

estimate made while he was there to exchange the cobangs he had brought from Japan.

Alcock was not totally convinced of this point, but he felt that, in any event, he should entrust this one problem to Harris. When he met Harris again, Alcock strongly urged him to advise the Japanese on the currency question.

He also sent a reply to the Bakufu, saying that he had no intention of discussing anything concerning gold.

Alcock was unable to explain the substantial difference between the price of cash in Japan and China; in his reply of August 9, he decided to ignore it.

The letter that had been sent to Alcock was also sent to Harris.

As far as Harris was concerned, the currency question had been settled. As long as the Japanese observed the weight-for-weight exchange provision in the treaty, he was satisfied.

But he did have to respond to two points in the Bakufu's letter.

One concerned the difference between the value of cash in China and Japan. This was something that Harris, like Alcock, could not understand. Harris wrote: "Iron is never used as money in civilized nations. Copper is used as money, but only in coins that have a lower value than silver coins." It so happened Japan used iron coins that had the same value as its copper coins.

The second point concerned measures for ending cobang profiteering. Alcock had prodded Harris to advise the Japanese government on this matter.

Harris offered the following advice: "The world ratio of gold to silver is one to sixteen. In Japan the ratio is one to five. This difference has led to the speculative buying of cobangs. I therefore urge you to issue a new cobang with a value one-third that of the present one and to make this new cobang equivalent to four ichibus. In other words, three of the new cobangs should be worth one of the present ones. If this is done, speculative buying of cobangs will cease."

A reply arrived from the Japanese. As always, Harris showed

the English translation to Alcock. "Here it is," he said wearily. Alcock did not want to look at it but, thinking that he may as well have a glance, began to read:

To increase the number of its silver coins, Japan has decreased the amount of silver in each coin, engraved them with the government stamp as proof of their worth, and given them the same value as when they contained the full amount of silver. These coins are the ichibu. We have used the silver saved by decreasing the amount of silver in the ichibu to mint the nishu, in which the amount of silver has been increased. We have thus returned to the old monetary system. This, we believe, is a perfectly correct method.

This was nothing but another repetition of the old specious claim that the nishu was a sound currency.

The letter also argued that making three new cobangs worth one present one, which Harris had suggested, and minting nishu were essentially the same. It offered the following reason for not accepting Harris's suggestion: "Japan is a gold standard country and the gold cobang is its key currency. If we triple the value of the cobang, prices would also triple. Therefore, we cannot increase the price of gold."

Gold was gold and silver was silver. It was totally impossible for gold to become the key currency of silver and for silver to become the auxiliary coin of gold. Alcock finished reading and looked up.

"How do you like it?" asked Harris. "The low cunning of the Japanese flows forth like a gushing spring—there is no end to it."

Alcock nodded in silent agreement, his stomach churning.

3

The Gold Rush

AUGUST–NOVEMBER, 1859

Alcock left his meeting with Harris in a quandary. Because Harris was his senior in age, rank, and experience in Japan, Alcock had naturally deferred to his assessments of the currency question and other matters. But now he had begun to suspect the man's motives. When Alcock learned that the cobang, Japan's gold currency, was valued in Japan at a five-to-one ratio to silver, whereas the international ratio was sixteen to one, Alcock asked himself again how long Harris had known this and why he had failed to inform the Japanese of their error. After all, it was part of his duty as a diplomat to inform and instruct, where need be. Harris's thin excuses simply did not hold water. To inform the Japanese would be to reduce the profits to be made in cobang speculation by a third. Harris could only be—shamefully—profiteering in cobangs himself, greedily draining the gold stores of a nation to which he was pledged in friendship, or at least to mutual, as opposed to one-sided, advantage.

Still, I haven't any proof, he said to himself as he returned home for the evening. Surrounded by wolves, he thought, and not a ship in port of our own. And yet Harris was the most knowledgeable ally Alcock had. He depended on Harris, and they must present a united front.

The exchange of explanatory letters among Alcock, Harris, and the Bakufu's administrators ended by settling nothing. The Japanese merely reiterated their position. Harris was right about one thing, Alcock thought grimly. The Japanese position was nothing but another example of Oriental guile.

Alarmed by the rush on cobangs by foreign merchants, the Yokohama Government Exchange House stopped changing ichibus after only ten days. The date was August 1, exactly one month after the opening of the ports.

