Behind the Curtains of Neutrality: The reorientation of Dutch foreign policy towards Tokugawa Japan during the Bakumatsu Period (1853-1868)

Hopman, Tijs

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Thesis supervisor: Dr. C. Wits (Leiden University)
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Tijs Hopman
Student nr. 3303845
Leiden University
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- Introduction -

The Bakumatsu Period in Japan (1853-1868) brought the end of the feudal Tokugawa Shogunate (1600-1868) and set the stage for the Meiji Revolution, heralding the Japanese course towards modernisation and imperialism. This period consisted therefore of complex internal political struggle within Japan. However, this conflict was exacerbated by a hitherto unknown factor within Japanese politics: foreign, Western, influence. During the Tokugawa period, Japan was closed to Western commerce – save that of the Dutch – and the shogunate would suffer no access to the country. The Bakumatsu Period saw a gradual switch in this international policy of Japan, albeit sometimes reluctantly and coercively. And because of this, the Western nations involved played a large part in the historical Japanese trajectory of modernisation and becoming part of the modern global world order and economy. On the other hand, the history of Western interactions with Japan during this period is important for understanding Western foreign policy and imperialism in East Asia.

Although much literature and scholarship focuses on the interaction between Japan and Western great powers, an important small power, the Netherlands, remains largely out of the picture. Yet, before the other Western powers were even sighted off the coasts of Japan, the Dutch enjoyed commerce and contact with the country for over 200 years. During the events that 'opened' Japan up to the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the Netherlands also played a role. This role differed from the other Western powers in that the Netherlands had enjoyed a long tradition of contact with Japan and that the Netherlands was a small power in Europe, but a large imperial power in Asia. The contextual position of the Netherlands during the Bakumatsu Period differed a lot from that of other powers, which influenced Dutch policy and actions. This creates the question of how the Netherlands reorientated its foreign policy towards Tokugawa Japan during the Bakumatsu Period, and what does this reorientation meant for the Dutch foreign policy in East Asia, in light of the Dutch position of small power with a large colonial domain.

Modern literature and scholarship often point to the expedition of American commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry (1794-1858) in 1853 as the opening of Japan. From there the stories narrate the role of nations like Britain, the United States, France, and

sometimes Russia; all of whom were considered great powers at the time.[1] Others, like Mitani Hiroshi, focus instead on the experiences and reactions within Japan.[2] Nevertheless, the Perry Expedition remains to play a pivotal role in the narrative of the opening of Japan to Western nations.[3]

However, although the Perry Expedition has often been recognised as the event that 'opened' Japan to the modern World – or at least was an important catalyst to this effect – there exist multiple problems concerning the idea of an 'opening' of Japan. One of the most prominent of these is that Japan was never truly closed. Although the shogunal court in power, known as the 'bakufu', refused interactions with Western powers, contact with foreigners did exist during the Tokugawa period. Most notably in the form of trade and contact with the Chinese and Dutch in Nagasaki.[4] Besides, the bakufu also received both frequent and infrequent embassies from the Joseon Kingdom of Korea, and the Ryukyu Islands.[5] The idea of Japan upholding a policy of 'closed country', or *sakoku*, is therefore a somewhat Eurocentric vision of Japan during the Tokugawa period.[6]

Even though it is not unknown that among the Western powers the Netherlands already had established contact with Japan, the position and role of the Netherlands in the histories of the post-Perry years is often overshadowed by that of the great powers. Some scholars, like Marius Jansen, and Hiroshi focus on the experience of Japan among the great powers.[7] William McOmie, on the other hand, focuses on the roles of the Western powers, along which the Netherlands, and puts each role in perspective.[8] Martha Chaiklin looks specifically at the way in which the Dutch were approached by the Americans and illustrates how the Dutch acted as middlemen between larger Western powers, like the US, to Japan.[9] Yet, large modern scholarly works focusing specifically on Dutch international policy

[1] Cf. W.G. Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan, 1834-1858* (Kent, 1995), and in I. Nish and Y. Kibata (eds.), *The History of Anglo-Japanesee Relations, Volume 1: The Political-Diplomatic Dimension, 1600-1930* (New York, 2000).
[2] M. Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse, The Decision to Open Japan* (Tokyo, 2006).
[3] Cf. also: M.B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, London, 2000), and W. McOmie, *The Opening of Japan, 1853-1855, A Comparative Study of the American, British, Dutch, and Russian Naval Expeditions to Compel the Tokugawa Shogunate to Conclude Treaties and Open Ports to Their Ships* (Folkestone, 2006).
[4] Hiroshi, *Escape from Japan*, pp. xiii-xv.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Cf. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 92-93.
[7] Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, and Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse*.
[8] McOmie, *The Opening of Japan*.
[9] M. Chaiklin, 'Monopolists to Middlemen: Dutch Liberalism and American Imperialism in the Opening of Japan', in *Journal of World History*, vol. 21, nr 2, (2010), pp. 249-269.

towards Japan during the Bakumatsu Period, like William Beasley's *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan* (1995), remain lacking.[10]

This does not mean that no scholarly literature on the Dutch role during the opening of Japan exists. Already, shortly after the fact, such works were written by Dutch scholars. Jacobus van der Chijs wrote his *Neêrlands streven tot openstelling van Japan voor den wereldhandel* (1867) to counter the criticism of other Western countries that the Netherlands had not exerted itself enough to open Japan.[11] Fuyuko Matsukata therefore rightfully claims that this work was primarily political in nature.[12] Another imposing work by Eelco van Kleffens covered the complete history of relations between the Netherlands and Japan. His work titled *De Internationaalrechtelijke Betrekkingen tussen Nederland en Japan (1605-heden)* (1919) covered the complete history of Dutch-Japanese interactions and focused primarily on the international legal aspect within this contact.[13] Yet, both these works are dated and are either too political in nature or too much focused on the legal standards of the times in which they were written.

Modern scholarly works that focus specifically on the Netherlands do so mostly within the framework of the question whether the Netherlands wanted to maintain its monopoly on Japanese trade. These studies deal with the opinions of other great powers, such as the US, that the Dutch actions in opening Japan for Western commerce were insincere or inadequate at best.[14] This is also the problem tackled by Rik van Lente, who argues that there existed a biased view of the opening of Japan and the matter of *sakoku*, and that not only the Americans were important within this history.[15] The main question posed by Van Lente is what the role of the Netherlands was, during the opening of Japan, and he focuses primarily on the period 1844-1858.[16] Van Lente concludes that the Netherlands did not act out of self-interest but acted as middleman for all parties involved.[17] His research therefore mainly

[10] W.G. Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan, 1834-1858* (Kent, 1995).
[11] J.A. Van der Chijs, *Neêrlands streven tot openstelling van Japan voor den wereldhandel* (Amsterdam, 1867).
[12] F. Matsukata, A. Clulow (transl.), 'King Willem II's 1844 Letter to the Shogun: "Recommendation to Open the Country", in *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 66, nr. 1 (2011), pp. 99-122; p. 100.
[13] E.N. van Kleffens, *De Internationaalrechtelijke Betrekkingen tussen Nederland en Japan (1605-heden)* (Leiden, 1919).
[14] M.C. Vernon, 'The Dutch and the Opening of Japan by the United States', in *Pacific Historical Review* , vol. 28, nr. 1 (1959), pp. 39-48; pp. 46-48.
[15] R. van Lente, *'Door goeden raad en onderwijs', Nederland en de opening van Japan, 1844-1858* (Rotterdam, 2008), p. 6.
[16] Idem, pp. 6-7.
[17] Idem, pp. 152-154.

concerns itself with earlier criticism that the Netherland did not do enough to open Japan, or even tried to maintain its monopoly.

Another such scholarly debate concerns the letter of king Willem II, sent to the shogun of Japan in 1844. Within this letter, the Dutch king advised the Japanese to open the country to Western commerce.[18] Els Jacobs argues that the Netherlands had not much to lose, but that the letter lacked persuasiveness.[19] Matsukata disagrees with the arguments of Jacobs, and argues that the letter was sent only to gauge the Japanese opinion regarding the acceptance of commerce with other nations. Matsukata therefore concludes that the Netherlands did not act out of selflessness, but merely wanted to know whether its monopoly was safe.[20] Like the work of Van Lente, this scholarly debate primarily centres on whether or not Dutch actions were selfless.

This quest for selflessness is connected to a more complex and interesting subject, namely that of Dutch neutrality. The connection between neutrality and selflessness stems from post-war and Cold War reasoning that neutral states are removed from world affairs and impartial – or even passive – in global affairs.[21] This led to scholarship on Dutch neutrality arguing that Dutch international policy from the 16th century to World War II was aloof from large European and global matters.[22] Abstention – or *afzijdigheidspolitiek*, in Dutch – became therefore synonymous with Dutch international policy; a policy in which the Netherlands remained disassociated as much as possible from global matters.[23]

Yet, this vision of Dutch international policy for over almost three hundred years is too simplistic. Before 2000, large reference works on Dutch diplomatic and international history were lacking, which prompted new research. Based on the question of how contemporary Dutch international policy had its origin in the past, Duco Hellema published a scholarly work showing that Dutch international policy was deeper and more complex than argued by scholars like Wels. And Hellema illustrated the importance of liberal free trade, of

[18] 1.04.21 Inventaris van de archieven van de Nederlandse Factorij in Japan te Hirado [1609-1641] en te Deshima, [1641-1860], 1609-1860, Inv. nr. 1712, *Nationaal Archief,* The Hague.
[19] E.M. Jacobs, 'Met alleen woorden als wapen. De Nederlandse poging tot openstelling van Japanse havens voor de internationale handel (1844)', in *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, vol. 105, nr. 1 (1990), pp. 54-77; pp. 60-61, 77.
[20] Matsukata, 'King Willem II's 1844 Letter to the Shogun', pp. 118-119.
[21] M. Abbenhuis, *An Age of Neutrals, Great Power Politics, 1815-1914* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 12.
[22] C.B. Wels, *Aloofness and Neutrality, Studies on Dutch Foreign Relations and Policy-making Institutions* (Utrecht, 1982), p. 15.
[23] Idem, pp. 17-18, 24.

colonial property, and of the preservation of a status quo.[24] Maartje Abbenhuis went further, arguing that the period between 1815-1914 was a golden age for neutrality, such as sustaining the global balance of power, enabling globalisation and underpinning free trade liberal policies, and the rise of internationalism and humanitarianism.[25] To the Netherlands, avoiding war in Europe made imperialism outside Europe more viable.[26] Neutrality, as propagated by the Netherlands, became an essential part of nineteenth century international affairs, making important contributions on all levels of international society.[27]

As a small country, neutrality provided the Netherlands with the possibility of independent action among the great powers. From the 1960´s onwards, the study of small states, as opposed to large states (or great powers) arose slowly.[28] This led to the identifications by Samuël Kruizinga of three groups of thinking about smallness in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century: smallness as minimalist policy, concerning law and neutrality as prevention of war, or the Netherlands as a potential great power.[29] Other studies point to unjust categorisation between 'significant' great powers and 'insignificant' small powers, and argue that small powers – which included most nations – were not insignificant at all.[30] More recent studies focus instead on how small powers thought about themselves and how this mental image shaped international policy.[31] The implication of Dutch small power status on its foreign policy has therefore been the subject of recent scholarship. Yet, none of these studies provide a comprehensive analysis on this issue and its relation to the Netherlands as colonial power in Asia, as well as its contact and influence in East Asia, most notably Japan.

The broader connection between the study of Dutch imperialism and Dutch influence and presence in East Asia is also lacking within the scholarly debate on Dutch imperialism. The debate on Dutch imperialism itself even took some time and only started to appear after

[24] D. Hellema, *Neutraliteit & Vrijhandel, De Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Buitenlandse Betrekkingen* (Utrecht, 2001), pp. 7-11, 42-43, 47-48.
[25] Abbenhuis, *An Age of Neutrals*, p. 2.
[26] Idem, p. 19.
[27] Idem, pp. 20-21.
[28] S. Kruizinga, ´A Small State? The Size of the Netherlands as a Focal Point in Foreign Policy Debates, 1900-1940´, in *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, vol. 27, nr. 3 (2016), pp. 420-436; pp. 420-421.
[29] Idem, pp. 432-433.
[30] R. van Dijk, S. Kruizinga, V. Kuitenbrouwer, R. van der Maar, 'Introduction: A small state on the global scene', in R. van Dijk, S. Kruizinga, V. Kuitenbrouwer, R. van der Maar (eds.), *Shaping the International Relations of the Netherlands, 1815-2000, A Small Country on the Global Scene* (London and New York, 2018), pp. 1-12; pp. 1-3.
[31] Cf. S. Kruizinga (ed.), *The Politics of Smallness in Modern Europe, Size, Identity and International Relations since 1800* (London, 2022).

the 1970's.[32] Maarten Kuitenbrouwer has illustrated that Dutch imperialism had often been characterised as reactionary in the way that it only took military actions in crises in which the Netherlands was dragged involuntarily.[33] This is also the case in Frans van Dongen's work on the historic diplomatic relations between the Netherlands and (Qing) China during the nineteenth century. Van Dongen portrays the relation between China and the Netherlands from 1863 until shortly after the Boxer War (1899-1901), illustrating that only because of the crisis of the Boxer War, the Dutch government felt it necessary to go over to a policy of gunboat diplomacy.[34] And concerning gunboat diplomacy, even the research by Anselm van der Peet on Dutch gunboat diplomacy does not feature Dutch involvement in the Shimonoseki Campaign of 1864, which could be considered an act of Dutch gunboat diplomacy in Japanese waters.[35] Dutch imperialism has thus remained an understudied subject, and even if studied, it rarely focuses on the Netherlands and East Asia.

