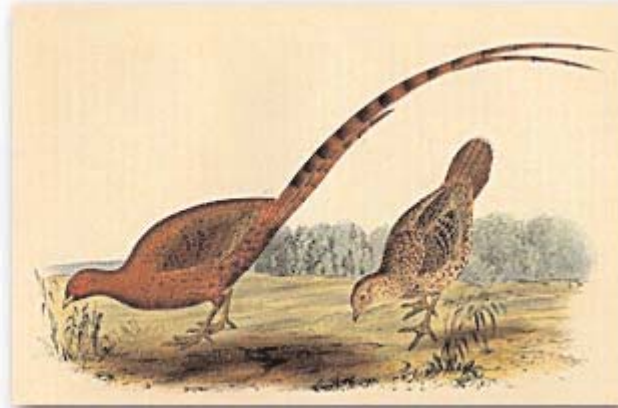


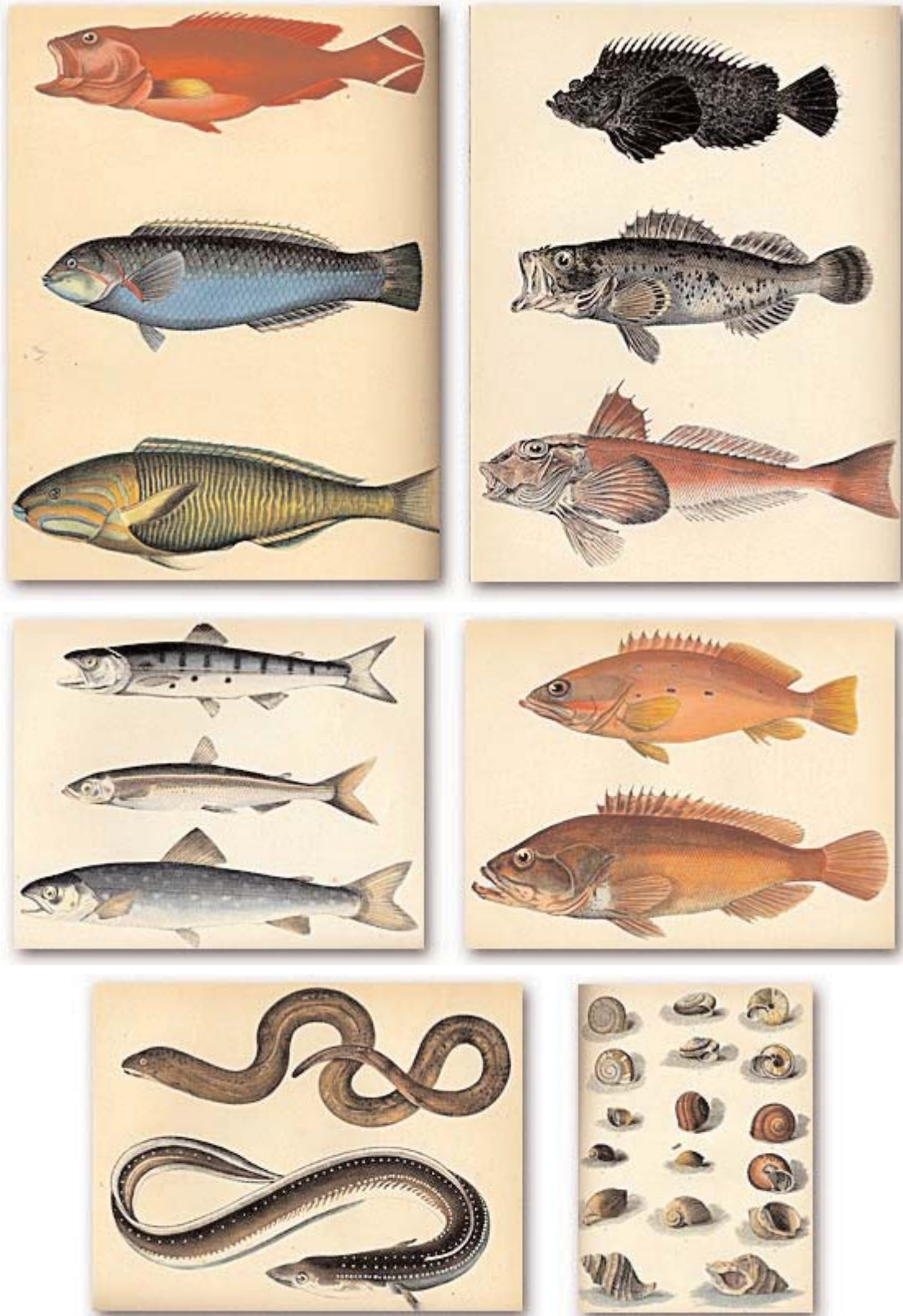
Marine life

Lithographs from volume two of the official Narrative

The Perry mission was intent on more than just opening relations with Japan, and its artists and technical specialists devoted themselves to more than just depicting the people, customs, and landscapes of a hitherto secluded country. They also set themselves the task of compiling a graphic record of the natural world.

