

Defining  
Engagement

Japan and Global Contexts, 1640–1868



# Defining Engagement

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Robert I. Hellyer

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*To my father*  
*Harold Jesse Hellyer*  
*1934–1989*



## *Acknowledgments*

The idea for this book began in 1991 when I was sent, quite unexpectedly, to teach English on the island of Tsushima. Upon being accepted into the Japanese government's Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program earlier that year, I had requested, because of my budding interest in Japanese history, to teach in Nagasaki, where I hoped to learn more about the history of that city. In a way my request was granted because I was dispatched to a part of Nagasaki *prefecture*: Tsushima. The island's natural beauty and the warmth of its people quickly assuaged my concerns about spending a year in such a remote location. And as I soon realized, I had been given a wonderful opportunity to learn firsthand about a place that offered an exciting and unique lens through which to consider the history of Japan.

That interest in Tsushima, and later in the Kyushu region overall, was supported and nurtured during my time as a graduate student at Stanford University, where I wrote the doctoral dissertation upon which this book is based. For helping me on the long road to completing that dissertation, I thank first my advisor, Peter Duus, who always took time to answer my questions and to give perspective in a challenging yet encouraging way. I especially appreciated his ability to help me move beyond merely the small story of the Kyushu region and to think more broadly about the history of Japan. James Ketelaar was equally supportive, continuing to read chapters and to offer valuable insights even after he moved to the University of Chicago midway through my graduate career. While at Stanford, my studies were made possible by a History

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During my graduate school days and after I also had the privilege of spending several extended periods as a visiting researcher at the Historiographical Institute, University of Tokyo. During my initial visit on a Ministry of Education fellowship, I received guidance first from Miyachi Masato, who kindly allowed me to attend his seminar on late Edo-period history and who freely offered his keen insights on my research and Japanese history in general. I could not have effectively researched the history of Tsushima without the unstinting assistance of Tsuruta Kei, and Yokoyama Yoshinori was generous with his wide knowledge of Satsuma and Ryukyu. Others who were also helpful during my visits were: Asami Masakazu, Gonoï Takashi, Hakoishi Hiroshi, Hoya Tōru, Ishida Chihiro, Kimura Naoki, Matsui Yōko, Nishizawa Mihoko, Ōhashi Akiko, Oka Mihoko, Ono Shō, Tanaka Yōko, the late Kanai Madoka, and the entire staff of the institute's library. I offer special thanks to Matsukata Fuyuko for her friendship and help and also thank Tomori Maiko and Yokoyama Yuriko for their tutoring in reading and analyzing Edo period sources. While at the University of Tokyo, I also benefited from attending the seminar of Hamashita Takeshi, who in subsequent years generously made time to meet and provide valuable advice. In addition, I appreciated the suggestions offered by Arano Yasunori, who invited me to participate in his engaging graduate seminar at Rikkyo University. Finally the Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo, where I served on the faculty for two years, provided an extremely positive environment for furthering my research. I thank especially Nitta Michio and Hirashima Kenji for their help during my tenure there.

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Tokyo, Summer 2009

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## *Conventions*

### *Romanization*

Japanese words, names, titles, and place names are spelled using the modified Hepburn system. Macrons are included for Japanese words, except for commonly used terms (such as shogun and Tokyo) that appear in standard, English dictionaries. Korean words and place names are romanized according to the McCune-Reischauer system. Chinese words, proper names, and place names are given in *pinyin*, except in cases, such as Amoy (Xiamen) and Canton (Guangzhou), where the older romanization is more familiar to English-language readers.

### *Proper Names*

Chinese, Korean, and Japanese names appear in the original order, with the family name first, followed by the given name, except for citations in English-language works where the author's name appears in Western order.

### *Dates*

All dates before 1 January 1873 (when Japan adopted the Gregorian calendar) are given according to the Japanese calendar. Exceptions are significant events widely chronicled according to their date on the Gregorian calendar, e.g., the opening of the ports of Nagasaki, Yokohama, and Hakodate to Western-style free trade on 1 July 1859.

*Currency and Measures*

During the Edo period, Japan had a multi-metal currency system, with silver used primarily in western Japan and on the Osaka market, with gold being standard in the east and Edo. While the Tokugawa set official conversion rates, in reality rates fluctuated based upon market conditions and varied by region. Copper coins were used throughout Japan for smaller market transactions.

## CURRENCY WEIGHTS

<i>mon</i> :	0.1325 ounces or 3.75 grams of copper
<i>monme</i> :	0.1325 ounces or 3.75 grams of silver
<i>kan</i> :	8.72 pounds or 3.75 kilograms of silver
<i>ryō</i> :	0.63 ounces or 18 grams of gold (also referred to as <i>koban</i> )

The silver *kan*, used to measure values in foreign trade, consisted of 1,000 *monme* of silver coins or 1,000 *mon* of copper coins. While it is difficult to gauge the exact conversion rate, one *kan* equaled roughly 15 *ryō* of gold. The gold *ryō* equaled 50–60 *monme* of silver.

## MEASURES

<i>kokū</i> :	47.5 U.S. gallons (approximately 6 bushels) or 180 liters
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The *kokū* was used to measure especially rice, other grains, as well as the tonnage of ships. Because it was the staple crop, Japanese had begun to calculate taxes in rice in the sixteenth century. During the Edo period, the wealth of domains, the ranks of retainers, as well the stipends of samurai were calculated in *kokū*.

<i>kin</i> :	1.32 pounds or 0.6 kilograms
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The *kin* was used to measure bulk items such as copper bar and rods, marine products, and sugar.