Within historical research, the complex nature of Dutch neutrality, smallness and imperialism in combination with the longer Dutch tradition of influence and presence in Japan remains understudied. This paper seeks to remedy this by answering the following question: 'What does the reorientation of Dutch (diplomatic) relations with Tokugawa Japan, during the tumultuous Bakumatsu Period (1853-1868), say about Dutch international policy in the East, in light of the Dutch position as small power and general policy of neutrality at the time?' It will do so methodologically by using primarily government archives, but will also make use of diaries, memoirs and letters by those involved, in an effort to provide a complete picture of the events, as the actors involved were often more important than the government back in The Hague.

The following paper will be divided in three chapters with a final conclusion bringing all three together. In order to provide a basis from which a reorientation can be identified, the first chapter will narrate the history of the contact between Japan and the Netherlands between 1600-1844. In this chapter the context of the Nagasaki trade and Dutch presence on Dejima will be a central theme, as this would later on become a point of tension. It will finish

[32] M. Kuitenbrouwer, 'Het imperialisme-debat in de Nederlandse geschiedschrijving', in *BMGN Low Countries Historical Review*, vol. 113, nr. 1 (1998), pp. 56-73; pp. 56-57.
[33] Idem, pp. 65-66, an M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de Opkomst van het Moderne Imperialisme, Koloniën en buitenlandse politiek 1870-1902* (Amsterdam, 1985), p. 17, 22-23.
[34] Cf. F. van Dongen, *Tussen Neutraliteit en Imperialisme, De Nederlands-Chinese Betrekkingen van 1863 tot 1901* (1966, Groningen).
[35] Cf. A.J. van der Peet, *Belangen en prestige, Nederlandse gunboat diplomacy omstreeks 1900* (Amsterdam, 1999).

with an analysis of the letter by Willem II, which broke with earlier conventions. Chapter II will focus on the arrival of Matthew Perry and the conclusion of treaties between Japan and the Western powers (1853-1858), amongst whom The Netherlands. This chapter will illustrate how the Netherlands conducted diplomacy in between that of great powers, and will analyse Dutch interests. Chapter III will narrate the events leading from the conclusion of the treaties in Chapter II to the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate. In this chapter the implications of internal Japanese politics, the Shimonoseki Campaign, and years leading up to the Boshin War, will be a central theme.

- Chapter I -

Before the opening of Japan

For more than 200 years the Dutch enjoyed the sole right among Western nations of frequent intercourse and trade with Tokugawa Japan. Beside the Dutch, only the Chinese were permitted to conduct trade at Nagasaki; and including both frequent and infrequent diplomatic relations with the Ryukyu and Joseon kingdoms respectively, Tokugawa Japan did not maintain relations with other foreigners, nor suffer any outsider to trade in one of its ports. To both outsider and insider Japan was deemed a 'closed country', isolated from global affairs. The turn of the nineteenth century and the decades after saw Western foreigners approaching the coasts of Japan, which was met by the bakufu in different ways. The most fundamental threat perceived by the shogunate was that of the rise of British dominance in China, eliciting fear and anxiety among the ranks of the bakufu. The Netherlands would thus have to deal with the increasing amount of approaches by Western foreigners to Japan, as well as an ever more warily growing bakufu.

From Hirado to Dejima

Although the Dutch enjoyed a Western monopoly on Japanese trade for more than 200 years, they were not the first Europeans to visit Japan. In 1542, the Portuguese arrived on Tanegashima, south of Kyushu. Shortly after, the Spanish disembarked in Japan. To both Spanish and Portuguese actors, commerce and conversion were among the principal interests in overseas travel. Proselytism was connected to the larger ambitions of the Portuguese and Spanish crowns in Europe as an important instrument in the Counter-Reformation. The subsequent conversion of Japanese people brought friction between European missionaries and Japanese feudal lords known as 'daimyo'. To preserve national harmony, in 1614, the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu ordered all Christian missionaries out of Japan. In 1639, a final decree promulgated the expulsion of the Portuguese. The combination of commerce and conversion proved to be the undoing of Portuguese and Spanish influence and presence in Japan.[36]

[36] M.B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, London, 2000), pp. 66-68, 76, 79, and G.K. Goodman, *Japan: The Dutch Experience* (London, 1986), p. 11.

The appearance of other Europeans on the shores of Japan initiated intense rivalry and competition between the Protestant Europeans and Catholic ones, importing European feuds into Japan before the Portuguese departure. In 1600, the Dutch ship *Liefde* stranded on the coast of Japan, establishing Dutch contacts via the Dutch East India Company, the VOC (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*). The English East India Company followed suit in 1613.[37] Ieyasu, who had just become the first Tokugawa shogun, de facto military ruler of Japan, after the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, viewed the coming of the Dutch and English as an expansion of the possibility of commerce, breaking the Portuguese monopoly.[38] Even more so, the English representatives spoke mainly of trade while the Dutch reinforced Japanese fear for Catholic subversion, promising a commerce free from religious dimensions.[39] The Dutch offer proved to be so good that Ieyasu granted the Dutch official trading rights, permitting them to settle in Hirado, north of Nagasaki, in 1609, where the English followed after them in 1613.[40]

Thus it came to pass that both the Dutch and English settled at Hirado. The English, who had to renew their trading permit under each new shogun, were ultimately confined to solely trade at Hirado. For the EIC this proved to be so cumbersome and unprofitable that it was decided to close the English factory in Hirado in 1623. In the meantime, distrust of the Christian motives grew among members of the Tokugawa court/government. This distrust grew to such an extent that local daimyo were ordered to persecute Christians throughout their domains.[41] Ironically, bakufu suspicions proved true after persecuted Christians came together in the Shimabara Rebellion (1637-1638), in which the Dutch were asked to provide naval aid to shogunal troops, probably to test their anti-Christian (read: anti-Catholic) convictions.[42] Eventually the Dutch were considered to be a safer and less subversive (European) trading partner, and after the Portuguese were expelled in 1639, they settled on the man-made island of Dejima in Nagasaki and obtained the monopoly over trade.[43]

[37] Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 72-74.
[38] Idem, p. 72.
[39] Idem, p. 74.
[40] Idem, p. 67, 74.
[41] Idem, pp. 74-75, 77.
[42] Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, p. 77, cf. I. Morris, *The Nobility of Failure, Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan* (London, 1975), pp. 166-168; Morris provides both a vivid and thorough account of the Shimabara Rebellion.
[43] Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan,* p. 75. The island of Dejima was initially intended to be used by the Portuguese. When they settled on Dejima, the Dutch were ordered to close their factory at Hirado.

The Nagasaki Trade

The small island of Dejima became the sole abode for Dutch representatives in Japan. These representatives consisted most of the time out of a chief factor called the *opperhoofd*, or *kapitan* in Japanese, a doctor, a bookkeeper, and assistants. The Dutchmen – who were representatives of the VOC, and the Dutch East Indies, after the company was nationalised in 1800 – were not permitted to leave the island and were closely supervised by shogunal officials and guards – Nagasaki was under direct shogunal control. Life in Nagasaki was therefore extremely dull and monotonous.[44] Grant Goodman describes the lives of Dutchmen in Dejima as harsh, restrictive and boring. The Japanese on their part feared the Dutch because of suspicions that they could reintroduce Christianity, and also because the Japanese detested Dutch use of slaves and despised commerce and traders.[45] Even though the Dutch had won the monopoly, their situation on Dejima must have been less ideal than expected.

Nevertheless, trade was at first quite profitable. This trade was conducted primarily through the barter of goods. The Japanese desired Chinese silk, followed by war-related raw materials, other raw materials, luxury items, and finally European curios. In return for these goods, the Dutch merchants received silver bullion at first. Later, because the Japanese officials were fretful of the outflow of silver, the Dutch received copper instead.[46] Because the Chinese wanted silver, the trade between Japan and Batavia, the capital of the Dutch East Indies, became important for the intra-Asian trade in the region.[47] As the following table shows, this triangular trade was quite valuable to the Dutch:

[44] Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 80-81, Goodman, *Japan: The Dutch Experience*, pp. 19-23.
[45] Goodman, *Japan: The Dutch Experience*, pp. 19-24.
[46] Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 81-82. The switch from silver to copper occurred near the end of the 17th century.
[47] H. Rahusen-De Bruyn Kops, 'Not Such an 'Unpromising Beginning': The First Dutch Trade Embassy to China, 1655-1657', in *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 36, nr. 3 (2002), pp. 535-578; p. 537.

Table 1: Source of VOC Bullion in Batavia, Average per Year. Other Sources of Bullion not listed.[48]

Decade	Total	from NL	from Japan	Japanese Share (%)
1630-40	fl. 3,188,000	fl. 850,000	fl. 2,338,000	73.3
1640-50	fl. 3,243,000	fl. 920,000	fl. 1,519,000	46.8
1650-60	fl. 3,206,000	fl. 840,000	fl. 1,315,000	41.0
1660-70	fl. 2,900,000-3,200,000	fl. 1,210,000	fl. 1,048,000	32.7-36.1
1670-80	fl. 3,100,000-3,400,000	fl.1,130,000	fl. 1,154,000	33.9-37.2

The table above shows that the Japanese share of silver bullion traded by the VOC with China was very high during the beginning of the Dutch monopoly of Japanese trade. Over time silver bullion exports from Japan decreased. This diminished the overall share of Japanese silver imported by the VOC into China, which means that the Dutch monopoly was initially more profitable to the VOC because of later restrictions on the export of silver bullion by Japanese officials in Nagasaki. Of course it should also be mentioned that Japanese merchants could also trade for Chinese products like silk with the Chinese traders in Nagasaki. Trade with Japan was important for the VOC in their intra-Asian commerce although by the end of the seventeenth century, the Japanese share had fallen to a lower percentage than earlier.

Like all other things on Dejima, the trade was thoroughly controlled by Japanese officials. Ships would mostly arrive during the summer monsoon in July. The captains of the ships would order their crew to hide bibles and other items bearing Christian connotations. In the early years, the crew was obliged to perform the *fumie*, a ritual in which one had to step on the image of Madonna and child to show anti-Christian sentiments; this was a big humiliation to the Dutch, and some even expressed their discontentment.[49] The abolition of this practice would become important for Dutch negotiations for a treaty.[50] These ships would be inspected by Japanese officials, and the cargo unloaded by Japanese workers. The ships would then sail back in November.[51]

[48] Source: J. de Vries, A. van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy; success, failure, and perseverance of the Dutch economy, 1500-1815* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 394-395.
[49] Cf. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, p. 81.
[50] Cf. Chapter II.
[51] M. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 80-85, Goodman, *Japan: The Dutch Experience*, pp. 19-23.

Furthermore, the *opperhoofd* also had to perform the court trip (*hofreis*) to show respect for the shogun. At first these trips occurred annually, but, after 1790, every four years. These trips were carefully planned and directed by Japanese officials. They also had to be paid for by the Dutch themselves – as virtually everything on Dejima.[52] Still, as Jansen points out, this trip elevated the Dutch position, because it changed the rank of the *opperhoofd* from merchant chief to feudal lord. This essentially placed him above Korean ambassadors and Chinese captains, because 'he alone came there [i.e. the shogunal palace] by virtue of Ieyasu's permit to Mauritz of Nassau.'[53] The court trip therefore provided the Dutch presence in Japan with prestige.

Prestige from the Western monopoly over contact and trade with Tokugawa Japan was the primary reason why the Dutch continued with the Nagasaki trade, despite all its restrictions and falling profits. In light of all difficulties faced by Dutch traders, Marius Jansen justly poses the question why the Dutch did not abandon the trade.[54] He argues that Dejima to 'the Dutch … was an extension of the Batavia station that became, as Netherlands East Indies, the country's profitable colony, and claim to continued great power standing.'[55] This claim fits the Dutch context of the 18th century; for Dutch power waned after the 17th century. Dejima was therefore proof of the tradition and continuation of influence of the Dutch presence in East Asia.

Rangaku and Neo-Confucianism

If prestige was important to the Dutch, what did the Japanese hope to gain from prolonged trade and contact with the Dutch? According to Jansen, contact with the Dutch provided intelligence of the outside world.[56] It is true that this was the case. However, intelligence became more important during the first half of the nineteenth century, as the perceived threat of Western infringement upon Japanese harmony grew. Before 1800, Japanese interest in the Western world – politically and culturally – was virtually non-existent.[57]

The study of Holland became known as 'Rangaku'. The fact that little attention was given to the complexity and variety of the West was present within Rangaku in that Holland

[52] M. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 80-85, Goodman, *Japan: The Dutch Experience*, pp. 19-23.
[53] Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, p. 82.
[54] Idem, p. 85.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Idem, p. 85.
[57] Goodman, *Japan: The Dutch Experience*, pp. 5-6.

was seen and used to describe the West as a whole.[58] Because rangaku was a top-down endeavour, what really mattered were the interests of the bakufu. Before the turn of the nineteenth century, the bakufu was not really interested in Western geopolitics but in whatever practical knowledge that could be applied in Japan. This also limited the potential of Rangaku, because only whichever the bakufu sanctioned to be studied could be studied. This created the problem that matters that were studied haphazardly without true understanding of the context in which the knowledge had originated, its larger (scientific) tradition and methodology. According to Goodman the largest obstacle towards the maturation of Dutch Studies in Japan was that it was seen by both Japanese practitioners and the bakufu as a utilitarian supplement to the harmonious, intellectually satisfying ethical system derived from Chu-hsi Neo-Confucianism.[59] There existed Japanese intellectuals who were aware of Western military might, but because the bakufu could not change its attitude towards foreigners, based on Neo-Confucianism, this never lead to the implementation of government policies.[60] Rangaku therefore became nothing more than intellectual curiosity supplementary to the dominant Neo-Confucian system present within Japan.