Due to unfortunate personal wrangles, the hundreds of botanical samples collected by Dr. James Morrow were never included among the plates that graced the official Narrative, and Morrow's illustrations were subsequently lost. The second volume did, however, include sumptuous lithographs of marine life, together with a small selection of birds. Works of art in and of themselves, these illustrations represent an obvious counterpart to the great Audubon folios of birds and mammals that constituted one of the most elegant of Perry's gifts to Japanese officials. These renderings, presented below, remind us that the Western adventurers and expansionists of these days were intent on "mapping" virtually every aspect of the little known world.





All images from the official Narrative, volume two

BLACK SHIPS & SAMURAI

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CHAPTER NINE: SOURCES

Basic Sources on Commodore Perry and the Opening of Japan
followed by Staff, Credits, and Acknowledgements

Basic Primary Sources

Perry, Matthew Calbraith. *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan, performed in the years 1852, 1853, and 1854, under the Command of Commodore M. C. Perry, United States Navy, by Order of the Government of the United States*. Compiled from the Original Notes and Journals of Commodore Perry and his Officers, at his request, and under his supervision, by Francis L. Hawks, D.D., L.L.D. (Washington, D.C.: Published by Order of the Congress of the United States, 1856–1858). Three quarto volumes.

This now rare publication is the lavish basic official account of the Perry mission. Volume 1, published in 1856 and of greatest general interest, is extensively illustrated with fine lithographs and woodcuts, many of which are reproduced in the Essay. Volume 2 contains the colored plates of birds and marine life that are reproduced here. Volume 3, of virtually no interest today, consists entirely of astronomical charts prepared during the voyages. An abridged one-volume commercial trade edition of the Narrative was also published in 1856. This includes many of the same graphics, but the quality of reproduction is inferior to the original.

Perry, Matthew C. *The Japan Expedition, 1852–1854: The Personal Journal of Commodore Matthew C. Perry*. Edited by Roger Pineau, with an introduction by Samuel Eliot Morison. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1968).

Throughout his mission to Japan, Perry dictated his observations and thoughts to an aide who wrote them down. This voluminous account was a major source for the official Narrative written by Francis Hawks. This printed version of the Perry journal includes numerous illustrations in both color and black and white—including lithographs that did not appear in the official Narrative and a small selection of Japanese graphics.

"Commodore Perry's Expedition to Japan," *Harper's Magazine*, vol. 12, no. 70 (March 1856), pp. 441–466, and vol. 12, no. 72 (May 1856), pp. 733–756.

This journalistic account of the mission coincided with the publication of the first volume of the official Narrative and took its text, and a few illustrations, from that source. It captures how the expedition was presented to the general public.

Preble, George Henry. *The Opening of Japan: A Diary of Discovery in the Far East, 1853–1856*. Edited by Boleslaw Szczesniak. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962).

A sample of Preble's lively first-hand observations appears in the text of the Essay, describing the inebriated exchanges that took place at the formal banquet Perry held for Japanese commissioners on his flagship *Powhatan*.

Williams, Samuel Wells. "A Journal of the Perry Expedition to Japan (1853–1854)," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, vol. 37 (1910), pp. 1-261.

Williams, an American missionary based in China, accompanied Perry as "first interpreter of the expedition." This lengthy published version of his journal was edited by his son.

Heine, William. *Graphic Scenes of the Japan Expedition*. (New York: G. P. Putnam & Company, 1856).

Heine, William. *With Perry to Japan: A Memoir by William Heine*. Translated by Frederick Trautmann. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990).

Heine, in his mid-twenties and born and educated in Germany, was the major artist who accompanied the Perry expedition. Most of the illustrations in the official Narrative are based on his paintings and sketches.

Morrow, James. *A Scientist with Perry in Japan: The Diary of Dr. James Morrow* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1947).

Morrow accompanied the Perry expedition to collect, record, and illustrate botanical specimens. Unfortunately, his illustrations were never published and most of them have been lost.