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## *Introduction*

An outside view of Japan, presented by the governor of China's Fujian province, Xu Jiyu, offers a useful starting point to consider the actors in Japanese foreign relations in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1848, Xu published a collection of annotated maps of the world beyond China. In his section on the maritime provinces to the east, he wrote that Japan

is located in the Eastern Sea on three islands. The northern island is called Tui-ma-tao [Tsushima], which is across from the southern edge of Korea. It can be reached [from Korea] in one night. . . . The center island is called Ch'ang-ch'i [Nagasaki]. The land area is comparatively large and is opposite [the island of] P'u-t'o-shan, [Putuoshan Island in the Zhoushan Islands] off the coast of Chekiang [Zhejiang]. *China's merchant ships trade at this place.* The southern island is called Sa-szu-ma [Satsuma] and is opposite Wen [chou] and T'ai- [chou] in Chekiang. Its people are strong and healthy and their swords are the sharpest; horses are also raised. . . . In addition to these three islands there are numerous small ones. The king resides to the northeast of Nagasaki in a place called mi-yeh [?] -ku, meaning 'capital' in Japanese [*miyako*]. . . . The authority over state affairs resides with the generalissimo [shogun]. The king does not attend to such affairs, but only serves in a ceremonial capacity.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Drake, *China Charts the World*, 73. For consistency, I use the pinyin of the governor's name, Xu Jiyu, although Drake uses the Wade-Giles spelling, Hsu Chi-Yü. The first ellipsis and most items in the brackets are original from Drake's translation. I added the second and third ellipses and for clarity, the "Putuoshan Island in the Zhoushan Islands," and "Zhejiang," the pinyin for Chekiang, in brackets.

Xu presents a surprising view of Japan's geography, which at that time was composed primarily of three main islands: Honshu, Kyushu, and Shikoku (the northern island of Hokkaido was fully incorporated into the Japanese state in the 1870s). For his sources, the governor exclusively utilized Chinese accounts of Japan published in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. He declined to use Western sources believing them based "on impressions only," given that Western merchant ships had seldom actually visited the waters around Japan.<sup>2</sup> As such, his description is revealing because it shows how Japan appeared from China, its most important trading partner during the Edo period (1603–1868).

Xu conceived of the port of Nagasaki in western Kyushu as the "central island" because Chinese merchant ships regularly called there in numbers that consistently eclipsed those of the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie in Dutch, abbreviated as VOC). We can conclude that Xu dubbed as main islands the feudal domains of Satsuma, in southern Kyushu, and Tsushima, an island in the straits between Japan and Korea, because they were the only Japanese domains to be directly involved in Japanese-Chinese trade during the Edo period. Tsushima monopolized Japanese trade with Korea, and therefore the often more valuable Japanese-Chinese trade conducted through Korean intermediaries. For its part, Satsuma manipulated Japanese-Chinese trade flowing through the Ryukyu Kingdom (today's Okinawa prefecture). Finally Xu's seeming ignorance of the city of Edo (renamed Tokyo in 1868) is equally instructive. Because of the structure of Japanese foreign relations, it is understandable that Xu did not explicitly locate power and authority over foreign relations in the hands of the shogun, the leader of the Tokugawa shogunate (*bakufu*), Japan's central authority, based at Edo. Although the *bakufu* directly administered Nagasaki, the shogun and Tokugawa leaders did not dispatch envoys to China and other foreign lands and had only limited involvement in trade and related diplomatic contacts taking place at Satsuma and Tsushima. In the Edo-period system, Satsuma and Tsushima exercised control over a significant share of Japanese foreign

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2. Ibid.

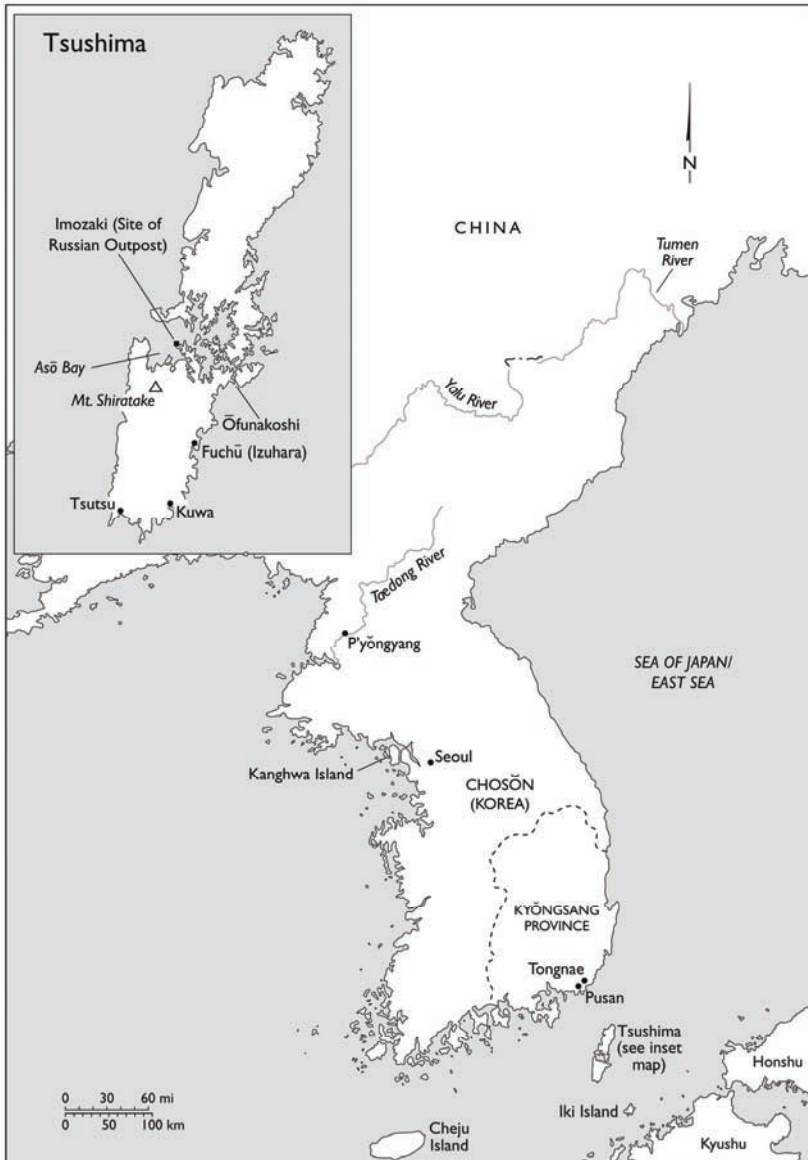


Map 1 The Nansei [Southwest] Islands.  
 The present name for the island groups extending from Kyushu to Taiwan.

relations, which in this study includes primarily foreign trade, diplomacy, and defense.