The central aspects of hierarchy and harmony had made Neo-Confucianism into the dominant ideology among the feudal leaders of Japan. After consolidating his powerbase with his victory at Sekigahara in 1600, Ieyasu founded the Tokugawa shogunate on the principles of Neo-Confucianism. Military might was in the hands of the shogun, who was responsible for the harmony of the realm. Although the first shoguns held high authority, over time the role of the shogun waned and the role of the rōjū, or elders, of the bakufu increased. The rōjū were recruited from the fudai daimyo, feudal lords from clans that had supported Ieyasu in 1600.[61] The fudai daimyo held around 20% of the land in Japan, whilst the tozama daimyo, from the clans who had not supported Ieyasu, controlled around 40%. The shogun himself and his retainers and household guard, the hatamoto – another recruitment pool for the shogun – controlled around a third of the land.[62] Beneath the daimyo were the samurai,

[58] Goodman, *Japan: The Dutch Experience*, pp. 5-6.
[59] Idem, pp. 6-8.
[60] Idem, pp. 221-222; intellectuals of Rangaku, also known as the *Rangakusha*, Takanao Choei and Watanabe Kazan, warned the bakufu about Western military progress. As intellectuals they could not change government policies. Before 1800, the bakufu also argued that a military expedition from Europe to Japan would be logistically too hard for Westerners.
[61] M. Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse, The Decision to Open Japan* (Tokyo, 2006), pp. xxiii-xxvii.
[62] P.K. Cassel, *Grounds of Judgement, Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 29-30.

ronin (samurai without lords), peasants, artisans and merchants.[63] Next to the intricate bureaucracy overseen by the bakufu, this was the strict social hierarchy of the Edo period.

Yet, matters of state were more difficult. Although the Tokugawa shoguns and the bakufu, were in de facto control of the country, the nominal head of the country was the emperor in Kyoto. The Japanese state therefore consisted of the feudal bakufu presiding in Edo and the traditional imperial court in Kyoto. In practice the emperor and imperial court in Kyoto held symbolic power, while the bakufu in Edo held de facto power; whilst local daimyo held great authority within their own domains, creating a complex legal order throughout the country.[64] The shogun, or 'Sei-i tai shogun', was the commander in chief who conquers barbarians, and who's role was to guard the realm from outsiders.[65] The emperor was therefore the symbolic and religious head of the realm, while the shogun was the guardian, protecting the harmony of the realm, burdened with the affairs of state.

Because of the complex configuration of Japanese society and state during the Edo period, the bakufu tightly controlled not only trade with foreigners such as the Dutch, but only permitted Dutch knowledge, Rangaku, insofar it was a harmless complement to the existing Neo-Confucian order.

Foreigners on the Shores of Japan

The sporadic arrival of Western foreigners to Japan during the first half of the nineteenth century challenged the Neo-Confucian harmony, bringing new threats and anxieties not limited to the bakufu, but slowly sprouting nationwide debate on international relations.

The debate within Japan of the country as a closed nation originated out of Rangaku. In 1801 Shizuki Tadao published a book titled *Sakokuron* based on an earlier work by Engelbert Kaempfer, *The History of Japan* (published posthumously in 1727). Kaempfer, had been to Dejima a couple of times at the end of the seventeenth century. And he had written extensively about Japan, including its politics and international relations. In *Sakoruron*, Shizuki translated Kaempfer's description of Japan as a closed country. The effect of this translation was an internalisation of Kaempfer's arguments that Japan was and had been a closed country. Furthermore, it legitimised the idea, not only for intellectuals but bakufu

[63] Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse*, pp. xxiii-xxxvii.
[64] Ibid. Cassel, *Grounds of Judgement*, pp. 30-32.
[65] Cassel, *Grounds of Judgement*, pp. 29-30.

members, that Japan should remain closed and ward off all foreigners.[66] However, Kaempfer, who lamented the strife in Germany – most notably after the Thirty Year War – had created a utopian vision of Japan, portraying the country as a peaceful and tranquil alternative to Europe.[67]

The *Sakokuron* was not the only work originating from Rangaku and sparking debate throughout Japan. Another such text was Yamamura Saisuke's *Teisei zōyaku sairan igen*, a work based on an earlier geography of Japan, complimenting the earlier knowledge with new information taken from Dutch sources. According to Mitani Hiroshi, both works relied heavily on information from Rangaku and exemplify Japanese foreign policy of the first half of the nineteenth century; firstly in legitimising the idea of closing the country off to outsiders, and secondly in trying to gain as much knowledge of the outside world as possible.[68] For intellectuals, Rangaku therefore became the source for information about the world and Japan's position within it.

Events during the first half of the nineteenth century encouraged other influential people, outside the ranks of intellectuals, to join the discussion on opening or closing the country to foreigners. The first of these events was the arrival of Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov, who entered the harbour of Nagasaki in 1804, requesting to initiate diplomacy. This being refused, Rezanov left and carried out plans to raid Japan's northern outposts and shipping.[69] Although no war resulted from these raids, needs arose to modernise the weaponry of the country.[70] But because of the Napoleonic Wars, news obtained from the Dutch was infrequent and unreliable.[71] This became obvious during the Phaeton Incident in 1808, when the British frigate *Phaeton*, who was trying to ambush Dutch ships sailing from Dejima, entered the harbour of Nagasaki flying the Dutch colours. This surprised both the Dutch and Japanese, and representatives from both who came aboard were taken captive. Because the garrison in the city was far below required numbers, and most batteries too old to fire, reinforcements arrived later, at which time the *Phaeton* had already sailed off, having learned

[66] Mitani, *Escape from Impasse*, p. 1, W. McOmie, *The Opening of Japan, 1853-1855, A Comparative Study of the American, British, Dutch, and Russian Naval Expeditions to Compel the Tokugawa Shogunate to Conclude Treaties and Open Ports to Their Ships* (Folkestone, 2006), pp. 13-14.
[67] McOmie, *The Opening of Japan*, pp. 13-14.
[68] Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse*, p. 1.
[69] Idem, pp. 13-15, McOmie, *The Opening of Japan*, pp. 14-17.
[70] Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse*, pp. 15-16, McOmie, *The Opening of Japan*, pp. 17-18.
[71] Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse*, pp. 25-27.

that no Dutch ships were present. The event proved so disgraceful, that the Japanese official in Nagasaki, the bugyō, committed seppuku.[72]

These events, and more, stirred commotion throughout Japan creating a sense of national anxiety. Among daimyo and members of the bakufu grew the sense that Japan's harmony was being threatened, and that action should be taken to defend it.[73] After the Phaeton Incident, this led to the promulgation of the *Bunsei rei* – otherwise known as the *Munimen uchihairei* (edict to fire without hesitation) – in 1825, ordering all forts to open fire on foreign vessels.[74] When the American ship *Morrison* – which was mistaken for a British vessel – reached the coast off Uruga, the ship was promptly bombarded according to the edict. When the ship tried to land at Kagoshima, the same result was obtained, after which the captain made the prudent decision to return to Canton, instead of trying the heavily protected harbour of Nagasaki.[75] Although the edict of 1825 was rescinded in 1842, when additionally basic humanitarian aid for castaways would be ordered, the edict of 1825 and the Morrison Incident illustrate how far certain actors within Japan wished to go to preserve the harmony.[76] It is also plausible to understand that Western nations took these actions as unfriendly, and ideas for a friendly approach to Japan, among Americans and British, soured.

The First Opium War

The edict of 1825 to fire at foreigners without hesitation was rescinded in 1842 because of events that had occurred in China. British desire to increase trade with a reluctant Qing China had kindled the sparks that fired into the First Opium War (1839-1842). Although heavily outnumbered, the British managed to gain the upper hand over Qing forces. Besides suffering a humiliating defeat, the Qing had to sign the unfavourable Treaty of Nanjing, ceding the island of Hong Kong to the British, as well as paying large sums of indemnity – this was later supplemented with granting the British extraterritoriality and the most favoured nation

[72] McOmie, *The Opening of Japan*, pp. 20-21. During the latter part of the Napoleonic Wars, the Kingdom of Holland was a vassal state under France. Because of this, the Dutch were at war with the British who seized all of the Dutch east Indies. During this time, Dejima was the only place in the world were the Dutch flag still flew.
[73] Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 92-93.
[74] K. Yuzo, 'The Opening of Japan and the Meiji Restoration, 1837-72', in I. Nish and Y. Kibata (eds.), *The History of Anglo-Japanesee Relations, Volume 1: The Political-Diplomatic Dimension, 1600-1930* (New York, 2000), pp. 60-86; p. 64.
[75] McOmie, *The Opening of Japan,* pp. 24-28.
[76] F. Matsukata, A. Culow (transl.), 'King Willem II's 1844 Letter to the Shogun: "Recommendation to Open the Country", in *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 66, nr. 1 (2011), pp. 99-122; p. 99; the edict of 1842 was known as the 'firewood and water edict'.

clause.[77] Unsurprisingly, news about what had happened in China severely alarmed the Japanese and encouraged the bakufu to alter its aggressive stance to foreigners.

News of events in China reached Edo through two channels in Nagasaki. The first channel was that of the Dutch. These provided Japanese officials in Nagasaki with accounts detailing Western military potential.[78] Other information came from the Chinese. This spurred the creation of works such as the *Kaigai shinua* (1849) by Mineta Fuko, portraying a semi-fictional account of the First Opium War based primarily on Chinese sources. According to Bob Wakabayashi, the work provides the reader with the idea that the Chinese lost the war by virtue of their own mistakes, disunity and low morale, rather than British military superiority.[79] The most important conclusion put forth by Wakabayashi is that the image of China provided arguments for the *sakoku* and *jōi* – keeping the country closed and repelling the foreigners respectively – camps within the broader debate on foreign policy in Japan.[80] News from the Opium War served to increase anxiety in Japan, reorienting its current position towards Western foreigners, and creating false hopes of the ability to ward off foreign invasion through military might.

A Royal Letter

The First Opium War left matters in East Asia unpredictable and insecure. According to William Beasley, it seemed now, to the Japanese, that the British were preparing an aggressive reaction against Japan to open its ports; a sentiment shared throughout Europe. Furthermore, Beasley continues, Britain and Japan were aware that the same methods used to 'open China' would be used to open Japan.[81] However, British concerns lay elsewhere, and for the time being, the British were preoccupied with matters in China.[82] Moreover, to the British a similar expedition to Japan with the objective to coerce the country into treaty

[77] Cf. D.C. Wright, *The History of China* (Westport, 2001), pp. 102-105. A 'most-favoured nation clause' is an agreement between two countries that all benefits of future treaties will also count to the recipient of the earlier treaty bearing the most favoured nation clause. Thus, privileges the bakufu granted to one power, automatically counted towards all others. This robbed the Chinese and Japanese, who concluded such treaties of diplomatic potential; cf. Cassel, *Grounds of Judgement*, p. 61.
[78] McOmie, *The Opening of Japan*
[79] B.T. Wakabayashi, 'Opium, Expulsion, Sovereignty. China's Lessons for Bakumatsu Japan', in *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 49, nr. 1 (1992), pp. 1-25; pp. 16-17.
[80] Idem, p. 24. The Opium War also served to change Japanese perceptions of Qing China; no longer was the fate of Japan seen as combined with that of a mightier China. This might be the beginning of a shift Japanese perceptions of its own position reorienting from China to the West.
[81] W.G. Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan, 1834-1858* (Kent, 1995), p. 42, 54.
[82] Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse*, pp. 87-88.

relations far outweighed the advantages to be gained; an attitude in stark contrast to that revealed in China.[83] Although Japan would not suffer a similar fate as China, for many, both in Japan and Europe, storm clouds seemed to be gathering.

Amidst this panic, the Dutch King, Willem II, sent a letter to the Shogun of Japan. Due to its established position on Dejima, the Netherland's interests were opposite to those of Britain and lay in Japan instead of China. In Batavia, differences on the policy of relations regarding Japan arose between the director general, J.D. Kruseman and governor general Merkus. Kruseman urged the dispatch of a special embassy to insist on open trade with Japan. Merkus, on the other hand, feared that commercial concessions to the Dutch would spur the Japanese to request Dutch aid against England.[84] Back in The Hague, matters concerning Japan were also not entirely clear.[85] Thus, within the context of anxiety and uncertainty, the Dutch king, on the advice of his cabinet, sent a personal letter to the shogun in Japan.