Spaulding, J. W. *The Japan Expedition: Japan and Around the World, An Account of Three Visits to the Japanese Empire* (New York: Redfield, 1855).

Sewall, John S. "With Perry in Japan: Personal Recollections of the Expedition of 1853–54," *Century Magazine*, vol. 70, no. 3 (July 1905), pp. 349–360.

Watts, Talbot (M.D.). *Japan and the Japanese* (New York: J. P. Neagle, 1852).

A concise (184 pages), illustrated account of Japan, based on existing literature in English and published on the very eve of Perry's arrival in Japan in 1853. This is an excellent primary source for pre-Perry European and American images of Japan and the Japanese.

Kaempfer, Englebert. *The History of Japan* (Glasgow: James MacLehose & Sons, 1906).

This three-volume illustrated text is a translation from the German of the most famous Tokugawa-period foreign account of Japan, written by a German physician and scholar who resided in the Dutch enclave at Dejima from 1690 to 1692. It remained one of the best-known foreign sources about Japan into the 19th century.

Drifting Toward the Southeast: The Story of Five Japanese Castaways, Told in 1852 by John Manjiro. Translated by Junya Nagakuni and Junji Kitadai. (New Bedford: Spinner Publications, 2003).

This is a complete translation of Hyoson Kiryaku, the account told to Japanese officials by John Manjiro, a shipwrecked young man who was rescued by an American whaler and lived in the United States for many years before returning to Japan in 1851. Manjiro's account, issued in a very few copies, included colored illustrations by himself and Kawada Shoryo, the scholar who transcribed Manjiro's account for Japanese officials.

"Diary of an Official of the Bakufu," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Second series, vol. 7 (1930), pp. 98–119.

A rare view (in translation) of the Perry mission as seen by Japanese officials. The author of this account, which focuses on official interactions during the 1854 visit, is unidentified. Many exchanges between Perry and the Japanese side are given in the form of direct quotations.

Basic Secondary Sources

Morison, Samuel Eliot. *"Old Bruin": The Life of Commodore Matthew C. Perry, 1794–1858* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1967).

This basic biography of Perry, by one of America's most distinguished naval historians, covers the Japan mission in detail and includes interesting illustrations from the Japanese side.

Wiley, Peter Booth (with Ichiro Korogi). *Yankees in the Land of the Gods: Commodore Perry and the Opening of Japan* (New York: Viking, 1990).

A solid account of the Perry expedition.

Dulles, Foster Rhea. *Yankees and Samurai: America's Role in the Emergence of Modern Japan* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

Chapters one through five present an unusually lively and engaging account of the Perry mission and its background.

Barr, Pat. *The Coming of the Barbarians: The Opening of Japan to the West, 1853–1870* (New York: Dutton, 1967).

A short, popular overview.

Walworth, Arthur Clarence. *Black Ships Off Japan* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1946).

Griffis, William Elliot. *Matthew Calbraith Perry: A Typical American Naval Officer* (Boston: Cupples and Hurd, 1887).

Kaneko, Kokichi. *Manjiro, The Man Who Discovered America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956).

Sakamaki, Shunzo. "Japan and the United States, 1790–1853," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Second series, vol. 18 (1939), pp. 1–204.

A useful, lengthy account of Japanese contacts with and views of the United States prior to the Perry expedition.

Catalogs & Other Illustrated Sources

Reynolds, Robert. *Commodore Perry in Japan* (New York: American Heritage "Junior Library," 1963).

Although included in a "junior library" series, this volume contains an unusually broad and interesting selection of illustrations from the Japanese as well as American side.

Statler, Oliver. *The Black Ship Scroll: An Account of the Perry Expedition at Shimoda in 1854 and the Lively Beginnings of People-to-People Relations Between Japan & America* (Tokyo: John Weatherhill, Inc., 1963).

This little book offers a composite version of the "Black Ship Scroll" that is reconstructed in this unit. This scroll exists in several full or partial variations. The version reproduced in its entirety here is owned by the Honolulu Academy of Art. Statler's book alternates scenes from this Honolulu scroll with almost identical scenes from an incomplete (and cut up) version in the possession of the Japan Society of San Francisco. The value of the book is enhanced by useful translations of the Japanese texts on the scroll by Richard Lane.

Ryosenji Treasure Museum. *The Kurofune Art Collection* (Shimoda: Ryosenji Temple).