This book examines these three actors in Japan's foreign relations: the Tokugawa *bakufu*, which developed policies which created a foreign relations framework for the entire Japanese state, and the Satsuma and Tsushima domains, which maintained intercourse with the outside world based on an often changing combination of Tokugawa directives and politico-economic agendas particular to each domain. The central narrative exploring these three actors demonstrates that Japan's foreign relations were not defined by an overriding ideology of seclusion, as is conventionally argued, but rather by particular Tokugawa domestic agendas as well as political interchanges, shared goals and rivalries in trade, and disputes over defense between the *bakufu* and the two domains. As its secondary and connected narrative, this study considers Japan's interface with long-term global economic trends in the period spanning from the mid-sixteenth to the late nineteenth centuries. It shows that as they developed a larger system of foreign relations for the Japanese state, Tokugawa leaders consistently made pragmatic decisions, especially concerning foreign trade, in accordance with global commercial contexts.

Via these two narratives, the book argues that while it was decentralized, the Edo-period system of foreign relations nonetheless allowed Japanese leaders, not only in the *bakufu* but also in the two domains, to remain flexible and pursue nuanced approaches to intercourse with the outside world beginning in the mid-seventeenth century. Japanese leaders were therefore able to create rational systems of engagement, most notably with the China market, that served Japan well through the end of the eighteenth century. Although those systems continued to function effectively in the decades after 1800, the Satsuma and Tsushima domains were able to gain more influence because of political and economic factors, new military threats posed by visiting Western vessels, and Japan's particular interface with global economic trends. From those positions, Satsuma and Tsushima leaders jockeyed with the *bakufu* over coastal defense and competed, to varying degrees, with the Tokugawa regime to exploit existing commercial ties with China in particular, as all three actors simultaneously considered new engagement



Map 2 Chosŏn Korea and Edo-period Tsushima

with Westerners. The domains were therefore integral players in Japan's larger shift from using early modern East Asian practices of foreign relations to the national adoption of international relations, not only in the centralization of foreign relations authority but also in the recasting of foreign trade, both of which were fully accomplished as Japan formed as a nation-state in the years following the Meiji Restoration of 1868.

*International Relations and the Entrenched Ideology of Seclusion*

The term "international relations" in this study refers to bilateral and multilateral intercourse among nation-states as practiced throughout much of the Western world since the eighteenth century and in East Asia since the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Its use underscores how fundamental aspects of interaction between states changed when the nation-state model gained global dominance over the course of the nineteenth century, creating veritable *inter national* relations. Nation-states, which developed first in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Europe, came to be defined by sovereignty, supreme authority within a territory, upon which leaders drew to establish systems of unified rule, centralized administration, and clearly demarked maritime and territorial borders. The strong central governments of nation-states assumed primary authority in defense and war as well as in foreign trade. They directly administered diplomatic ties with foreign states, which involved dispatching envoys to permanent embassies in foreign capitals. This interaction between nation-states helped to create international ties based upon an assumed equality among nations and governed by a framework of international law.<sup>3</sup> Through the wider use of international relations, Japan and its East Asian neighbors eventually developed a new normative framework for interaction, what can be termed an "international order," in the early 1880s.<sup>4</sup>

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3. Discussion drawn partly from definitions of "international relations" and "sovereignty" offered by Berridge and James, *A Dictionary of Diplomacy*, 147, 248–49.

4. Hamashita, "Tribute and Treaties," 17–50 and especially Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, 328–51, explore the process whereby Japan, Korea, and China developed a new "international order" for East Asia.

Aspects of nation-states and international relations can certainly be identified in Japan and other East Asian states and in foreign relations in the region during the early modern period—from the sixteenth century to the early nineteenth century. Yet to understand how early modern East Asian foreign relations functioned, we must be aware of several fundamental differences. First, that there was no presumed equality among states. Instead, the Chinese model of foreign relations, premised on a higher-and-lower, lord-vassal relationship, had broad influence. China, the dominant state in the region, portrayed itself as more civilized and powerful by receiving envoys, usually as part of a tribute mission, from states perceived as weaker and less civilized. Other East Asian states—for example, Korea in its relations with Tsushima—followed the Chinese model. Particularly in relations with China, the leaders of many states gladly accepted the subservient status of vassal because it provided prestige that enhanced the leader's position within his own state. This was certainly true for the Ryukyu Kingdom. Second, in early modern East Asia a central governing body did not necessarily hold complete authority over foreign relations. As this study will explore, in Japan, for example, local actors, Satsuma and Tsushima, accomplished foreign relations in conjunction with the central Tokugawa authority. Third, state borders, especially maritime ones, were not rigidly fixed and a ruler could assume the status of vassal to more than one overlord. This was the case with the Shō (the ruling house of Ryukyu) and the Sō (the ruling clan of Tsushima) and will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Finally, in early modern East Asia, foreign trade was entwined with diplomacy in ways not practiced in international relations. To enhance their domestic political positions, leaders often demanded that trade be conducted only if specific diplomatic protocols, usually based upon the Chinese tribute ideal of a superior state receiving envoys from a subservient other, were fulfilled.

By not taking into full consideration these particular aspects of East Asian foreign relations, many historians have approached Edo-period foreign relations based upon a set of assumptions, a key one being that the *bakufu*, as the central authority, held firm control over foreign trade and diplomacy. For example, in a persuasive recent study, Mark Ravina successfully challenges the previously accepted wisdom that the *bakufu* set policies for the entire Japanese realm in religion, defense, taxation,

and commerce, which the lords were obliged to follow. In an important contribution to the study of Edo-period history, he instead portrays the *bakufu* as ruling in conjunction with the lords of the domains as part of a compound, feudal structure, in which local and larger state-wide concerns merged to create a functioning politico-economic system. Nonetheless, Ravina sees the *bakufu* as holding a monopoly in foreign relations, especially in diplomacy, where it “claimed the powers of a centralized state.”<sup>5</sup>