The main intention of the letter was to move the shogun away from the policy of *sakoku* and to initiate diplomatic relations with other Western nations through the offering of advice. The letter itself was written by Philipp Franz von Siebold, and approved by government.[86] In it, the Dutch king thinks the shogun is the Japanese emperor and addresses him as king to king. He continues by providing a short history and recalls the privilege given by Tokugawa Ieyasu to the Dutch. The future of Japan worries the Dutch king because of recent events in China, and this is his motivation to urge and advise the Japanese shogun. Claiming that Japan is on the verge of war and that ill fortune might direct the country towards such outcome, the Dutch king questions whether the edict of 1842 is enough to evade this fate. Willem therefore urges the shogun to open the country towards trade, because that will be a fitting portrayal of friendliness towards the world in the current age. After all, the last decades have seen such tremendous technological change, that steamships can now transport intelligence and troops easily and swiftly across the globe. The Dutch king assures

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[83] Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan*, p. 87.
[84] E.M. Jacobs, 'Met alleen woorden als wapen. De Nederlandse poging tot openstelling van Japanse havens voor de internationale handel (1844)', in *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, vol. 105, nr. 1 (1990), pp. 54-77; pp. 58-59.
[85] Idem, pp. 59-60.
[86] H.J. Moeshart, 'The Conclusion of the First Dutch Treaty with Japan', in *Crossroads: A Journal of Nagasaki History and Culture*, nr. 5 (Autumn, 1997), pp. 1-22, taken from: http://www.uwosh.edu/faculty_staff/earns/moeshart.html Von Siebold had been on Dejima, and he was expelled from Japan because he was convicted of espionage, in 1829, by Japanese officials. He was considered an expert on Japanese matters, and the Dutch government in The Hague often asked his advice in matters relating to Japan. Cf. A. Kouwenhoven, M. Forrer, *Siebold en Japan, Zijn leven en werk* (Leiden, 2000).

that he is even willing to help modernise the country, and insists that his intentions are utterly selfless and merely to help a friendly sovereign. Using the words of Lao Tzu, Willem seeks to remind the Shogun that a ruler should do everything to avoid war and preserve peace. The Dutch king closes by wishing the Shogun all the best and by stating to have sent gifts along with the letter.[87]

Debate concerning the letter focuses on the nature of whether the letter was truly written with selfless intentions. Els Jacobs argues that the Netherlands had nothing to lose because trade with Japan was negligible. A Dutch mission to persuade the Japanese government would not only be sweet revenge against the British – who had occupied the Dutch East Indies during the Napoleonic Wars, and were the main European competitor in the region – but would also greatly increase Dutch prestige in Europe.[88] Fuyuko Matsukata disagrees with Jacobs. According to her, the letter was sent to gauge the meaning of the 1842 edict and to seek to preserve the Dutch monopoly on trade; essentially, the Dutch government wanted to know the Japanese stance towards foreigners after the edict.[89] Matsukata ultimately argues that the letter was no selfless document, and that the call for Japan to open its harbours was merely an expedient to prevent the country from clashing with Britain. What truly mattered was to prolong the Dutch monopoly and keep other nations out.[90] Matsukata therefore disagrees with Jacobs and other Japanese scholars on the letter – which argue that the letter was a selfless document.[91]

However, both the arguments of Jacobs and Matsukata are lacking and focusing too much on the supposed altruistic nature of the letter. To argue whether the letter and its intentions were truly selfless is not important; governments always have interests and have to work with a budget. Because of this their actions are never altruistic. The arguments of Matsukata are not watertight because trade in the first place was negligible and also because of the possibility of a Japanese war with Britain, which was a widespread sentiment at the time.[92] Furthermore, the letter itself speaks of valuable gifts and an official embassy.[93] At the

[87] 1.04.21 Inventaris van de archieven van de Nederlandse Factorij in Japan te Hirado [1609-1641] en te Deshima, [1641-1860], 1609-1860, Inv nr. 1712, *Nationaal Archief,* The Hague.
[88] Jacobs, 'Met alleen woorden als wapen', pp. 60-61.
[89] F. Matsukata, A. Clulow, 'King Willem II's 1844 Letter to the Shogun: "Recommendation to Open the Country", in *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 66, nr. 1 (2011), pp. 99-122; p. 99, 101, 105-106.
[90] Idem, p. 118.
[91] Idem, p. 119.
[92] Jacobs, 'Met alleen woorden als wapen', pp. 60-61, Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan*, p. 42.
[93] 1.04.21 Inventaris van de archieven van de Nederlandse Factorij in Japan te Hirado [1609-1641] en te Deshima, [1641-1860], 1609-1860, Inv nr. 1712.

time, the Netherlands was in serious financial trouble.[94] Sending a special mission to Japan, bearing valuable gifts was a significant burden on the government. It seems therefore not probable that these were sent merely to gauge Japanese sentiments to foreigners. Jacobs' explanation of prestige seems more plausible; but again: this was a large price for prestige. What seems to be the correct explanation is that the letter was sent out of Dutch anxiety over a Japanese war with Britain. In a war like this, the Dutch would involuntarily be drawn in, thus having to forfeit its treasured policy of neutrality.

This policy of neutrality was of paramount importance to the Dutch government in The Hague, something which remained the case during the whole Bakumatsu Period. Yet, certain circumstances and events elicited action by Dutch actors on the ground as well as the central government in the Hague. The context of the letter illustrates this well. The Dutch government feared that Dutch neutrality would be imperilled by the British drive for expansion, as attested in the First Opium War. Anxieties ran so high, that the governor general in Batavia argued that it would be best to resign the trade with Japan, before the Netherlands would find itself in the middle of a war between Japan and Britain.[95] The Dutch government itself was unsure about matters concerning Japan.[96] The central government thus took the initiative by attempting to steer the bakufu to a different course concerning foreign relations. Apprehension concerning a war involving Britain was all the greater because Britain had occupied the Dutch East Indies during the Napoleonic Wars. This theme of preserving neutrality through the reaction on events, provided the central government in The Hague, as well as Dutch actors in Japan, with opportunities for initiative, resulting in a special form of Dutch diplomacy, distinct from that of great powers, as shall be illustrated in the following chapters.

Nevertheless, the letter of Willem II produced no real result. Once in Nagasaki, the Dutch envoy was not permitted to travel on to Edo. The bugyō in Nagasaki obtained the letter and gifts, passing them on to Edo. After quite some time an answer came from the bakufu. The reply of the shogunate was that no official or friendly relations between Japan and the Netherlands existed; relations of commerce and friendship being something altogether quite different. The Dutch were also curtly asked not to send a similar letter in the future.[97] After

[94] Jacobs, 'Met alleen woorden als wapen', p. 61.
[95] Jacobs, 'Met alleen woorden als wapen', pp. 58-59.
[96] Idem, pp. 59-60.
[97] McOmie, *The Opening of Japan*, pp. 33-35, Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse*, pp. 52-54. Hiroshi argues that the reason the Japanese provided for not accepting advice, so-called 'ancestral law', was in fact conjured up on the spot.

this, the Dutch did not attempt a second try to open Japan, and all remained quiet. That was, until a new storm was coming from America.

Conclusion

For more than two hundred years, the Dutch had enjoyed a Western monopoly on contact and commerce with Japan. During this time, Dutch merchants were confined to the small isle of Dejima in Nagasaki. Although trade dwindled over time, and the Japanese officials imposed restrictions on the export of precious metals, the Nagasaki trade could be claimed as a source of prestige for the Dutch. Until the first half of the nineteenth century, this had been without hiccups or competition. However, now other foreigners were sighted within view off the coast off Japan. A hardening stance among many Japanese made those in favour of *sakoku* and *jōi*, more prominent. Edicts were issued to repel the foreigners, though fear and anxiety for a Japanese Opium War made the bakufu rescind the more aggressive edicts. The decline of the profitability of the Nagasaki Trade combined with the precarious position of the Dutch colonies in Asia among the other imperialist great powers – something which had become more acutely clear by the British occupation of the Dutch East Indies during the Napoleonic Wars – increased the value of a policy of neutrality. A second opium war in Japan would threaten Dutch neutrality and was therefore the reason for the dispatch of a royal letter to Japan. This illustrates how changing global affairs combined with the desire to preserve the colonies in Asia, prompted the Dutch government away from passivity, by taking the initiative.

- Chapter II -

The Opening of Japan and the Race for Treaties

Though the letter of king Willem II failed to move the bakufu to open Japan, war with Britain did not erupt. The tranquillity of the period after 1844 was broken by the news that came after 1850 of an American expedition to open Japan to international trade. These tidings brought anxiety to the Dutch who would be drawn into the American pursuit to open Japan. Fortunately for the Dutch, the batteries on the American gunboats remained silent, and the negotiations were carried out peacefully. The first expedition by commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry in 1853 would soon be followed by the arrival of other Westerners, the English, Russians and French, seeking to obtain treaties with Tokugawa Japan. These nations often sought to establish contact with Japanese officials through Dutch mediation. The Netherlands was thus drawn into the complex events heralding the opening of Japan to foreigners. This chapter therefore deals with the process in which the Dutch attempted to preserve their interest and finally concluded a formal treaty with Tokugawa Japan.

The Netherlands and the Perry Expedition

The United States had more interests in Japan than the British had. To the British China had been a large potential for commerce. This had also been the motive of the British government to conduct a war to open China to modern trade. While British focus was thus directed towards China, Japan remained a far-off island with considerably less potential for trade.[98] This was not the case for the US. For the Americans Japan was not as remote, as it lay on the way to China. Because of this, the island could be an important coaling station to American ships and a refugee spot for shipwrecked whalers.[99] The Pacific Ocean had seen a large increase of American ships, most noticeably whalers, who often sailed close off the coast of Japan. It would also be useful if the ships that would get the castaways would be able to barter their goods on the spot.[100] Besides all of this, Britain had been the one to open China,

[98] M. Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse, The Decision to Open Japan* (Tokyo, 2006), pp. 87-88, W.G. Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan, 1834-1858* (Kent, 1995), p.87, M.B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, London, 2000), pp. 274-275.
[99] Hiroshi, *escape from* Impasse, pp. 89-99, Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan*, p. 87, Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 274-275.
[100] Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse*, pp. 89-99.

now, for the sake of their own prestige, the US should open Japan.[101] These were the motives prompting the US to prepare an expedition under the command of commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry.

The Dutch government was not unaware of the American plans. The Americans asked the Dutch ambassador all they could to obtain information about Japan.[102] This news roused the Dutch government into panic and debate. On 20 March 1852, the Dutch cabinet held a meeting in which the matter was discussed. To the Dutch government war between America and Japan seemed likely. The Dutch representatives on Dejima should therefore insist with Japan on opening its harbours. In case war would ensue, the Netherlands should not pick a side, but remain neutral; if this was no longer maintainable and/or the trade with Nagasaki disrupted, Dejima and Japan should be abandoned.[103] Therefore, the Dutch government was only prepared to abandon Japan if no other option was available.

The Dutch government sought to take the initiative. On 17 April, 1852, the Dutch cabinet held a secret meeting with the king – at this time Willem III. The governor general in Batavia had urged to temporarily leave Dejima, until matters were clear. To the government in The Hague, this was unacceptable, as shown with the directive resulting from the cabinet meeting of 20 March. Instead, it was proposed that the *opperhoofd* on Dejima should provide the Japanese with information concerning the American expedition, and that he should work to conduct a treaty with Japan. To this end, it was proposed that the governor general in Batavia should seek a suitable person for this task, and also to elevate him to provide said person with more weight in these matters.[104] In this fashion, the Dutch were starting to initiate their own negotiations with Japan.

Concerning the Americans, for the meantime, it was decided to help them as best as possible. Because Perry wanted to prepare himself as best as he could, the Americans asked the Dutch for a lot of information.[105] It was decided by the Dutch government to send the letter of king Willem II to convince the Americans of Dutch intentions to open the country.[106] This was done after the Americans had provided the Dutch government with assurances that

[101] Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan*, p. 87.
[102] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2.05.01, Inv. Nr. 3141, *Nationaal Archief*, The Hague.
[103] Ministerraad, A250, 2.02.05.02, Inv. Nr. 24, *Nationaal Archief*, The Hague.
[104] H.J. Moeshart, 'The Conclusion of the First Dutch Treaty with Japan', in *Crossroads: A Journal of Nagasaki History and Culture*, nr. 5 (Autumn, 1997), pp. 1-22, taken from: http://www.uwosh.edu/faculty_staff/earns/moeshart.html.
[105] Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 275-279.
[106] Ministerraad, A250, 2.02.05.02, Inv. Nr. 24.

they would not resort to violence.[107] Besides sending the letter, the Dutch also sent maps and other bits of information to the Americans.[108]

While the Americans were getting as much information as they could, the Dutch governor general in Batavia chose a new *opperhoofd* to provide the Japanese with news and advice. The new *opperhoofd*, Jan Hendrik Donker Curtius (1813-1879), was also requested by the Americans to urge the Japanese to open their ports.[109] In order to increase his negotiating capacities, Curtius was increased in rank. This would make Curtius more than a mere 'merchant chief', and, the Dutch government hoped, would lift Japanese contempt for the chief Dutch representative on Dejima.[110] As mentioned previously, the Japanese disdained people connected to commerce, which they considered an unworthy occupation. Curtius furthermore presented the Japanese officials in Nagasaki with a letter with advice and information regarding the American expedition. The Japanese response to this was a note of respect and gratification but also a rejection of the advice and an indication that the bakufu was not at all thinking of opening the country.[111] Although the Netherlands was now taking the initiative in Japan with the dispatch and promotion of Curtius, the bakufu remained deaf to Dutch advice.

After long and arduous preparations and a long seabound voyage, Perry arrived in Edo Bay in July 1853. Because of his research, Perry was convinced that the Japanese could only be persuaded by force. When he arrived with his fleet in Edo Bay, he refused the Japanese to board his ships, and was also unwilling to enter into negotiation with anyone below his own rank. Faced with the stubborn Perry, the bakufu was caught unaware; yet, the Japanese still played their hand skilfully.[112] After the bakufu reluctantly and carefully acquiesced to Perry's demands, Perry handed over a letter from President Fillmore. In it, Fillmore stressed the friendly intentions of America, noting that the US only seeks trade and friendly relations. However, the President also emphasises that the US is not like other European nations; it is much closer to Japan geographically, and it is also stronger than it was

[107] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2.05.01, Inv. Nr. 3141.
[108] Idem.
[109] Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse*, pp. 103-104.
[110] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2.05.01, Inv. Nr. 3141.
[111] Idem.
[112] Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 275-279.

when the ancestral law of Ieyasu was made.[113] The rhetoric used by the President was thus, like commodore Perry, forceful, and indicative of the American actions towards Japan.