An exception, however, was made for ships' officers and crews, which allowed them to change fifty dollars a month per ship so that they could purchase everyday necessities.

A total of twelve merchantmen had entered the port of Yokohama. Three had left, leaving nine. Each of these nine ships was thus permitted to change fifty dollars a month.

The same chain of events—the withdrawal of the nishu, the decision to allow free exchange of the ichibu, and the sudden imposition of exchange limits—also occurred in Nagasaki.

Outraged by the Japanese government's action, the foreign merchants again complained to their vice-consuls. The vice-consuls also found the situation unacceptable; they began to register daily protests with Bakufu officials. Surprisingly, the Japanese government quickly caved in. On August 10, it announced that it would “exchange currency according to the circumstances.”

Initially, the amount the Bakufu would change “according to the circumstances” was only one or two dollars per person. This was a far cry from the amounts the merchants were requesting. Beleaguered by the merchants' constant demands, Government Exchange House officials gradually began to change larger

amounts: two, five; ten, and as much as thirty dollars for a privileged few on rare occasions. These arbitrary exchange limits inevitably invited confusion.

On the morning of August 22 two officials at the Government Exchange House were sitting in front of a box of ichibus and drinking tea, as was their unvarying custom at the beginning of the working day. Although limits had been placed on the exchange requests of foreign merchants, the officials had the box of ichibus ready so that they could supply them.

That day their first visitor was British Vice-Consul Vyse, who came striding in unannounced, accompanied by his interpreter. Vyse immediately began shouting at them, as though he were scolding servants.

"Yesterday I gave my interpreter five hundred dollars to be exchanged for ichibus, but you refused to do it. May I ask why?"

Vyse's interpreter had come in the day before carrying five hundred dollars, which weighed nearly 31 pounds—quite a heavy load—and demanded to exchange them for their equivalent weight in ichibus. "We have to change dollars for other people as well," one official answered. "If you would like to change five hundred dollars, please submit a letter explaining the reason."

"You ask that I submit a letter, but I have already sent one concerning this matter to the governor," said Vyse.

The letter that Vyse had sent the governor of foreign affairs actually had nothing to do with the five hundred dollars. Early that morning the two governors had boarded a small boat flying the black-and-white striped flag of Bakufu patrol boats and headed toward Kanagawa. Knowing that they would not be there to contradict him, Vyse felt safe in making his demands.

"As a high-ranking official, I require five hundred dollars' worth of ichibus. If it pleases you gentlemen, I would like to exchange that amount of dollars today," said Vyse.

The British home government had given detailed instructions to not only Alcock but also the consuls in Nagasaki and Hakone and the vice-consul and interpreters in Kanagawa. These instructions stated that they were strictly forbidden from

engaging in trade on their own account or serving as company agents, either directly or indirectly.

At this time no distinction was made between diplomats and merchants. Nearly all European diplomats in the Far East conducted business on the side at their posts of duty. This mixing of business and diplomacy strongly influenced their conduct of public affairs and gave rise to many abuses. England, in line with its friendly policy toward Japan, forbade its diplomats from engaging in trade. In compensation, the British government increased their annual salaries slightly. Many were attracted by these relatively high salaries.

Diplomats were also instructed to avoid disputes with the Japanese people and officials at all costs and to give them no cause to commit aggression.

In addition, they were told to refrain from actions aimed at evading Japanese customs duties or reducing customs revenue; British diplomats in China were at that time doing all of these things openly—to the severe detriment of British-Chinese relations.

Vyse, for example, had been instructed to argue as little as possible with Japanese officials—the reverse of his conduct that day. Also, he was forbidden to engage in trade on his own account, either directly or indirectly, but how else was one to regard the purchase of cobangs? But it was also a temptation almost too strong to resist—and Vyse was not a strong man. So on August 22 he demanded that he be allowed to change five hundred dollars.

The official who dealt with Vyse was Yamashita Kanemon, whose rank as *shirabeyaku*—inspector—made him equivalent to a commissioned military officer. Yamashita passed Vyse's request to his superior, who gave him the following sensible instructions: "Vyse is not a merchant and has a definite need for the money, so there is no harm in changing it for him."

Yamashita therefore told Vyse that he would change the five hundred dollars.