Coupled with the perception of Tokugawa dominance is the still widely held view that seclusion defined Japanese engagement with the outside world during the late Edo period. Post-1945 studies concluded that Tokugawa leaders used their monopoly and ordered the lords to essentially close the Japanese realm when they expelled the Portuguese and limited foreign contacts in the 1630s, creating a stance that continued until the arrival of Commodore Matthew C. Perry and his flotilla of U.S. Navy warships in 1853.<sup>6</sup> Beginning in the 1970s, Japanese and American historians successively challenged this view by conclusively showing that *bakufu* leaders kept Japan diplomatically and commercially engaged, especially with neighboring East Asian states. In studies of foreign relations in the first century of the Edo period, Tashiro Kazui showed that Japanese trade with Korea and China continued to thrive and Ronald Toby illustrated that Tokugawa leaders aggressively pursued diplomacy with East Asian states.<sup>7</sup>

Yet while many scholars have identified active commercial and diplomatic agendas early in the Edo period, those examining the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries often assume that Tokugawa leaders, firmly controlling foreign relations, came to be guided by what equates to an ideology of seclusion, implicitly making decisions based upon a shared consensus that intercourse with the outside world should at the very least be strictly limited. Even “enlightened” leaders like Shogun Yoshimune (r. 1716–45), who implemented sweeping reforms in the first half of the eighteenth century, are seen as conservative adherents to

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5. Ravina, *Lord and Lordship in Early Modern Japan*, 23.

6. Sansom, *A History of Japan, 1615–1867*, 35–45.

7. Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan*; Tashiro, *Kinsei Nitchō tsūkō bōeki-shi no kenkyū*.

seclusion policies. That subsequent Tokugawa leaders held the same stance is apparently confirmed by their rejection of proposals made by prominent intellectuals, many of whom had studied the Netherlands and its global trading activities. Honda Toshiaki, a mathematician–cum–self-styled political economist, is often seen as an especially prescient voice, more aware than *bakufu* leaders of looming demographic and economic problems that could be resolved by expanding trade with Western nations, the first being Russia, which made several overtures to open commercial and diplomatic ties in the decades around 1800.<sup>8</sup>

In a valuable study focusing on events in the 1820s, Bob Wakabayashi asserts that other more conservative intellectuals, in combination with Tokugawa edicts, helped to codify an ideology of seclusion in the late Edo-period polity. Wakabayashi believes that the conservative views of Aizawa Seishisai, a scholar from Mito domain (currently Ibaraki prefecture), were particularly influential because Aizawa persuasively presented Japan as the “divine realm” in his 1825 text *New Theses*. This powerful work helped Tokugawa leaders to conceive of Japan as the “Middle Kingdom” that superseded China’s presentation of itself as the most civilized and powerful state in the world. Wakabayashi asserts that the timing of the publication of Aizawa’s views was also especially significant as it came in the same year that the *bakufu* issued an order directing coastal domains to shell and repel all foreign ships arriving on Japanese shores. He concludes that in the decades after 1825, Tokugawa leaders committed to a more militant approach. Instead of simply turning away foreign visitors requesting the establishment of commercial and diplomatic ties, the Tokugawa now directed that force be used without hesitation to uphold “national isolation.”<sup>9</sup>

Other historians have also identified an ideology of seclusion in nineteenth-century Japan, using it not only to frame the last decades of the Edo period but also to explain perceived stark differences between Japan and Western nations. As the story is often told, Britain, the United States, and other Western states, imbued with commercial vigor and technological innovation, expanded outward, while Japan, stagnating in its ideology and tradition, closed its borders and turned its back on

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8. Howe, *The Origins of Japanese Trade Supremacy*, 67–71.

9. Wakabayashi, *Anti-Foreignism and Western Learning in Early Modern Japan*, 8–10.

foreign trade. The contrasting approaches set the stage for what Walter LaFeber, a prominent historian of American foreign relations, concludes was a collision between the irresistible force of the modern West against the immovable object of Japan. Like many before him, LaFeber sees this clash exemplified in the arrival of Commodore Perry near Edo in 1853. He asserts that from Perry's visit until the Meiji Restoration, "the relentless American determination to break feudal barriers and gain access for every individual—whether merchant, diplomat, or missionary—encountered a centuries-old and apparently immovable culture of Tokugawa Japan."<sup>10</sup>

In a more recent study, Michael Auslin effectively demonstrates that the leaders of the *bakufu* skillfully used negotiation to temper the diplomatic demands of Western nations in the 1850s and 1860s. Yet Auslin, too, sees Tokugawa leaders as focused on the defense of Japanese tradition. He paints them as interested not in trade but in protecting the "ideological, intellectual, and physical boundaries between themselves and Westerners."<sup>11</sup> Auslin concludes that while Tokugawa leaders could for a time successfully use negotiation as a tool against Western nations, in the end decisive Western military and economic power forced Tokugawa and later Meiji leaders to abandon tradition and to fully embrace international relations.

Without question, beginning in the late eighteenth century the Tokugawa regime assumed a strong and sometimes defiant stance against Western visitors that continued for decades. Moreover we cannot deny the importance of diplomatic intercourse between Tokugawa officials and Western envoys—interchange that certainly influenced the significant changes in Japanese foreign relations that occurred in the years surrounding the Meiji Restoration. It is also impossible to ignore that Western nations, which industrialized first, brought to Japan the treaty port system, the modern industrial structure, and, of course, the principles of international relations that Japan adopted after 1868 and continues to use today.

What this study aims to reconsider is the widely accepted wisdom that by the late eighteenth century, if not before, a single, powerful central

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10. LaFeber, *The Clash*, 30–31.

11. Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, 9–10.

government, the Tokugawa *bakufu*, acted reflexively based upon an ideology of seclusion to protect Japanese tradition in the face of Western modernity. The influence of this interpretation of the late Edo period is important because the ideological label accentuates a negative perception of Japanese leaders, especially vis-à-vis their Western counterparts, to the point that the ideology of seclusion becomes what Clifford Geertz describes as a parodic paradigm: “I have a social philosophy, you have political opinions; he has an ideology.”<sup>12</sup> Japanese leaders have become the “he,” seeing the world through a rigid ideology, while their Western counterparts represent the “I” and “you,” leaders acting flexibly and reasonably within sophisticated political systems that stimulated diverse opinions and philosophies and by consequence, a more informed understanding of the outside world. In addition, it is presumed that Western nations had already emerged as the centers of global economic power and had become more rational economic actors, especially in foreign trade. By contrast, Japanese leaders are viewed as failing to perceive the course of economic advancement emerging from Western nations. For example, they did not pursue foreign trade explicitly for capital accumulation, as Western nations did, and thus missed an opportunity to move Japan’s economy toward industrialization.<sup>13</sup>

It follows that Japanese leaders were unable to institute significant changes without Western pressure. As a result, the story of late Edo foreign relations becomes one of Western nations, surging with economic and military power, dispatching envoys in an attempt to convince Japanese leaders to embrace economic rationality and consider expanding trade, especially with Western states, while adopting the tenets of international relations. Only through interaction with Western nations did Japan’s leaders move to jettison their ideology of seclusion and begin to trade with the outside world and later adopt principles of international relations. Because of the presumed overwhelming sway of ideology, the actual actors in foreign relations, such as the Satsuma and Tsushima domains, are considered less significant than the scholars and ideologues who, while influencing discourse about interactions with the outside world, were not directly involved in foreign relations as they occurred at

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12. Geertz, *An Interpretation of Cultures*, 194.

13. Hall, *Tanuma Okitsugu*, 18–20.

ground level—in the offices of Tokugawa and domain officials making decisions about coastal defense and diplomatic exchanges, or in the ports where foreign merchants were received and goods were imported and exported.

Overall this study demonstrates that because the system of foreign relations was divided among several actors—the *bakufu*, Tsushima, and Satsuma—it included multiple voices and agendas which went beyond a single and commonly held ideology of seclusion. Due in large part to this competitive political environment and because of conclusions born of an awareness of global commercial contexts, Japanese leaders made proactive decisions, especially concerning foreign trade. The logic and rationality inherent in their actions becomes clear if we consider both the global environments, and the particular agendas of the each actor, outlined in detail below.

### *Japan and Early Modern Proto-Globalization*

Throughout the Edo period, we can identify points where Tokugawa leaders developed stances in tune with global commercial contexts, many of which emerged from world historians have termed “proto-globalization.” Today we encounter daily references to globalization, which by undermining the importance of local and even national boundaries, is seen as having a pervasive influence on the contemporary human experience.<sup>14</sup> World historians have demonstrated that proto-globalization, a nascent form of today’s globalization, emerged between 1600 and 1800 with the reconfiguration of state systems, along with the growth of finance, services, and pre-industrial manufacturing in Europe, Asia, and parts of Africa. Proto-globalization also included the incorporation of North and South America into global commercial networks.<sup>15</sup> The Americas became a fountainhead of new foodstuffs, such as the potato, manioc (cassava), and maize, which were adopted throughout the globe.<sup>16</sup> The region also emerged as a produc-

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14. Scheuerman, “Globalization.”

15. Hopkins, “Globalization: an Agenda for Historians,” 6.

16. Maize, for example, was adopted in both the Venetian and Solomonic (Ethiopian) empires in the seventeenth century. See McCann, *Maize and Grace*, 59–93. For more on the flow of the potato in the early modern world, see Zuckerman, *The Potato*.

tion center for sugar, and more importantly, silver, mined in the mountains of South America and exported throughout the world. As scholars of world trade have shown, the flow of silver in early modern global trading networks illustrates the economic centers of power in the early modern world. They stress that much silver from South America, as well as from Japan, ended up in China, demonstrating that during this early globalization, China functioned as a center of the world economy. It absorbed a significant percentage of the world's silver largely because Europeans and Japanese alike used it to purchase tea, silk, porcelains, and medicines, all generally available only on the China market.<sup>17</sup>

With proto-globalization, the peoples of the Americas also found their economic lives defined by global markets instead of previously dominant local contexts. For example, Amerindians now labored in the silver mines of Potosí (in present-day Bolivia), which grew to a city of 150,000 by the 1570s. Their lives, connected to the global market, were in stark contrast to those of their ancestors just a generation before who had lived in the agrarian and largely self-contained economy of an Incan Empire that engaged in little intercourse with the outside world.<sup>18</sup>

While not as radically as Amerindians, in the sixteenth century Japanese commoners and the samurai elite alike were influenced by the new trading relationships and the concomitant cultural influences of proto-globalization. With Asian and European partners, Japanese merchants traded silver for Chinese silk, which supplied Japanese artisans crafting fine silkwares. Japanese merchants also ventured to Southeast Asia, where they established enclaves in port cities. New, thriving global trading networks brought European firearms, which samurai readily adopted, and Christianity, which achieved a foothold especially in Kyushu. The influence of European culture was also seen in new artistic trends such as the Nanban screens and paintings of the period, which depicted scenes of Iberian merchants and priests who were dubbed Nanban—"Southern Barbarians"—because they arrived in Japan from the south.

A similar process of deeper engagement with the outside world occurred simultaneously in Southeast Asia during what Anthony Reid

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17. A prominent representation of this view is found in Frank, *ReOrient*.

18. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, 78.

identifies as a “long sixteenth century” spanning from circa 1450 to 1680. Concomitant with expanded domestic and foreign trade, Southeast Asians entered an age of “globalized cosmopolitanism” during which they welcomed new religious and intellectual ideas from abroad, which were incorporated into their respective cultures and societies, notably in the performance traditions of state theater.<sup>19</sup>

Reid concludes that the increase in interaction with the outside world began to wane during the first half of the seventeenth century. Southeast Asian trading states faced serious setbacks resulting from intense competition from Portuguese merchants as well as from the VOC, which established monopoly control over the more lucrative exports. He believes that domestic strife proved even more costly. For example in Java, the “interior, rice-based regime” of Mataram quashed the influence of coastal cities, which through foreign trade had emerged as centers of a new cosmopolitan culture. Mataram later banned Javanese shipping, which the court feared might prove a threat to the king. Reid suggests that in turning away from foreign engagement, Mataram began a process that paralleled events in Japan in the 1630s. Namely he sees Mataram, and insular Southeast Asia overall, as entering an extended “reaction against globalization” during which “international trade was less rewarding, and many rulers urged their subjects not to plant pepper and cloves lest it bring them war and oppression.” Reid argues that thereafter Southeast Asian states accordingly became more self-sufficient and less dependent on foreign trade, especially by promoting “localization,” producing at home goods previously imported.<sup>20</sup>

We can also identify what equates to a “reaction against globalization” in the actions of Tokugawa leaders over the course of the seventeenth century. Beginning in the 1630s, the *bakufu* moved to reduce the cultural influences that had entered Japan during the period of generally free intercourse in the sixteenth century. Building upon the successful repression of Christianity within the realm, it cut ties with Portuguese merchants, who sought to bring their faith along with Chinese silk. In a series of edicts that Arano Yasunori and other historians have labeled

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19. Reid, “Global and Local in Southeast Asian History,” 7–11.