Following adroit negotiations on both sides, Perry was finally able to conclude a treaty between the US and Tokugawa Japan. Using temporising strategies, the bakufu hoped to stall the Americans and force them to leave. Yet, Perry would hear nothing of this, and, after having made clear his demands, left Japan, to return the next year. He returned even earlier than proposed, bringing more warships.[114] In order not to escalate matters further, the bakufu gave in to signing a treaty. This treaty became known as the *Japan-US Treaty of Peace and Amity* (or the *Kanagawa Treaty*). Although this treaty did not truly open ports for trade to foreigners, nor did it establish diplomatic relations between the two, it did have some interesting points. Article II stipulated that the ports of Shimoda and Hokodate be opened to American ships for resupply. Article V specified that (shipwrecked) Americans in Shimoda and Hokodate would have freedom of movement and not be restricted like the Dutch or Chinese. Article IX set forth the most favoured nations clause for the US. And Article XI laid down the groundworks for American consuls and agents to reside in Japan.[115] Even though the treaty did not formally open Japan – to Western trade and diplomacy – it did break with conventions of Japanese refusal, creating cracks in the wall of *sakoku*.

Mediators and Instructors

Perry was not the only one leading a mission to Japan. In fact, there existed a race between the Americans and Russians. Evfimi Vasilevich Putiatin (1803-1883) also set out to 'open Japan'. However, unlike the Americans, the Russians did not communicate directly with the Dutch government, concerning the matter and might very well have been trying to conceal this information from the Dutch. Nevertheless, unlike Perry, Putiatin dropped anchor in Nagasaki, where he relayed his information and message to the Japanese via the Dutch.[116] The method of the Russians was also different; while the Americans used force, the Russians tried to be as courteous as possible. This won the respect of Japanese officials in Nagasaki,

[113] 'Millard Fillmore, President of the United States of America, to His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Japan, 13 November 1852', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 99-101.
[114] M. Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse, The Decision to Open Japan* (Tokyo, 2006), pp. 179-201.
[115] 'Convention between the United States of America and Japan, signed at Kanagawa, 31 March 1854. Ratifications were exchanged at Shimoda, 21 February 1855.', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 119-122.
[116] Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse*, p. 158, McOmie, *The Opening of Japan*, pp. 69-70.

although it became grounds for the bakufu not to take Putiatin too seriously. Putiatin also could not wait very long at Nagasaki because of the Crimean War (1853-1856), which worsened his diplomatic capabilities.[117] All the while Curtius, on Dejima, tried to maintain good relations with both sides. However this was made exceedingly difficult because both the Nagasaki bugyō and Putiatin distrusted the Dutch. The bugyō was fretful of providing too much freedom, and Putiatin thought the Dutch wanted to protect their monopoly.[118] Eventually Putiatin left without having achieved much.

While the Dutch were being used as middlemen in Nagasaki, the arrival of Perry and Putiatin pushed the bakufu to send a message to the Dutch government. On 21 February 1854 the Dutch government discussed the Japanese request of purchasing warships.[119] Shortly later, on March 7, the Dutch government concluded that the careful approach to Japan should be continued. It was agreed upon that the Netherlands should urge the bakufu more strongly to conclude a formal treaty with the Netherlands containing more commercial benefits. Of paramount importance to the benefits was that these should apply to all other nations as well. Concerning the Japanese request, it was argued that Japan could only purchase a steamship which was not intentionally constructed for warfare.[120]

Though the documents do not officially state why it was so important to the Dutch government that benefits of the Dutch should count to all, combined with the Dutch stance towards the Japanese proposal for steamships, a plausible explanation can be made. By obtaining commercial rights for all, the Dutch would gain both prestige and respect from all other Western powers. To dispatch a warship to Japan would draw the ire of Western powers who hoped to force Japan to open, like the US.[121] The vessel in question could also eventually be used by the Japanese in a potential war against one or more Western powers; thus drawing the Netherlands into a hypothetical larger conflict. Agreeing on sending a more 'neutral' steamship would perhaps not completely satisfy the Japanese, but it might still not completely alienate them from the Dutch, and even be used as a bargaining chip for conducting a treaty. The primary objective of the Dutch government was therefore to preserve the Netherlands from a larger (military) conflict through neutrality, whilst attempting, through shrewd and active diplomacy, to obtain prestige and respect from all parties involved.

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[117] Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse*, p. 168.
[118] Cf. McOmie, *The Opening of Japan*, pp. 146-150.
[119] Ministerraad, A250, 2.02.05.02, Inv. Nr. 26.
[120] Idem.
[121] This argument also returns in most secondary literature. Cf. McOmie, *The Opening of Japan*, p. 326.

In order to gain the respect and friendship of the bakufu, the Netherlands went over to a different kind of gunboat diplomacy than the US. In 1854 lieutenant Gerhardus Fabius (1806-1888) was sent aboard the paddle steamer *Soembing* from the Dutch East Indies to Japan. His primary objective was to provide Curtius on Dejima with letters and missives from Batavia. However, once Fabius had anchored in the bay of Nagasaki, the Japanese officials requested to sail aboard his ship. Eventually, Fabius conducted training sessions with Japanese sailors, going out to sea and showing the crafts of seamanship and the naval manoeuvres involved.[122] William McOmie rightfully states that the visit of the *Soembing* was not meant to exert military pressure on the bakufu but rather to promote the idea that the Netherlands was also a modern nation capable of modern military prowess and that the Netherlands was willing to provide the naval training the bakufu sought. And that, in return for this, the Netherlands hoped, the bakufu would ease the antiquated 'ancestral' restrictions on Dutch residence and trade in and with Japan.[123] Yet, this means that the neutrality pursued by the Dutch government was not one void of action and initiative, nor regarding interference into global matters.

Fabius' exploits were so successful that the Dutch government decided to give the *Soembing* to the bakufu. The governor general in Batavia sent Fabius a letter to explicitly congratulate him on his successful efforts.[124] On January 19, the Dutch government therefore debated about sending the *Soembing* to the bakufu.[125] In doing so, the Dutch government hoped to raise Dutch prestige and gain more respect from the Japanese. Although it was decided to hand over the *Soembing* as a gift to the bakufu, this decision was not reached entirely because of the success of Fabius' first trip to Japan. The matter became urgent when news reached the Dutch government that the bakufu had reached out to the British. The British, in turn, were preparing to send a luxury yacht as a present to the shogun himself.[126] The British and the Dutch became therefore locked in a race for the favour of the bakufu and the prestige of having gifted the first modern ship to Japan.

Because of these matters, Fabius was assigned to sail again from Batavia to Nagasaki and to hand over the *Soembing* to the Japanese officials. At the end of June, 1855, Fabius set out from Batavia aboard the *Gedeh*, while the *Soembing* accompanied him. His missives were: to use the *Gedeh* to hand over letters and documents to Curtius, and to sail back to

[122] Collectie 150 Familie Fabius, C25054, 2.21.061, Inv. Nr. 166C, in *Nationaal Archief*, The Hague.
[123] McOmie, *The Opening of Japan*, p. 328.
[124] Collectie 150 Familie Fabius, C25054, 2.21.061, Inv. Nr. 179.
[125] Ministerraad, A250, 2.02.05.02, Inv. Nr. 27.
[126] McOmie, *The Opening of Japan*, p. 398.

Batavia, to bring Curtius his (new) promotion – to increase his ranking – to provide the Japanese with a portrait of Willem III, to hand over the *Soembing*, to guide the Japanese in nautical ways, and to sail to Shimoda, to hand over the portrait of the king.[127] With the exception of sailing to Shimoda, this Fabius did. And the *Soembing* was handed over to the Japanese on October 5 1855 along with much celebration. Having won the race of handing over a modern ship, the Dutch were of paramount importance in the birth of the modern Japanese navy. Along with these celebrations was also the pompous handover of the portrait of the Dutch king.[128]

The handover of the *Soembing*, which was afterwards called the *Kanku Maru*, was the birth of the modern Japanese navy. Through this skilful way of 'gunboat diplomacy' (the *Soembing* was armed with guns) the Dutch attempted to win the respect and trust of the Japanese in a friendly way. This would prove fruitful in the establishment of an official treaty between the Netherlands and Tokugawa Japan.

Conclusion of the First Dutch Treaty with Japan

Fabius was not the only one who employed soft-power diplomacy to endear the Japanese officials to the Dutch. It should be noted that the Dutch were also actively providing the Japanese with technological innovation. Dr. van den Broeck conducted many scientific and medical experiments on Dejima, attracting the attention of the Japanese. He also demonstrated the workings of the telegraph to the daimyo of Chikuzen, and later also to a shogunal magistrate. He further advised the bakufu on matters concerning the coastal defences of the country. All of which was well received by Japanese officials.[129] In this way, people like Van der Broeck and Fabius were instrumental in the soft-power diplomacy of the Netherlands in Japan.

Within the Netherlands, the minister of colonies, Charles Pahud, was already ecstatic with the news from Japan. Even before the transfer of the *Soembing*, on 14 February 1855, Pahud made a public statement in the government-gazette. Because Japan was easing its restrictions – also to the Netherlands – Pahud stated, the joyous task had reached him to explain the 'volhardende' (persistent) and 'onbaatzuchtige' (selfless) attempts of the Netherlands in Japan.[130] The goals of these attempts would be to conclude a treaty, that other

[127] Collectie 150 Familie Fabius, C25054, 2.21.061, Inv. Nr. 184.
[128] Idem, In. Nr. 166C
[129] McOmie, *The Opening of Japan*, pp. 327-329.
[130] Collectie 150 Familie Fabius, C25054, 2.21.061, Inv. Nr. 179.

powers would gain no privileges excluding the Dutch, and that the Dutch government did its best to defend Japanese interests by pushing the bakufu to open its ports. Continuing with a summary of the deeds of Curtius, Faber, and Van den Broeck, Pahud stressed the peaceful and gentle approach of the small Netherlands compared to the aggressive and coercive approach of the great powers towards Japan.[131] Pahud thus clearly wanted to spread the message that the Netherlands could and did act among the big players in the world. Not only that; while the great powers used coercive means, the Netherlands used peaceful and gentle means to further the interests not only of the Netherlands but of all.

While soft power diplomacy lay in the hands of men like Fabius and Van den Broeck, and was being used to increase the image of the Netherlands by Pahud, the spider in the web tasked with concluding a real treaty was Curtius. The objectives of Curtius was to conclude a treaty with more commercial advantages which would also count for other nations.[132] Using the transferral of the *Soembing*, the nautical training provided by the Dutch navy, and the technological exchange, Curtius pressed the Japanese bugyō in Nagasaki now that the Americans – and British, in the meantime (1854) – had been given this honour. Yet, still, Curtius' words fell on deaf ears, and he thus threatened to stop naval training altogether. This elicited a response from the bakufu, stating that it was ready to present Dejima as a gift to the Netherlands. Curtius thanked the bakufu, but stated that he would rather have a treaty. And thus, after months – if not years – of debates and requests, a provisional treaty was finally signed on November 9, 1855.[133]

The first treaty between Japan and the Netherlands was officially signed on January 30 1856, with a supplementary treaty in 1857. The treaty signed in 1856 opened with the article stipulating that Dutch people were allowed free access through Nagasaki, ending the isolation on Dejima (Article I). It further emphasises the importance of consular jurisdiction (or consular courts) in which Dutch should be judged according to Dutch law, not Japanese (Article II), the granting of the same privileges to the Dutch as to other nations (Article IV), the recognition of the Dutch flag (Article VII), and the respect of customs, in which the Dutch no longer had to prostrate themselves in front of the bugyō (Article XXI).[134] It is interesting to note that the treaty starts with matters concerned to prestige (no restriction on Dejima), law (extraterritoriality), and only after this, trade. Concerning trade, this technically

[131] Collectie 150 Familie Fabius, C25054, 2.21.061, Inv. Nr. 179.
[132] Ministerraad, A250, 2.02.05.02, Inv. Nr. 26.
[133] McOmie, *The Opening of Japan*, pp. 429-432.
[134] Idem, pp. 446-448.

remained the same; however, some bureaucratic restrictions concerning merchant vessels – such as that merchant vessels had previously had to hand over weaponry (Article XXV) – were lifted.[135] Article XXVI stipulates that trade with the factory on Dejima would remain as it was.[136] The original Dutch treaty of 1856 did therefore not increase Dutch trade, nor did it open trade in Nagasaki to other nations.

To the treaty of 1856 supplementary articles were added in 1857, after renewed talks and rounds of negotiation. These supplements provided the Dutch with unlimited trade at both Nagasaki and Hakodate.[137] The articles of the supplementary treaty begin and are mainly concerned with matters regarding commerce. Later on it specifies the limit of freedom of access to Dutch people.[138] Article XXXIII is particularly interesting, for lifting the tight restriction on Christianity. The article specifies that the Dutch are at liberty to practice their own faith within their own buildings and appointed graveyards.[139] As mentioned in the previous chapter, Christianity proved a very delicate matter; and it was prohibited by the bakufu. Though the Dutch were now allowed religious respect – abandoning the practice of *fumie* – they did not succeed in procuring the right to proselytise or freedom of openly practise of Christianity throughout Japan.[140] Besides, when the Americans had inquired whether this matter was something worthy to wage war about, the Dutch government replied with a resounding 'no'.[141] The matter was therefore not too important to the Dutch.