Vyse put his bag on the table, opened it, and raked out the

coins. Yamashita counted them—there were nearly seven hundred dollars—and raised his head:

"There is more than five hundred here. Please take back the extra dollars."

"Why not change them, now that you've got the chance?"

"This is not the amount you mentioned."

"I know, but would you mind holding the remainder for me?"

Vyse's plan was to leave the extra coins and receive ichibus for them later.

Nine English merchants were watching this scene intently. Hearing that their vice-consul had left for the Government Exchange House to change a large amount of dollars, they had scurried after him and managed to witness the entire exchange.

"If the vice-consul can change five hundred dollars, we should be allowed to change one hundred dollars each," interjected J. S. Barber who, together with William Keswick, represented Jardine, Matheson & Company in Yokohama.

"Yes," said Vyse, embarrassed that he had been singled out for preferential treatment, "let them change one hundred dollars."

Tanaka Konoshin, who was one rank lower than Yamashita and in charge of accounting and general affairs, came forward to take care of the merchants' requests. He had never changed money for nine foreigners at once, let alone in amounts of one hundred dollars each. Tanaka and Yamashita consulted with another official.

They decided that, because the vice-consul had interceded on the merchants' behalf, they would permit all nine to change fifty dollars each.

"We will allow the merchants to change fifty dollars," Tanaka announced.

Although the firm of Jardine, Matheson had rather recently acquired a reputation for civilized behavior, twenty years before its employees had been known for their rough-and-ready ways—

and unscrupulous business tactics. When it came to cobang profiteering, Barber was a throwback—and didn't care who knew it.

"If you allow the acting consul five hundred dollars, why do we get only fifty?" he asked, stepping toward Tanaka.

"That is what we have decided," said Tanaka flatly.

"Under whose authority do you refuse our request? What's your name?" Barber asked insultingly. Stepping forward, he made as though to grab Tanaka by the front of his coat.

"Tanaka Konoshin," replied Tanaka reluctantly. Before Barber could touch him, he rose to his knees and grabbed the hilt of his sword.

"Stand back, you!" he shouted.

When European diplomats had first come to China and Siam, they had not concerned themselves very much with the ranks of their negotiating partners. Occasionally, they negotiated with low-ranking officials who treated them with contempt. As a result, the Treaty of Nanking expressly stated the right of British diplomats to directly communicate on a basis of equality with Chinese officials of similar rank.

Diplomats had also experienced this contempt in Japan. When the diplomatic corps was in Yokohama, Alcock, representing the others, had asked the Japanese to regard foreign ministers as equal to ministers of foreign affairs, and foreign consuls and vice-consuls as equal to governors of foreign affairs.

The Japanese immediately acquiesced; they, as well as Harris and Alcock, had desired such a clarification.

Japanese society was layered into strictly graded ranks; the Japanese thus found it difficult to deal with someone of undefined standing. It was only natural that they would need to establish the relative status of foreign diplomats vis-à-vis their own officials. When they opened the ports, they assumed that the status of foreign merchants was as low as their own. Bakufu officials were samurai and ranked far above mere merchants. Accordingly, when they dealt with foreign merchants, these officials regarded them as they did their Japanese counterparts.

They thought of them as *shirasu*: men who groveled on the *shirasu*—the white gravel spread in front of the veranda of a typical samurai home.

"Where are you from? What business brings you here?" the samurai would disdainfully inquire of a petitioning merchant, making him kneel before him on the gravel.

That image of the humble merchant bowing to the proud samurai—repeated over and over—was firmly fixed in the samurai mind. But when the ports opened, the foreign merchants, as well as the ships' captains and crew, had come together with the vice-consuls, who were said to hold the same rank as a Japanese governor of foreign affairs. It made no sense.

"Hey, you! Merchants can't enter here. Get back on the *shirasu*!" the officials would shout.

But the foreigners laughed and ignored them. Even the big dogs they brought, which the Japanese called *kame*—mistaking the command "come on" for their name—paid no attention to rank. Thrusting forth muzzles that seemed to be as big as their bodies, they were completely undisciplined. The patience of the Bakufu officials was wearing dangerously thin.

Now this Barber, a mere merchant, had taken this same high-handed attitude toward one of those officials—Tanaka. No matter how slight and spindly his appearance, Tanaka was still a samurai. The blood rushed to his head. He gripped the hilt of his sword.

"Enough of your impudence. Stand back!"