20. *Ibid.*, 12–13, 19.



Map 3 East and Southeast Asia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries  
 Information about points in Southeast Asia drawn from maps in Pluvier, *Historical Atlas of South-East Asia*, 30, Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Indonesia*, 90; Warren, *The Sulu Zone*, 103.

“maritime prohibitions,” Tokugawa leaders also abolished Japanese enclaves overseas, limited the size of oceangoing vessels, and prohibited Japanese from traveling abroad.<sup>21</sup>

Nonetheless there were important differences in the Tokugawa approach to foreign trade. Unlike their counterparts in Mataram, *bakufu* leaders did not initially reduce foreign trade; instead, they chose to rely on domestic partners to help redirect commerce with China through Korea and the Ryukyu Kingdom, and at Nagasaki, to trade with Chinese merchants and just the VOC instead of several European partners. It was not until the 1680s that Tokugawa leaders, concerned about the realm’s dwindling silver reserves resulting from increased trade with China, issued edicts to reduce foreign trade on a large scale. When those proved ineffective, they changed tack, first establishing more institutions to supervise trade. Tokugawa leaders subsequently implemented their own brand of “localization” by expanding domestic production of raw silk as well as ginseng and sugar, two other prominent imports. In turn, they developed substitute exports for silver: abalone, sea cucumbers, kelp, and shark fins, which Chinese used as medicines and in many regional cuisines. Overall, Japan’s reaction against globalization was swift vis-à-vis outside religious influences but more protracted in its readjustment of foreign trade. Successive Tokugawa leaders showed a willingness to further amend trade practices. In 1763, they ended silver exports through Nagasaki and two decades later created a monopoly over marine products produced throughout Japan. Nagasaki became an entrepôt for marine products, which the *bakufu* used, in a turnabout, to import silver and some gold from China.

Tokugawa leaders could shape Japanese trade in these ways because a vital China market exuded demand for specialized goods such as marine products. Kenneth Pomeranz illustrates that in household and especially luxury consumption, often viewed as important engines of growth in Western states, China matched and sometimes surpassed Western Europe until around 1800.<sup>22</sup> Japan, like other actors in East and Southeast Asian trade, structured much of its foreign trade to meet Chinese consumer demand.

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21. Arano, *Kinsei Nihon to bigashi Ajia*, 3–5, 29–33.

22. Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*, 114–65.

Via the China market, Japan also engaged with an often forgotten sector of early modern global trade, the exchange of medicinal products. C. A. Bayly notes that medicinal goods were a key commodity on global markets because “until the late eighteenth century, central physiological and agricultural doctrines of Eurasia and Africa were humoral and had been generated from an ancient dialogue between China, the Islamic World, and Greece. This put a premium on different types of medicinal plants, spices, precious metals, or precious stones.”<sup>23</sup> For example, eighteenth-century Americans used agaric, a mushroom imported from Siberia via Hamburg, as a laxative, expectorate, and as a cure for more serious ailments. A guidebook for herbal remedies published in serial form in Pennsylvania the 1760s and 1770s advised that, “For persons afflicted with falling evil [epilepsy], an agaric decoction instead of soap should be used to scrub the head.”<sup>24</sup>

Although domestic substitutes became available, Japanese consumers, like their American counterparts, sought exotic, and what they perceived as more efficacious, imported medicines. As a result, Nagasaki became an import hub for a wide array of medicinal goods primarily from China: herbs, roots, animal parts, and even fossils, used to cure everyday and serious ailments. Tokugawa leaders adeptly developed means to supervise the import of medicinal goods and to earn a slice of the considerable profits that could be gained from their sale on the domestic market.

Looking at the late eighteenth century overall, we see that Tokugawa leaders moved proactively, shaping Nagasaki into a viable entrepôt that allowed manageable and yet profitable trade with the China market. The significance of the Tokugawa approach becomes clear when we compare it with the policies pursued by the English East India Company in the same period. Because China demanded silver over all other goods, the Company was also frustrated by the loss of silver. With Britons developing a taste for tea, the Company searched for silver substitutes, first failing to sell British woolens on the Chinese market. From the 1760s, it therefore began a decades-long quest to create an

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23. Bayly, “‘Archaic’ and ‘Modern’ Globalization in the Eurasian and African Arena,” 53.

24. Weaver, *Sauer’s Herbal Cures*, 35.

entrepôt, to collect East and Southeast Asian goods such as marine products, which would serve as substitutes for silver in trade with China. The Company developed a truly effective entrepôt only with the establishment of Singapore in 1819.

With an awareness of these larger eighteenth-century contexts—the continued power of China on the global market and the Japanese trade system developed to interact with it—we can move to consider the decisions of Japanese leaders in the critical decades after 1800. Assuming that Western nations possessed superior economic power, the ideology of seclusion has been used to tidily explain the seeming Japanese stubbornness to interact with powerful Western nations who are assumed to be bringing trade goods produced from their industrializing economies and by implication, a new and viable framework of direct trade between the West and East Asia.

Certainly Britain, leading the way for other Western European nations and the United States, was building upon the industrial foundations that had emerged within its borders in the late eighteenth century. Particularly by exploiting recent inventions such as steam driven engines, Britain and other Western nations were increasing their manufacturing capabilities and by implication their economic power vis-à-vis East Asian states. Yet as Bayly points out, “it was only after about 1840, in fact, that the patchy, but now relentless shift toward industrialization began to ‘kick in’ at a global level.”<sup>25</sup> In East Asian trade, this is illustrated in the fact that for its technological prowess, Britain at last gained an upper hand on the China market and solved its silver dilemma not by exploiting its own manufactures, but by using Indian opium, especially after 1820.<sup>26</sup>

Intra-Asian trade clearly remained viable, and part of the reason for this, as Takeshi Hamashita demonstrates, was the continued vitality of the China-centered tribute system. The system provided a broad structure that allowed people, goods, money, and information to move throughout early modern East and Southeast Asia and did not simply disappear when Westerners arrived in more powerful ships in the mid-nineteenth century. Because of the sustained power of this network and

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25. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 7.

26. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, 114.

the China market overall, Hamashita notes that in the last decades of the nineteenth century, Westerners and Asians alike were not choosing between either the “old” tribute system and the “new” Western-dominated treaty system, but using aspects of both as commercial circumstances dictated. He shows instead that Western diplomats, often acting in concert with their East Asian counterparts, constructed a new treaty system within East Asia by appropriating facets of the existing tribute system.<sup>27</sup>

These Asian and global contexts help explain the decisions of Japanese leaders in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Beginning in the late 1840s, Britain, France, and the United States used their superior military technology to pressure Japan to later conclude treaties that would create new trading relationships favorable to their interests. Yet the actions of Tokugawa, Satsuma, and Tsushima leaders as well as Western merchants, suggest that despite their clear military advantage, the Western visitors did not initially bring a new and viable system of direct Japanese-Western trade. Instead, all parties initially looked to take advantage of more lucrative, established Japanese-Chinese trade ties.

It was only on the eve of the Meiji Restoration that direct Japanese-Western ties supplanted long viable economic links to the China market. At that time, Japanese leaders moved more aggressively to trade with Western merchants and states. They began to purchase cotton and woolen manufactures and advanced Western technologies, such as weapons, while developing specific products, notably silk and green tea, tailored for growing Western markets. At the same time, Japan’s larger embrace of Western ideals, including medical practices, brought a shift away from the use of accepted remedies, based particularly on Chinese medicine, and consequently decreased demand for roots, herbs, and other medicinal products from abroad. As a result by the mid 1870s, although its trade with China was still important, a significant share of Japan’s foreign trade was shifting to intercourse with Western states.

### *The Domestic Parameters of the System of Foreign Relations*

Pursuing larger agendas for the entire Japanese realm, the *bakufu* created the broader structure of Japanese foreign relations, which it ad-

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27. Hamashita, “The Interregional System in East Asia in Modern Times,” 117–28.

justed according to domestic and global contexts. Within that structure, the *bakufu* was particularly invested in receiving embassies from neighboring states and in gaining intelligence about events abroad. Through the authority of the Tokugawa house, it also controlled relations with the VOC factory and Chinese merchants at Nagasaki. In the Nagasaki trade, the *bakufu* consistently focused on protecting the populace of Nagasaki, which owed its economic livelihood to foreign trade flowing through the port, and in assuring, for the greater social good, imports of medicinal products. Although revenue garnered from commercial intercourse at Nagasaki was prized by the Tokugawa leaders, it was not the primary and overriding motivation to supporting foreign trade at the port throughout much of the Edo period. One of the goals of this study is to present the importance of these broad agendas, building upon the rich statistical analysis of Edo-period trade offered by Japanese scholars.<sup>28</sup>

By contrast, Satsuma and Tsushima represent a local perspective on Japan's interface with the outside world. Satsuma maintained relations with the Ryukyu Kingdom and Tsushima with Korea based upon relationships developed largely independent of Tokugawa authority. Domain leaders therefore most immediately focused on how their respective foreign ties related to their domains, not the Japanese state overall, a stance evident in their commercial, diplomatic, and defensive postures. Matsumae, a domain located on the southern part of the island of Hokkaido, also presents a local perspective as an additional "portal" in relations with the outside world.<sup>29</sup> The ruling clan of the domain, also known as the Matsumae, monopolized relations with the various Ainu tribes that populated what was then called Ezo, a broad territory encompassing Hokkaido, Sakhalin, and the Kuril Islands. Unlike Satsuma and Tsushima, however, the Matsumae gained their monopoly thanks to the support of leaders of central authorities: first Toyotomi Hideyoshi and later Tokugawa Ieyasu.<sup>30</sup> As it focuses mainly

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28. For example, Nakamura Tadashi, *Kinsei Nagasaki boeki-shi no kenkyū*.

29. Tsuruta explores the idea of Matsumae, Ryukyu/Satsuma, Tsushima, and Nagasaki as "gates" of interaction with the outside world in the Edo period in "The Establishment and Characteristics of the 'Tsushima Gate,'" 30–32.

30. Matsumae chōshi henshūshitsu, ed., *Matsumae chōshi, tsūsetsuben*, vol. I, 349–55.

on the period after 1800, this study, while not denying the importance of events within Matsumae, does not explore them in depth. Rather it considers how Matsumae's commercial activities intersected with the respective agendas and activities of the *bakufu* and especially Satsuma, and Tsushima, which enjoyed comparatively more influence within the larger structure of Japanese foreign relations, particularly after 1800.<sup>31</sup>

Satsuma and Tsushima, looking to fulfill their local goals and the *bakufu*, seeking to implement agendas pursuant to the overall governance of Japan, together facilitated foreign relations through an interdependent system of trade, diplomacy, and defense. In trade, the domains enjoyed autonomy—for example, in the acquisition of goods, transport, and warehousing. As the *bakufu* controlled the domestic market, where imported goods were sold, the domains had to work within Tokugawa guidelines to achieve profits from trade. A reverse situation existed in diplomacy. *Bakufu* leaders wanted Korean and Ryukyuan embassies to visit Edo, a goal they could not accomplish without the cooperation of Satsuma and Tsushima, which facilitated the visits through their independent relations with Korea and Ryukyu. Although explored in less detail in this study, a similar interdependent relationship existed between Satsuma and Ryukyu. While Satsuma held a dominant position, Ryukyu's independent ties with China, maintained through a tribute relationship, gave the kingdom a fair level of autonomy in relations with Satsuma.