The Dutch-Japanese Treaty of Amity and Commerce of 1856, and its supplementary articles of 1857 illustrate the focus of Dutch diplomacy. As McOmie points out, the main focus of the treaty of 1856 was the object of prestige through the removal of restrictions on the Dutch position on Dejima.[142] It seems therefore that Curtius primarily focused on altering the humiliating conditions of Dutch trade on Dejima; them being little more than hostages, as illustrated in chapter I. This would have increased Dutch international prestige as an effect. Matters of trade came primarily with the supplementary treaty, which restricted limits of Dutch trade in Nagasaki, and allowed the same in Hakodate. It is important to note, however,

[135] McOmie, *The Opening of Japan*, pp. 446-448
[136] Ibid.
[137] 'Additional articles to the Dutch Treaty of 1856, signed at Nagasaki, 16 October 1857', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 149-155; cf. Article I and V.
[138] Ibid. Cf. Articles XXIX-XXXII.
[139] Idem, Cf. Article XXXIII.
[140] Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse*, pp. 260-260. Though the Dutch didn't obtain full freedom of religion, Curtius was elevated to consular rank, in the eyes of the Japanese, instead.
[141] M. Chaiklin, 'Monopolists to Middlemen: Dutch Liberalism and American Imperialism in the Opening of Japan', in *Journal of World History*, vol. 21, nr. 2 (2010), pp. 249-269; pp. 259-260.
[142] McOmie, *The Opening of Japan*, pp. 448-450.

that neither the original treaty, nor the supplementary articles mention the inclusion of other Western powers to these provisions. Besides the nations that already had, or later would, gain a 'most favoured nations' agreement, no other nations benefited directly from the Dutch treaty. It could be argued therefore that the Dutch treaty was primarily intended for Dutch prestige, and secondly Dutch trade. Prestige was thus a priority.

The Netherlands among Great Powers

The Americans and the Dutch were not the only ones concluding treaties with Tokugawa Japan between 1854-1858. With help of the Dutch, the British and Russians also managed to conclude treaties during this time.[143] Based on the Treaty of Kanagawa of 1854, the British managed to gain a similar treaty later that year. Beasley argues that James Stirling, who was tasked with signing a treaty with Japan was a military man, operating within the context of the Crimean War, with an imperialist vision of a global British seaborne empire.[144] The British treaty resulting from this, prioritises therefore the opening of ports to British ships, instead of friendship or trade.[145] Putiatin, the Russian commander, had to be careful of British and French ships because of the Crimean War, and quickly concluded a treaty prioritising peace and the borders of the Kurils and Sakhalin.[146] All of these treaties thus had a unique focus, connected to the aims of their respective governments.

Because of the uniqueness of the primary focus points of the treaties signed before the Harris Treaty of 1858, the Dutch-Japanese treaty tells much about the concerns and goals of the Dutch government. Moeshart argues that the Dutch government was disappointed with Curtius' efforts. Primarily because of the 'most favoured nation' and extraterritoriality clauses.[147] Although all of the nations included these clauses – with the exception of Russia, who included reciprocal extraterritoriality – it is true that these could be viewed as unfriendly gestures.[148] The inclusion of extraterritoriality could especially be seen as imperialist because it protected Western actors from being tried and judged by Japanese.[149] The 'most favoured

[143] Cf. Hiroshi, *escape from Impasse*, pp. 157-178, 22-225, 229-232, 247-250, 270-271.
[144] Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan*, pp. 143-144.
[145] Cf. McOmie, *The Opening of Japan*, p. 450; McOmie provides a neat chart in which the main points of the American, British, Russian, and Dutch treaties are compared.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Moeshart, 'The Conclusion of the First Dutch Treaty with Japan'.
[148] P.K. Cassel, *Grounds of Judgement, Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 4-5; for Russians, cf. p. 89. Cassel does mention that the reciprocity in the treaty with the Russians was ultimately void, because of the fact that the bakufu never sent consuls to Russia.
[149] Ibid.

nation' clause, on the other hand, restricted bakufu negotiating power because all advantages provided in the treaty would automatically count to other nations – that had made this agreement – as well.[150] Because of this, these treaties were often named the unequal treaties of Japan – more commonly known as *Ansei Treaties*, named after the period.[151] That Curtius, therefore, included these articles does not only fit the time period, but also his objectives that the Netherlands should not be outdone in advantages given to other nations.[152] Consequently, Moeshart is right in stating that Curtius had an almost impossible task.[153] Still, Curtius managed to gain the prestige the Dutch government desired; lifting the restrictions in Dejima, and getting what the other nations had gotten. After this, he even managed to gain unrestricted trade for the Netherlands in Nagasaki and Hakodate. Perhaps it could be said that Curtius and the first Dutch-Japanese treaty did open Japan.

Conclusion

The Dutch-Japanese Treaty of Amity and Commerce and the context in which it was made not only illustrate shrewd diplomacy in the form of soft power and good negotiating skills on the part of Dutch actors involved, but also portrays the interests and goals envisioned by the Dutch government of the Netherlands in the Far East. The Netherlands had enjoyed the monopoly of trade with Japan for a long time, to the chagrin of other Western powers whose requests were staunchly declined by the bakufu. Yet, the conditions on Dejima were less than ideal, and this brought international humiliation to the Dutch. Besides, when Perry arrived in Japan in 1853, there existed a plausible prospect of war which would imperil Dutch neutrality. Through mediation, nautical training, technological exchange, and other means of soft power, the Dutch actors tried to endear the Netherlands to all parties involved. The biggest accomplishment of this was that the Dutch delegate, Curtius, was able to conduct a treaty that did away with the restrictions on Dejima and enhanced Dutch prestige. Not only that, but through supplementary articles, the Dutch gained unrestricted trade in Nagasaki and Hakodate; in effect opening Japan to Western commerce. Whereas countries like the US used the coercive means of gunboat diplomacy to get what it wanted, the Netherlands used a more gentle form of gunboat diplomacy. Still, the Dutch-Japanese treaty included clauses of

[150] For an explanation of 'most favoured nations clause', cf. Chapter I, footnote 77, and Cassel, *Grounds of Judgement*, p. 61.
[151] Cassel, *Grounds of Judgement*, p. 91.
[152] Idem, p. 11. Cf also: Ministerraad, A250, 2.02.05.02, Inv. Nr. 26 and 29.
[153] Moeshart, 'The Conclusion of the First Dutch Treaty with Japan'.

extraterritoriality and most favoured nation status, indicating that though the Netherlands had friendly intentions towards Japan, it still belonged to the imperialist Western powers.

- Chapter III -

The Shimonoseki Campaign and the end of the Shogunate

The Ansei Treaties opened Japan to Western foreigners and created ripples within internal Japanese politics. For a long time, the supporters of the *sakoku* side were dominant. Yet, against Western pressure, even those in power who were adherents of the ideals of *sakoku* had to give way in order for the situation not to escalate. After the Harris Treaty in 1858, members of the *kaikoku* side in the debate gained the upper hand. Outside of the bakufu, slowly but surely, opponents of the bakufu started to rally behind the Japanese emperor, escalating internal strife in Japan, and severely weakening the control of the bakufu. This led to clashes between local daimyo and the Western powers. Because the authority of the bakufu was waning, this even led to military confrontation between the Western nations and daimyo, resulting in the bombardment of Kagoshima and the Shimonoseki Campaign in 1864. The Netherlands was now dragged into serious conflicts in which she herself also acted in military fashion. It is therefore important to look at the interests and role of the Netherlands in the escalating conflicts before the fall of the Shogunate.

From Sakoku to Kaikoku

For a long time, Japanese politics was dominated by supporters of the *sakoku* policy of keeping Japan as closed as possible to foreign intrusion. At first it was thought by members of the bakufu that Japan could be armed and forcefully ward off any foreign attempt at contact. Because of this, already at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Matsudaira Sadanobu redefined the policy of *sakoku*, and set out to protect and fortify Japan.[154] As discussed in the previous chapters, however, this policy was not plausibly maintainable around 1850. And although influential people like the rōjū Abe Masahiro, who was the chief senior councillor around the time Perry arrived, and Tokugawa Nariaki, a highly influential member from one of the ruling Tokugawa branches, strived to uphold *sakoku* as much as

[154] M. Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse, The Decision to Open Japan* (Tokyo, 2006), pp. 6, 9-12.

possible, they had to accommodate to Western demands.[155] Even the most influential and strongest adherents of *sakoku* eventually had to compromise.

The Ansei Treaties that were concluded between 1854 and 1858 seriously compromised the tenability of *sakoku*, which slowly gave way to *kaikoku*. The commercial treaty between the United States and Tokugawa Japan, concluded on 29 July, 1858 – and often named after the American consul general, Townsend Harris – was the first treaty establishing official diplomatic relations between Japan and a Western nation. Its first article specifies that the US can appoint diplomatic agents and consuls in Japan; a right that is reciprocal.[156] The Harris Treaty further opened the ports of Kanagawa, Nagasaki, Niigata, and Hyogo.[157] The treaty emphasises extraterritoriality; Americans being tried in American consular courts; and freedom of religion and the erection of houses of worship.[158] Because of the most-favoured nation clauses in the treaties of other Western nations, these rights were also granted to the other Western powers (Britain, Russia, and the Netherlands).

The Harris Treaty established official diplomatic relations between Tokugawa Japan and the Western powers, also granting access to Japan to the Western foreigners. It is thus possible to conclude that Japan had gone the opposite direction of *sakoku*. Because of this, other influential people, favouring the *kaikoku* (open country) argument, like Ii Naosuke thought that it was time for a change in course of direction. And in 1858, Naosuke made a bid for power by backing Tokugawa Iemochi, who became shogun after the death of Tokugawa Iesada. By doing so, Naosuke outplayed Nariaki and *kaikoku* became the dominant force within the bakufu.[159] It should be noted, however, that although *kaikoku* and *sakoku* seemed opposing policies, they were two extremes in reaching the same goal: harmony and sovereignty of a Tokugawa ruled Japan.[160]

Nevertheless, though the bakufu exercised de facto control over Japan, true sovereignty lay with the Emperor in Kyoto. Essentially the shogun and his bakufu held their authority by virtue of being guards against 'barbarians' (i.e. 'Western foreigners'). Conducting treaties with these barbarians was therefore the opposite of what the shogunate

[155] Hiroshi, *Escape from Impasse*, pp. 67-69, and W.G. Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan, 1834-1858* (Kent, 1995), pp. 106-108.
[156] 'Treaty between the United States of Japan, signed on 29 July 1858', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 183-189.
[157] Ibid. (Article III)
[158] Ibid. (Article VI and VIII)
[159] M.B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, London, 2000), pp. 261-262, and Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan*, pp. 106-108.
[160] Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan*, pp. 106-108, 110.

was supposed to do, and the treaties undermined the raison d'être of the Tokugawa Shogunate.[161] To be precise, the bakufu did actually not even possess the authority to conclude treaties with foreigners. Exactly because of this, disgruntled tozama daimyo, who had been left out of the higher level of decision-making of the bakufu, and who opposed its policies, began to rally around the Emperor. Among these were the strongest supporters of the *jōi* (*sonno jōi*; 'revere the emperor, remove the foreigner) cause, declaring the treaties concluded by the bakufu void.[162]

Yet, the time to completely remove the bakufu had not yet come, although the emperor now became an active political actor and figurehead, opposing the might of the bakufu. Ii Naosuke had alienated opposing parties to such an extent that he was assassinated by samurai in March 1860.[163] In order to quell the unrest within the country, both the imperial court and shogunal bakufu thought it wise to openly conclude an alliance between court and bakufu by marrying princess Kazunomiya, the emperor's sister, to shogun Iemochi. Through this marriage both court and bakufu also attempted to outflank each other.[164] The imperial court itself hoped that this marriage would bolster imperial prestige, and would lead to the bakufu ceding authority.[165] In the meantime, the bakufu attempted to convince the court that matters concerning the foreign treaties were very complex. Although they tried their best to stall implementation of the treaties – most ports, like Hyogo, had not been opened – they were not ready with rearming the nation.[166] This political event indicates the ripple effect the treaties with the foreign powers had on domestic Japanese matters, and how they destabilised the bakufu and brought legitimacy and authority to the imperial court.

Thus, Japan became a divided country, in which the bakufu had lost much of its authority and control. Under the influence of malcontent samurai from Tosa and Chōshū, the imperial court ordered the bakufu to expel the foreigners.[167] However, influential members of

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[161] P.K. Cassel, *Grounds of Judgement, Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 32-33.
[162] W.G. Beasley, *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 195-197.
[163] Ibid.
[164] 'Iwakura Tomomi to the Emperor Kōmei: memorandum on the Kazunomiya Marriage, undated. Written between 21 July and 6 August 1860', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 198-200.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Cf. Rōjū to Imperial Court: memorandum on the Kazunomiya Marriage, undated. Presented to the Court on 14 September 1860.', 'Rōjū to Kyōto-shoshidai, 21 December 1860', and 'Kyōto-shoshidai to Kampaku, *circa* 8 January 1861.' in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 200-204, 204-206, 206-208, respectively.
[167] 'Hitotsubashi Keiki and others to the Imperial Court, 29 March 1863.' In W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), p. 234.

the bakufu, under which Hitotsubashi Keiki (the future, and last, shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu) argued that to expulse the foreigners at this stage was madness, and that bakufu decisions should overrule those of the court, in order to preserve the national harmony.[168] Though this might have been, even Keiki was aware of the opinion that the foreigners would, eventually, have to be driven away.[169] The bakufu was therefore under pressure by the imperial court and lost control over daimyo, such as those of Chōshū and Tosa, who took matters in their own hands. This would lead to larger conflicts with the Western nations.