This small catalog (entirely in Japanese) reproduces some of the holdings of this important collection of "Black Ship" (*kurofune*) artwork held by the Ryosenji Temple in Shimoda. Shimoda was one of the two treaty ports

opened to foreigners by Japan in 1854, and a famous lithograph depicts American troops on parade in front of Ryosenji Temple. Many of the Japanese graphics included in this unit were provided by this source.

Worlds Revealed: The Dawn of Japanese and American Exchange (Salem: Peabody-Essex Museum, 1999).

This is the bilingual catalog of a joint U.S.-Japanese exhibition at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts. It includes several excellent artworks on the Perry mission from the Peabody-Essex collection—most of which have been included here.

Houchins, Chang-su. *Artifacts of Diplomacy: Smithsonian Collections from Commodore Matthew Perry's Japan Expedition (1853–1854)*. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1995).

This catalog contains many black-and-white photographs of gifts received from the Japanese by the Perry mission and now stored in the Smithsonian, along with itemized lists of gifts exchanged.

Tokio Koete Kataru Mono ["Voices from the Past: Historical Sources and Art Treasures"]. (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shiryo Hensanjo, 2001).

This catalog, published by the Historiographical Institute of the University of Tokyo, accompanied an exhibition held at the Tokyo National Museum in December 2001 and January 2002. Of particular interest is the eight-panel folding screen titled "Assembled Pictures of Commodore Perry's Visit," which is reproduced in great detail in the Essay. The catalog includes an appendix of English captions for all illustrations.

Hibata, Ohsuke. *A Picture Scroll of Commodore Perry's Arrival at Yokohama in 1854: A Posthumous Work* (1930).

This rare, short, illustrated text (a copy is held at Harvard University's Yenching Library) is largely in Japanese but includes a brief English introduction. It was issued by Hibata Sekko, the son of Hibata Ohsuke, who prepared detailed illustrations at the time of Perry's 1854 visit. The black-and-white illustrations are fascinating, and many later emerged in colored versions by different Japanese artists—including some of the paintings pasted onto the outstanding "Assembled Pictures of Commodore Perry's Visit" folding screen at the Historiographical Institute at Tokyo University.

Yokohama Kaiko Shiryokan [Yokohama Archives of History].

This Japanese archive holds many materials pertaining to the opening of treaty ports in the years following the Perry mission. Illustrated publications pertaining to Perry include Perry Raiko kankei Shiryo Zuroku [The Japan Expedition of Commodore Perry, 1982] and Shiryo ga Kataru Yokohama no Hyakunen [A Century of Yokohama As Told in Documentary Materials, 1991].

Perry-Related Websites

www.baxleystamps.com Perry info: <http://www.baxleystamps.com/litho/>

This is an exceptionally detailed website compiled by George C. Baxley, stamp and book seller, and constantly updated: "These web pages are devoted to books, literature and lithographs pertaining to the 1852 to 1854 US Expedition to Japan and the China Seas by Commodore Matthew C. Perry. Here you will find material on early Japan, Lew Chew (Okinawa), China, Hong Kong and Macau."

<http://www.us-japan.org/jsnc/virtualjapan/BSS/bssmain.htm>

This site features scenes from an incomplete variant version of the 1854 "Black Ship Scroll" painted in Shimoda that is reconstructed in full in "Black Ships & Samurai." UCLA Professor Fred G. Notehelfer provides an accompanying commentary for teachers and students.

<http://dl.lib.brown.edu/japan/index.html>

Under the title "Perry Visits Japan: a visual history," this site reproduces an unusual and little known Perry scroll in the collection of the John Hay Library at Brown University. The scroll is anonymous, and it is not clear when it was painted. It offers perspectives not seen in better known depictions of the mission.

<http://www.lib.virginia.edu/speccol/exhibits/mellon/newVistas.html>

Paul Mellon's Personal Library at the University of Virginia includes five large-scale, colored illustrations by William Heine, including "Passing the Rubicon" and "Exercising the Troops" in Shimoda.

<http://www.spinnerpub.com>

“Drifting Toward the Southeast: The Story of Five Japanese Castaways.” This site is based on the 2003 translation of Hyoson Kiryaku, John Manjiro's account of his experiences in the United States as told to the officials of the Shogunate in 1852.

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“Black Ships & Samurai” was developed by Visualizing Cultures at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and presented on MIT OpenCourseWare.

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Honolulu Bishop Museum
Kobe City Museum
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Peabody Essex Museum
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[Permissions are still being sought for graphics from the collections of Carl Boehringer, DeWolf Perry, and Paul Blum.]

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