The interdependent nature of foreign trade and diplomacy, combined with Japan's specific interfaces with global contexts, created a system of foreign relations in which agency, the ability to exercise discretionary authority in decisions regarding trade, diplomacy, and defense, moved fluidly between the *bakufu* and the Satsuma and Tsushima domains. This conception of agency emerges partly from a principal/agent ideal, in which a principal authority, by virtue of an institutional position, bestows discretionary power on an agent, which acts

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31. For excellent and comprehensive examinations of Matsumae-Ainu relations and Matsumae's trade with the Japanese market, see Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands* and Howell, *Capitalism From Within*. For a look at Ainu identity and its place in the early modern Japanese state see Howell, *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Japan*, 110–30.

on that authority's behalf. In the Edo-period feudal polity, the Tokugawa regime enjoyed a dominant position over the two domains, and therefore, at certain times, acted as the principal authority in foreign relations, directing domain leaders to execute Tokugawa policy in trade, defense, and diplomacy. Because of the domains' respective independent contacts, Satsuma and Tsushima always held some amount of discretionary authority in the three areas, although the level and ability to exercise that authority rose and fell vis-à-vis the *bakufu* over the course of the Edo period.

Chapter 1 offers an outline of Satsuma's and Tsushima's positions, the domains' interdependent relationships with the *bakufu*, as well as overviews of the larger Edo-period polity and foreign relations in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Chapter 2 examines primarily the *bakufu*, which after 1640 aggressively implemented measures that together formed a reaction against globalization. In pushing an agenda of limiting some effects of globalization, the *bakufu* bestowed commercial authority on Satsuma and Tsushima by making the domains conduits in the silk-for-silver trade with China. Once gained, Satsuma and Tsushima battled with the *bakufu* to preserve and even enhance their agency, a process through which domain officials developed political and rhetorical strategies that their successors would employ over the next century. Chapter 3 demonstrates that beginning in 1764, the *bakufu*, reasserted its authority in foreign relations and moving to redefine Japan's interface with global contexts, initiated what can be viewed as a period of "guarded engagement." Focusing on commerce over diplomacy, the Tokugawa regime kept Japan connected to the outside world but within the boundaries of a system that allowed trade to thrive without the loss of precious silver. In this new system, the *bakufu* became the primary domestic force in foreign trade, and as a result, Satsuma's and Tsushima's agency, particularly in trade, reached a nadir by 1800.

The period between 1800 and 1868 forms the heart of this book because during these decades, Japan's engagement with global contexts merged with the particular, interdependent aspects of the system of foreign relations to create an environment whereby Satsuma gained commercial agency and Tsushima assumed greater defensive agency. Satsuma and Tsushima leaders were consequently in a position to por-

tray their local concerns as important for the entire Japanese realm. Satsuma, because of commercial goals, and Tsushima, due to defensive concerns, pressured the *bakufu* to make revisions in the overall system of foreign relations. For their part, Tokugawa leaders approached foreign relations with greater deference to the desires of the two domains. Together, the domains and the *bakufu* were integrally involved in a series of events that eventually led to the full adoption of international relations after 1868.

Chapter 4 examines the ways in which, after 1800, the overall growth of the Japanese economy, and subsequent increase in consumer demand, especially for foreign medicinal products, created new opportunities in domestic and foreign trade. Satsuma took particular advantage of this new atmosphere, emerging as a veritable trade competitor with the *bakufu*. In so doing, it temporarily regained commercial agency in the system of foreign relations. By contrast, Tsushima struggled, finding limited options to assuage the loss of valuable trade with China via Korea. As explored in Chapter 5, that contrast became more pronounced as Tsushima directly and Satsuma through its control of Ryukyu undertook much of Japan's ground-level engagement with the Western warships, merchantmen, and whalers that increasingly visited Japanese shores after 1840. Satsuma leaders began to chart a more independent commercial and defensive course, while their counterparts in Tsushima emphasized defense and increasingly appealed for Tokugawa financial assistance to help defend their domain.

Chapter 6 considers how Satsuma and Tokugawa officials negotiated the transition from a focus on established Japanese-Chinese commercial links to more direct trade with Westerners during the first few years after Western merchants were allowed to live and trade at three Japanese ports in 1859. It shows on one hand that Tokugawa leaders, still in many ways working under the structure of guarded engagement, chose a conservative course of protecting established trade links with China in part to assure the welfare of the Nagasaki merchant community. Free from such feudal obligations, Satsuma leaders, on the other hand, operated with greater range, finding effective ways to plug Westerners into their domain's thriving trade network.

Because their domain was less directly involved in the larger trade transition, the Tsushima leadership focused on securing the defense of

their island, events chronicled in Chapter 7. Desperate for assistance, they attempted to cede their agency in trade, diplomacy, defense—and indeed their rule over the domain—to the *bakufu*. Despite the Tokugawa refusal of those requests, Tsushima leaders continued to lobby not only the *bakufu* but also the imperial court, which was then gaining domestic political prominence, to take greater control and act on behalf of all of Japan in relations with Korea.

The Conclusion explains how after 1868 Satsuma officials, with little prodding from Meiji leaders, and Tsushima officials, through their continued lobbying efforts, actively assisted in a process that allowed the central government to assume, by 1876, full control over all of Japan's foreign relations. The two domains accepted greater control by the central authority not because of an ideological conversion brought by engagement with Western nations but rather because such a step was in accord with initiatives for reform in the existing system of foreign relations present in both Satsuma and Tsushima before the Meiji Restoration. It also outlines the steps taken by Meiji leaders to expand direct trade ties with Western nations, moving beyond the Japanese-Chinese trade ties that had proved more lucrative only a decade before.

Overall, by focusing on central and local perspectives with an eye on the global background, this book demonstrates that Japanese leaders accepted the new global construct of international relations and expanded foreign trade with Western states not merely by interacting with Western nations or because of a desire to imitate their power. Because embracing the Western modernity inherent in international relations was not in itself the overriding goal, the leaders of Satsuma, Tsushima, and the early Meiji government were not concerned with discerning whether a practice was traditional or modern, East Asian or Western. They were not choosing between the past and the future but deciding, based upon their particular agendas, on a course of action that would serve their immediate interests. Their engagement in an improvised and often ad hoc process consequently made Japan's path to adopting new trading structures and international relations evolutionary and not revolutionary—a process shaped, as it had been during the Edo period, by commercial and defensive concerns emerging from interactions with fluid global contexts.