The Netherlands within the Storm

After the Harris Treaty technically opened up more of Japan to Western trade, the Netherlands had to react to this. In 1859, Donker Curtius, together with his secretary, Dirk de Graeff van Polsbroek went on the last *hofreis* (court trip) the Dutch would make to Edo. Because of the desire to conclude a treaty, Curtius had refused earlier requests for a court trip.[170] Already a change in bakufu politics was visible, as earlier ceremonial traditions, such as the *fumie,* were being refused by Polsbroek, which incurred no serious reaction.[171] Back in Dejima, the Netherlands continued mediating between the Japanese officials and Westerners, helping Russia and France in their negotiations with Tokugawa Japan.[172] Yet, the opening of other ports, such as Kanagawa, gave the Western powers the opportunity to move closer to Edo, where they could more easily conduct business with the bakufu. Curtius wanted to remain as Dutch commissioner in Dejima, so Polsbroek was sent to Yokohama to act as consul – the Western powers had found Yokohama more suitable than Kanagawa.[173] Dejima was thus no longer the only official Dutch station in Japan.

The official Dutch representation in Japan was therefore growing, creating more opportunities for the Netherlands to interact with Japan. Because of the expanding bureaucracy, the Dutch minister of foreign affairs wondered whether it would be prudent to change the responsibility of the consul general, and other consuls in Japan, from the ministry of colonies to that of foreign affairs. This idea was initially discarded by the Dutch

[168] 'Matsudaira Keiei to Bakufu, 4 December 1862', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 227-234. Though Keiei is against overruling the court himself, he does explain the intentions and beliefs of Hitotsubashi Keiki.
[169] 'Hitotsubashi Keiki to the Rōjū in Edo, 12 June, 1863.', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 246-248.
[170] *Journaal van Jonkheer Dirk de Graeff van Polsbroek*, H.J. Moeshart (ed.) (Assen/Maastricht, 1987), p. 31.
[171] Idem, p. 32.
[172] Idem, p. 52.
[173] Idem, p. 53. This happened in June 1859.

government because the shared impression was that the current system, in which the Dutch officials in Japan had to communicate with the governor general in Batavia, sufficed.[174] This would change in 1862.[175] The fact that the Dutch government in the Hague was slothful in regards to events in Japan would be illustrative of the whole 1860's, whereas Dutch officials in Japan were busy with, or dragged into, complex events.

In Yokohama, Polsbroek soon encountered all sorts of conflicts between foreigners and Japanese. The anti-foreign sentiments smouldering among the Japanese around 1860 exploded into open hostility and a series of attacks on foreigners, some of which lost their lives in the incidents. Among those that were brutally murdered were two Dutchmen.[176] The Dutch government in the Hague deliberated over the matter. The case in question was left to the minister of colonies, thus ending up with Polsbroek.[177] But the matter was not only Dutch, and when in January 1861 the Dutch-born American interpreter Hendrick Heusken was assassinated, the matter became a shared affair for all foreigners in Edo and Yokohama.[178] The fact that the bakufu was unable to safeguard the lives of the foreigners brought the bakufu much embarrassment and fear of escalating conflicts with the Western nations, and a treaty with Prussia was hastily signed.[179] The bakufu's anxiety was well founded, because soon the port of Yokohama was full of gunboats, and Western marines walked the streets of the town.[180] The inability of the bakufu to maintain order enlarged the conflict between Japan and the Western powers.

The fact that Western people were slain was not the only reason for Western powers to be angry with the bakufu. Although the Western nations had concluded different treaties from 1854 on, each profiting from the advantages gained by others through their most-favoured nations clause, many of the stipulations had not yet been put into effect by the bakufu. In February of 1862, Rutherford Alcock, the British consul-general in Japan, sternly inquired the bakufu after the fact that many agreements, bound in the treaties, had not been made into effect.[181] Before Alcock sent his angry message to the bakufu, the bakufu had

[174] Ministerraad, A250, 2.02.05.02, Inv. Nr. 32.
[175] Idem, Inv. nr. 34.
[176] *Journaal van Jonkheer Dirk de Graeff van Polsbroek*, p. 55.
[177] Ministerraad, A250, 2.02.05.02, Inv. Nr. 32.
[178] *Journaal van Jonkheer Dirk de Graeff van Polsbroek*, p. 56. Heusken had played an important part in concluding the Harris Treaty, and he was popular among many of the foreigners in Yokohama, being a good friend of the author of the diary, Polsbroek himself.
[179] Idem, p. 57.
[180] Idem, pp. 59-60.
[181] 'Rutherford Alcock's confidential memorandum of 14 February 1862', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 211-216.

already made plans to send a delegation to Europe to smooth things over.[182] In light of such a Japanese embassy to Europe, the Dutch government decided that, for the time being, it was acceptable that the bakufu could not open some of the ports. The Dutch cabinet also deemed it wise to communicate and negotiate with Britain and France concerning the matter, in order to find means required to make the bakufu honour the agreements made in the treaties.[183]

When the Japanese embassy arrived in Europe, the Netherlands tried to make a concentrated answer to the Japanese. The Dutch government itself was of the opinion that the concluded treaties could not be altered and that the stipulations made therein should be fulfilled.[184] When this was told to the Japanese embassy, the Japanese came with other demands, angering the Dutch government.[185] The fear existed among the Dutch government that Britain would not force their demands upon the Japanese, and thus it was proposed to work more closely with France.[186] Dutch anxiety proved true, as the British managed to sign a new treaty with the bakufu, known as the London Protocol of June 6, 1862. In this treaty the British agreed on postponement of the opening of harbours in return for a guarantee of the opening of more harbours later, as well as the removal of restrictions concerning some other problems that had occurred.[187] Dutch hopes for a united front against the Japanese embassy proved futile, and instead, the Dutch sought to mediate for Switzerland and the Hanse Cities instead.[188] The Netherlands had failed to make a united effort with the other great powers and instead returned to her role as mediator.

The Shimonoseki Campaign

The Namamugi Incident (1862) further escalated matters and sparked Western outrage and antagonism towards the bakufu. On 14 September 1862, the Englishman Charles Lennox Richardson was riding out in the country near Kanagawa, accompanied by another man named Marshall and a lady named Boradaile. Whilst they were riding their horses on the Tokaido, a highly placed official of Satsuma domain, Shimazu Hisamitsu, together with his

[182] Ministerraad, A250, 2.02.05.02, Inv. Nr. 33.
[183] Idem, Inv. Nr. 34.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid. cf. 3 juli 1862.
[186] Ibid.
[187] 'The London Protocol, 6 June 1862', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 216-217.
[188] Ministerraad, A250, 2.02.05.02, Inv. Nr. 33. These had approached the Dutch government with the request to help them and act as mediator in concluding a treaty with Japan; the Dutch government agreed to this, but proceedings would take until the end of the shogunate.

retinue, approached. Richardson did not want to give way to the samurai company – even though, as Marshall later recounted to Polsbroek, the road was wide enough – and let them pass.[189] The action of Richardson offended the Satsuma samurai deeply, and in their ire they rode Richardson down and slew him; his companions managed to flee with their lives.[190]

The action of the Satsuma samurai drew the outrage of Western nations present in Japan, and brought embarrassment to the bakufu. Britain demanded satisfaction of the transgression against a British subject. Lieutenant Colonel John Neale insisted that the bakufu took responsibility for the action and would provide financial compensation, an apology, and respect. To this end, the British put forth an ultimatum in which the bakufu had to make an ample and formal apology, and to make a payment of £100,000.[191] If, Neale stated, the bakufu was indeed unable to punish the Satsuma samurai, the British would do it themselves, and they would send out a naval squadron to demand that the lord of Satsuma would put those responsible on trial and would pay £20,000 as recompense to the victims.[192]

This demand greatly alarmed the bakufu, and initiated discussion about what to do next. Most argued that the bakufu should pay the indemnity to the British.[193] However, they argued, the relationship with Western nations should be broken, as it would only further deteriorate the internal Japanese market, causing further popular unrest and conflicts between foreigners and Japanese.[194] Interestingly, though, it was argued that although the foreigners should be expelled, the Dutch and Chinese should be allowed to remain.[195] Others within the bakufu argued that the Dutch should also be expelled because they were constantly bluffing and scheming.[196] Nonetheless, in the end the bakufu bowed to British demands, and the argument that the foreigners could not be expelled reasonably overcame the argument for expulsion.[197] The foreigners were therefore not expelled, and the imperial decree ordering so

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[189] *Journaal van Jonkheer Dirk de Graeff van Polsbroek*, p. 60. Polsbroek describes the story as heard from Marshall; accordingly, Marshall had tried to dissuade Richardson in vain.
[190] Ibid.
[191] 'Lt.-Col. St. John Neale to the Japanese Ministers for Foreign Affairs, 6 April 1863.', in .G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 236-240.
[192] Ibid.
[193] 'Mizuno Tadanori to Inoue Masanao, 20 April 1863.', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 240-242.
[194] Cf. Ibid. and 'Hitotsubashi Keiki to the Rōjū in Edo, 12 June 1863.' In W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 246-248.
[195] 'Mizuno Tadanori to Inoue Masanao, 20 April 1863.', 'Hitotsubashi Keiki to the Rōjū in Edo, 12 June 1863.', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 240-242, and 240-242 respectively.
[196] 'Jisha-bugyō, machi-bugyō, and kanjō-bugyō to Bakufu, 21 June 1863.', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 248-250.
[197]Nagamichi to Bakufu, 27 July 1863.', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 254-256. For the arguments concerning the expulsion of foreigners, cf.

ignored. This incited the Chōshū to stage a coup to restore the emperor, which, with the help of Satsuma and Aizu samurai, was foiled by the bakufu.[198]

While this debate raged and the bakufu acted in an unsteadfast manner, the Western foreigners were left in the dark and subjected to the fickle policies of the bakufu. It was at this time (28 March 1863) that Francois de Casembroot (1817-1895) docked in Yokohama with the gunboat *Medusa* in order to show the Dutch colours in the harbours of Japan.[199] According to De Casembroot, the harbour of Yokohama was full of British and French men of war. The British were still negotiating with the bakufu, which was stalling negotiations, as usual, about the case of Richardson, and were even drawing plans to take the port by force.[200] In a secret meeting with the British naval commander, De Casembroot stated that the Netherlands would not help such an action, as it was his objective not to violate Dutch neutrality.[201] This attitude corresponded to the official directions given by the Dutch government to the Dutch officials in Japan: the vessels of war that were sent had been sent to show the Dutch colours and safeguard Dutch possessions and lives.[202] This became urgent when the bakufu ordered that all Japanese be evacuated from Yokohama, indicating the possibility of an assault on the foreigners present in the town; though shortly after this order was rescinded.[203] Nonetheless, the allied Western forces were now brooding for war, which seemed to become an unavoidable conflict.[204]

Thus was the state affairs when De Casembroot sailed from Yokohama to Nagasaki, to take the Dutch consul, Polsbroek, back to Yokohama. The trip to Nagasaki was rather uneventful, but the trip back proved to be almost catastrophic. Before the *Medusa* had left the harbour of Nagasaki, a French ship called the *Kien-chan* arrived with tidings that the Chōshū were using their shore batteries around Shimonoseki to fire upon Western ships that were passing the strait. The French ship itself had only just managed to evade being blown to pieces.[205] When the *Medusa* entered the range of the batteries, it experienced the same fate.

'Hitotsubashi Keiki to the Kampaku (Takatsukasa Sukehiro), 9 July 1863.', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 250-253.

[198] W.G. Beasley, *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 257-260.

[199] Jhr. F. De Casembroot, *De Medusa in de Wateren van Japan, in 1863 en 1864* (The Hague, 1865), p. 9, 12.

[200] Idem, pp. 14-15.

[201] Ibid.

[202] Ministerraad, A250, 2.02.05.02, Inv. Nr. 35; missives of September 9, 1863 to the Dutch consul in Nagasaki.

[203] De Casembroot, *De Medusa in de Wateren van Japan*, pp. 24-27.

[204] Idem, p. 27, 31-32. According to De Casembroot, the French and British were delighted by the prospect of a larger conflict with Japan.

[205] Idem, pp. 40-42. Cf also: *Journaal van Jonkheer Dirk de Graeff van Polsbroek*, pp. 61-63. De Casembroot claims that he sailed through the strait of Shimonoseki because everybody was of the assumption that the Japanese would not fire upon a friendly nation. Polsbroek, however, tells that De Casembroot had been

And, although being shelled from the shore, the *Medusa* answered with a cannonade of its own and managed to force a passage into the Seto Inland Sea.[206] Battered but still alive, the *Medusa* and its passengers, among which De Casembroot and Polsbroek, managed to reach Yokohama.

