

*Maiden Voyage: The Senzaimaru and the Creation of Modern Sino-Japanese Relations.* Joshua A., Fogel. Oakland: University of California Press, 2014. ISBN: 9780520283305

Joshua A. Fogel has written a meticulously researched book, which developed from his Edwin O. Reischauer Lectures at Harvard University in 2007, on the reestablishment of Sino-Japanese relations in 1862 with the visit of Japanese delegates to China aboard the *Senzaimaru*, a British-manufactured ship purchased by the Tokugawa shogunate for the mission, to Shanghai.

Although Fogel also discusses subsequent Tokugawa Japanese missions to China, his emphasis is on the “maiden voyage” of the *Senzaimaru*. The mission occurred after a long hiatus—more than two centuries—in formal diplomatic relations between China and Japan. However, Fogel is quick to point out that these Japanese visitors did not necessarily conceive of themselves as national subjects or proto-citizens in the years before 1868, when the Meiji government was formed in Japan. “In clearly discernible instances, several of them acted first and foremost on behalf of their domains, and there was no love lost between many of them and the shogunal officials representing the *bakufu* aboard the *Senzaimaru*. There are, however, any number of instances—especially when finding fault with China’s apparent weaknesses and subservience to the Westerners—when they compared themselves as ‘Japanese’ favorably to their hosts... What ‘Japan’ meant to them is difficult to extract, but it was as much a cultural entity, a body with a history, as it was a modern nation-state with a modern military, centralized government, and uniform educational system” (pp. 5-6).

Historians of modern Japan must grapple with the intriguing, unavoidable topic of Japan’s determined emulation of first China and then the West, in culture, governance, and technology. Fogel might not have direct evidence pointing to the later development in Meiji Japan of “shedding Asia and joining Europe,” but he does provide anecdotes of Japanese disdain for the Chinese in Shanghai. Japanese visitors were appalled by the “smells of the crowds that followed them everywhere in the steaming heat, the seemingly omnipresent brothels and bars, and all the ‘offensive’ odors from the walled city—all of which [they] took as a sign of China’s fundamentally unhygienic nature. They were dumbfounded by the fact that Chinese lived in subservience to the Westerners in the concessions and plainly worried that such a condition would infect Japan” (pp. 94-95). For the Japanese, Shanghai was an incubator of attitudes, behaviors, and cultures that they had not directly experienced for much of the Tokugawa period. The Japanese travelers interacted extensively with the Chinese and Westerners in both Shanghai and Nagasaki, from which they set sail. The Westerners in Shanghai were not only a curiosity in Shanghai; unlike Nagasaki, their presence was dominant. The Japanese associated Christianity with opium—the two main Western “exports” to China. They regarded Christianity as a heretical religion that, under the Taiping rebels, had overrun and destroyed much of China. In their view, Western traders—or drug dealers, in Fogel’s words—were turning Qing China into one large opium den. The Japanese observed the changes that the Opium War and the opening of foreign concessions and treaty ports had brought to China, as well as the Chinese reactions to the unprecedented influx of Western objects and people into China. Sensing the inevitability of a similar influx into Japan, the Japanese drew lessons from the Chinese experience in Shanghai, the preeminent treaty port of China, determined to avoid the same fate for Japan.

Fogel has admirably detailed the conception, preparations, and observations of the *Senzaimaru* delegation. He offers a glimpse into late Qing Chinese society as seen through Japanese eyes. We read about the selection of the Japanese delegates, the ways in which the Japanese made sense of what they heard or saw in Shanghai, and the sometimes intimate “brush

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conversations” (*bitan*) between Chinese and Japanese. Many of the Japanese on the *Senzaimaru* were men of letters, well versed in art, and their erudition earned the respect and friendship of their Chinese counterparts. Fogel’s description of the Japanese travelers’ encounters is lively, and his analysis of their mission’s implications for late Tokugawa and early Meiji Japan and for Sino-Japanese relations of the future is insightful. Yet Fogel is careful not to overstate the significance of the *Senzaimaru* and subsequent Japanese missions to China. The samurai in an 1867 trip, for instance, “had no well-defined program of study, nor is there any indication that anyone even feigned one, other than in the official correspondence. They went and they saw Shanghai, and, to a lesser extent, Nanjing, but they left no report for the shogunate or even for their domains...it is [still] far from clear just how many Japanese were thinking on behalf of a ‘nation’” (p. 168). Nevertheless, Fogel has demonstrated that it is fallacious to trace the Japanese contempt for China in the 1930s and 1940s, when the two nations were at war, to Meiji and even Tokugawa times. As Fogel suggests, the Japanese travelers of 1862 were surely discontented with the ineffectiveness of the Qing Chinese military and its reliance on Western “barbarians” to defeat the Taiping rebels, but that was a sentiment shared by many Chinese. The overriding opinion of the Japanese appeared to be “concern for the future of China, continued respect for the fount of all meaningful civilization, and (most important) anxiety about what the future held for Japan” (p. 141). An interesting chapter on the *Senzaimaru* in fiction and film—or myth—reveals the ways in which misrepresentations of Sino-Japanese interactions, often deliberate, not only reflected anti-foreign hostility in wartime Japan, but have also resulted in lingering misconceptions of Sino-Japanese relations in Japan and beyond down to the present.

Fogel’s book is a welcome addition to the study of Sino-Japanese relations in the late nineteenth century, when both China and Japan were undergoing tremendous cultural, political, and social changes. With this valuable book, drawn on a large number of primary sources in both languages, Fogel has once again proven himself as an authority in the field, which he helped create.

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