In Yokohama it was decided, in coordination with other allied commanders, what to do about the matter. According to the instructions by the Dutch government, mentioned earlier, the Dutch were not to use the gunboats in a warlike fashion without provocation or when disrespect was shown to the Dutch flag and Dutch prestige.[207] Now the possibility of intervention had presented itself. Yet, while allied forces in Yokohama were planning a punitive campaign against the Chōshū daimyo, the British thought it high time to exact retaliation for the murder of Richardson. And in August 1863, the British set out with a large naval squadron to Satsuma domain on the south of Kyushu, and promptly bombarded the town of Kagoshima, principal stronghold of the lord of Satsuma, leaving naught but destruction.[208] In the meantime, the Western warships in the harbour of Yokohama, and marines in the town increased.[209] The Dutch naval division increased to four ships: *Medusa*, *Metalen Kruis*, *Djambi*, and *Amsterdam*, and would be the second largest squadron setting out to Shimonoseki.[210]

The punitive expedition against the daimyo of the Chōshū was finally planned for early September 1864. The Shimonoseki Campaign, as it was subsequently known, was an allied effort under the overall command of the British admiral Kuper, and consisted of British, Dutch, French, and American vessels of war. The initial phase of the battle occurred on September 5, 1864, and consisted mainly of a naval barrage on the coastal batteries of the Chōshū. On the next day, marines landed from the ships to spike the guns, or even taking them as spoils of war, and to occupy the town of Shimonoseki – which was occupied as a kind of hostage.[211] According to De Casembroot, the Dutch participation had shown all involved that the Netherlands might be a small country, with a small navy; yet Dutch ships were just as mighty, and Dutch sailors and marines possessed as much prowess as other

boasting about 'giving the Japanese hell' in company of other Western foreigners, upon which the Dutch could not go around Kyushu without a loss of face.

[206] De Casembroot, *De Medusa in de Wateren van Japan*, pp. 42-48. The *Medusa* was damaged by the onslaught, and several men were wounded or killed.

[207] Ministerraad, A250, 2.02.05.02, Inv. Nr. 35.

[208] De Casembroot, *De Medusa in de Wateren van Japan*, pp. 55-56.

[209] Idem, p. 71.

[210] Idem, pp. 74-75.

[211] Idem, pp. 80-92.

Western (great) powers.[212] The Shimonoseki campaign was therefore the first and only instance of Dutch coercive gunboat diplomacy in Japan.

Aftermath of the Shimonoseki Campaign, and the Final Years of the Bakumatsu Period

After the victory at Shimonoseki, the Dutch were among those demanding indemnities. It was first decided upon who was responsible for the damages inflicted at Shimonoseki. Yet, it was clear to all that the bakufu had lost control over certain daimyo, and that the emperor remained a political counterweight. Not only that, but the emperor was the only one who could ratify the earlier treaties.[213] Regarding the matter of responsibility, the bakufu objected that firstly the imperial order to expulse the foreigners had not been transmitted by the shogun nor emperor, but by traitors at the imperial court, and secondly that the daimyo of the Chōshū acted on his own initiative against the directives of the bakufu.[214] Still, the Western powers agreed that the chastising of the Chōshū daimyo by Western might had been the duty of the bakufu, and that the bakufu should therefore pay indemnities to the Western nations involved.[215] The payable amount was fixed at $3,000,000, which had to be paid in instalments but could also be absolved if the bakufu granted the opening of more ports, such as Shimonoseki, provided that this be done in negotiation with the treaty powers.[216] It should be noted that the Netherlands stayed on the side during most of these negotiations.

The matter thus resolved, a new phase entered in which the precarious position of the bakufu was visible to all. The Treaty Powers started to attempt to begin negotiations with the imperial court to gain the required ratification of the treaties.[217] The imperial ratification was finally announced on November 22, 1865.[218] Meanwhile, the bakufu sought to reclaim authority and was given permission to lead a punitive campaign against the Chōshū, which

[212] De Casembroot, *De Medusa in de Wateren van Japan*, pp. 94-95.
[213] 'Minutes of a conference between the Ministers in Japan of Great Britain, France, the United States, and the Netherlands, and the *gaikoku-bugyō* Takamoto Masao, held at Yokohama, 18 September 1864.', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 282-288.
[214] Idem, p. 284.
[215] 'Convention concerning the Shimonoseki indemnity, signed at Yokohama, 22 October 1864.', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 288-289.
[216] Ibid.
[217] W.G. Beasley, *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 290-292.
[218] 'Imperial Court to Bakufu, 22 November 1865.', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), p. 304.

failed dramatically and would ultimately draw the clans of the Chōshū and Satsuma domain together.[219]

Within these events, the Netherlands remained mostly aloof. Whereas officials from other Western (great) powers actively sought and demanded compensation from the bakufu, the Netherlands remained aside and merely agreed to the resulting terms.[220] What seemed to be of interest the most, to the Dutch were the matters of prestige and monetary compensation. Prestige had been gained during the battle of Shimonoseki, and the Shimonoseki Convention now provided the demanded indemnity. This led to problems at home with Dutch merchants from Amsterdam and Rotterdam seeking reimbursement for losses in Japan.[221] In proceedings that took years, the Dutch government objected – and won – stating that the Shimonoseki indemnities were compensation for the war effort, which had been used to further increase trade with Japan, from which the merchants profited, and that, furthermore, these merchants had responsible for their own goods. Besides, the Dutch navy had provided the opportunity to safeguard valuables.[222] The government in The Hague, when asked by Britain, also stated that it rather wanted indemnities than the opening of ports.[223] Therefore the Dutch government did not press upon the government of Japan to reimburse Dutch merchants, and continued her policy of not creating any (unnecessary) conflict with the bakufu.

The final years of the Bakumatsu Period, and the Tokugawa Shogunate, saw a sharp decrease in Dutch activities' prominence in Japan. The main activities of the Dutch at this time were to procure treaties for other powers, such as Switzerland, Denmark and the German Hanse Cities.[224] Polsbroek was also hindered by the aloofness prescribed by the Dutch government. When he complained about a French dignitary, the government ordered him to remain silent because the Frenchman was an official of a great power and that Polsbroek should recall his earlier missives in which it was considered policy to remain friendly with all foreign emissaries.[225] Polsbroek also made his frustrations regarding Western representatives

[219] W.G. Beasley, *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy*, pp. 290-292.
[220] Cf. 'Minutes of a conference between the Ministers in Japan of Great Britain, France, the United States, and the Netherlands, and the *gaikoku-bugyō* Takamoto Masao, held at Yokohama, 18 September 1864.', and 'Convention concerning the Shimonoseki indemnity, signed at Yokohama, 22 October 1864.', in W.G. Beasley (ed.), *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 282-288, and 288-289 respectively.
[221] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Z21000, 2.05.01, Inv. Nr. 3208, in *Nationaal Archief*, The Hague.
[222] Idem, cf. 3 September 1866. For the events regarding the Dutch navy and the safeguarding of Dutch possessions, cf. De Casembroot, *De Medusa in de Wateren van Japan*.
[223] Collectie 107 Cremers, C22272, 2.21.044, in *Nationaal Archief*, The Hague.
[224] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Z21000, 2.05.01, Inv. Nr. 3148, in *Nationaal Archief*, The Hague.
[225] *Journaal van Jonkheer Dirk de Graeff van Polsbroek*, pp. 65-66.

known during the Boshin War. Polsbroek complained that the British were supplying pro-imperial forces with weaponry, despite a royal proclamation banning such behaviour; and about the French he argued that they were secretly but actively supporting and training pro-shogun forces in the north of Japan.[226] Regarding this matter, the Dutch government ordered Polsbroek not to interfere in the situation.[227] This did not even matter, as Dutch prominence had dwindled to such a degree that the Japanese embassy which was in Europe in 1867 – secretly to gain military help for the shogunate – visited the Netherlands merely out of courtesy; its most important (military) members being absent for more important matters in Paris.[228] The other powers had started to overshadow Dutch influence in Japan, and the Dutch government was unwilling to actively attempt to change this.

Conclusion

After the conclusion of the Ansei Treaties, Dutch influence in Japan slowly but surely became overshadowed by that of the other great powers, whilst the government in The Hague lacked the incentive to create and support an active policy on Japan. Nevertheless, the conflicts that arose in Japan because of internal troubles which were exacerbated by foreign influences forced the Dutch actors present to act. In order to safeguard Dutch prestige, the Dutch government agreed to a united effort of gunboat diplomacy in concert with the other great powers. Yet, because the Dutch government forbade the Dutch officials in Japan, like Polsbroek and De Casembroot, to take the initiative, which made the Dutch rely heavily on the actions of other Western (great) powers. Neutrality seemed to be the only objective of the government in The Hague, and only policies that were considered harmless to Dutch neutrality, like helping other small countries conclude a treaty with Japan, were approved. Friendship with all was the goal; yet this proved a fickle friendship, as it had to be rectified with a broadside from a gunboat, if necessary and possible.

[226] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Z21000, 2.05.01, Inv. Nr. 2830, in *Nationaal Archief*, The Hague.
[227] Idem.
[228] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Z21000, 2.05.01, Inv. Nr. 3285, in *Nationaal Archief*, The Hague.

- Conclusion -

During the Bakumatsu Period, the Dutch government reoriented its policy towards Japan multiple times. Already some nine years before the coming of Perry in 1853, the Dutch king sent a letter to the Japanese shogun to try to convince the bakufu to change policy concerning foreign relations. Honeyed words failed, and the guns of Perry's black ships, and his own negotiating resolve proved more successful in changing bakufu actions. The crack provided by Perry was taken as opportunity by the Dutch to conclude a treaty with Japan. The resulting treaty of 1856 increased Dutch prestige by lifting many disgraceful restrictions. The supplements of 1857 opened Hakodate and Nagasaki to unlimited Dutch commerce, making the Dutch treaty the first among the Ansei Treaties to implement noteworthy trade agreements. Yet, the internal strife that followed, together with waning bakufu authority, exploded into aggression against foreigners, among whom Dutch. In order to maintain the respect of the Dutch colours and Dutch prestige, the Dutch took part in Western gunboat diplomacy together with other great powers. Still, the rise in prominence of the British, French and Americans soon overshadowed the Dutch in Japan, and even the Dutch government seemingly lost interest in Japan, and after the Shimonoseki Campaign, Dutch influence in the country slowly but surely eroded.

Accordingly, there seem to be four distinct reorientations of Dutch policy towards Japan. The first occurred when Willem II sent the letter to the shogun, and when the Dutch government provided help to the American expedition. During this period, the preservation of Dutch neutrality was the biggest goal. The second phase was when Curtius was sent to Japan as last *opperhoofd* to conclude a treaty with the country. Curtius was not alone; for het was helped by Fabius, Dr. van den Broeck, and others who conducted shrewd soft power diplomacy in the fields of nautical training, technology and medicine, and otherwise. The goal during this phase was prestige and through a treaty benefiting all, concluded by the Dutch. The third phase occurred when matters became grim and prestige was damaged. This made the Dutch government agree to the use of gunboat diplomacy in coordination with the other great powers. The objective of this was to enforce the conditions of the treaties and to maintain Dutch prestige and honour – also among that of the great powers. The last orientation occurred after the Shimonoseki Campaign, when the Dutch became overshadowed by the influence of other powers. To the chagrin of Polsbroek, the Dutch consul general, the Netherlands remained mostly aloof to Japanese matters.

The question of selflessness, dominant in some scholarly works, is thus not the important one. The changes in Dutch policy towards Japan illustrate the fact that the objectives, desires and concerns of the Dutch government changed over time, which in turn influenced the objectives laid down by the government. Actors in Japan often had to act on their own initiatives as well, because directives from the central government were often lacking. The Dutch government did not act out of altruism, as Rik van Lente, for example, argues. The Dutch government acted out of its changing interests and changing desires and goals. The mediation or nautical training given by Dutch officials were in fact important soft power tools with which the Dutch government hoped to obtain a bigger goal. The question of selflessness trivialises these actions because they are identified as ends in themselves, not the means to gain a more self-serving objective.

Nevertheless, neutrality remained the greater good. And the preservation of neutrality remained of the utmost importance to the Dutch government throughout the Bakumatsu Period. Although this fit with the scholarly debate on the Netherlands as a neutral power, Dutch actions during the Bakumatsu Period show the deep complexity of this neutrality. Not only did Dutch officials made shrewd use of soft power diplomacy, they were even prepared to use gunboat diplomacy to enforce their needs. Thus, the Netherlands, as a small power, was more than capable of taking the negotiating initiative or to take active part in gunboat diplomacy. Ironically, the narrative provided portrays a different course than is often ascribed to the Netherlands. The most active period of negotiations was after 1853, and Dutch actions and initiative fell after 1864. This changed went accompanied by the fact that Dutch influence and prestige in East Asia became eclipsed by other imperialist great powers. Still, this switch from active to passive goes counter to the process described for example by Maarten Kuitenbrouwer, who argues that Dutch imperialism and international policy increased only after 1870.

The reorientation(s) of Dutch policy towards Japan illustrate the waning influence of the Netherlands in Japan and East Asia, during the second half of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, it shows how resourceful Dutch actors could be, when supported by the Dutch government, in the procurement of a treaty, creating good relations, and preserving prestige. This also shows how important actors on the ground were, who often had to react quickly to chaotic and changing events, when waiting for government directives might take too long. Especially in times when technology was not as advanced as today, and the relay of messages could take months, the ingenuity, wisdom, and ambitions of those on the ground were extremely important, and indicative of the diplomacy of the time. This proves to be fruitful

ground for future studies on different aspects of diplomacy. And this portrays the uniqueness of Dutch diplomacy, covered behind the curtains of neutrality; a diplomacy in which, according to P. Knuttel, no blood had flown:

Holland! Juich om uw victorie!
Nieuwe luister, nieuwe glorie,
Hebt gij in Japan behaald!
Wees er trosch op, want die zegen,
Is, in vrede en regt verkregen,
Met geen stroomen bloeds betaald.[229]

[229] Excerpt from a poem by P. Knuttel, secretary to Curtius on Dejima, written 1855 to celebrate the efforts of Fabius and Curtius in gaining the friendship of the Japanese and in procuring the agreement for the conclusion of a treaty. In: Collectie 150 Familie Fabius, C25054, 2.21.061, Inv. Nr. 179.

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