Yamashita struck the same threatening pose. Realizing that they would not hesitate to cut him down, Barber retreated. A silence fell over the room. But Tanaka had a wife and child in Edo. If he drew his sword—even by mistake—and caused an incident, he would have to commit *seppuku*—ritual suicide. What would happen to his family then? Tanaka relaxed his grip.

"In any case, we'd like to leave our dollars with you," said Vyse. One of the merchants picked up the wooden box, which had fallen over. Vyse put in seven hundred dollars, and the merchants, one hundred apiece. They then nailed the lid shut and leaving the box with the officials, departed.

Of course, they intended to eventually receive ichibus for the dollars they had left behind.



Alcock soon heard from Vyse about the incident.

"It never would have happened if the Japanese had not imposed limits on the exchange of ichibus," said Vyse, not mentioning the real cause: his request to change five hundred dollars so that he could speculate in cobangs. Alcock, however, believed him completely. After hearing Vyse's account of this incident, Alcock repeatedly demanded that Tanaka and Yamashita be punished.

To Alcock, the recent behavior of the Japanese government—the withdrawal of the *nishu*, the decision to allow the free exchange of ichibus, the sudden imposition of exchange limits soon after—showed maddening inconstancy.

Even though it's been two months since the opening of the ports, trade has made absolutely no progress, he thought.

Alcock had told the Japanese he had no intention of discussing the currency question. He had left that to Harris, as the senior diplomat. Recently Harris had told him that the Japanese government was deliberately delaying his audience with the Tycoon.

Harris's manner toward me has cooled, thought Alcock. The man is putting me off with polite phrases and taking no action at all on the currency question.

Because Alcock had said he had no intention of discussing the currency question with the Japanese, he felt it was up to Harris to do something. The Japanese, of course, wanted to maintain the status quo. Just when Alcock's anger was about to boil over, along came the report from Vyse. Alcock immediately left for the American legation to prod Harris into action.

After Alcock's visit—and polite scolding—Harris paid a call on Manabe Akikatsu, the Prince of Sabae and a minister of foreign affairs, on August 27, five days after Vyse's attempt to change dollars at Yokohama.

This was Harris's second visit to Manabe at his official residence since coming to Edo. He had last seen him at their meeting about a month ago.

There was one other minister of foreign affairs—the newly appointed Wakisaka Yasuori, the Prince of Tatsuno. This was Harris's first meeting with Wakisaka. Today both Manabe and Wakisaka had come to greet Harris.

Harris's first impulse was to protest his treatment by the Japanese. He began speaking about the currency question, as he had been asked to by Alcock, but his thoughts soon began to drift in another direction.

"Ever since coming to Edo, I have experienced a great deal of ill feeling directed toward me. My recent promotion to the rank of minister by the President of the United States—the appointment, in other words, of a minister to Japan instead of a consul general—should be regarded as an expression of respect for the Tycoon. Since my appointment, however, no one has come to congratulate me on my safe arrival at my new post or invited me to celebrate my promotion. The only Japanese officials to come to the legation have been low in rank. Although two months have already passed, I have yet to meet with any high-ranking officials. Instead, I have been treated like a cipher—the lowest of the low."

Harris had negotiated the treaty with Hotta Masayoshi, the Prince of Sakura, who was then serving as prime minister and minister of foreign affairs. Hotta was the most progressive Japanese of his generation. If Harris had wanted, he could have easily visited Hotta at the residences of high officials anytime he wished.

But around the time the commercial treaty was signed, a change of government occurred and Hotta was deposed. In his place, Ii Naosuke, the Prince of Hikone, an arch-conservative whose views were diametrically opposed to Hotta's, became the de facto prime minister.

Harris was dimly aware of this political struggle but did not know the details. And no one was willing to tell him. The Japanese kept their dealings with foreign countries separate

from domestic political quarrels. Harris had come to Japan believing that there was no difference between progressive and conservative factions in their attitude toward foreigners.

Harris, a bachelor, was a sociable man. As a minister, the highest diplomatic rank, Harris had come to Edo expecting to enjoy the society of Japanese nobles, high-ranking government officials, and their families. But a conservative like Ii would never consider social intercourse with foreigners. Because Harris had come to Edo of his own free will, Ii did not find it necessary to send an official to congratulate him on his arrival at his post. Harris, however, had been wounded by this treatment, and his conversation naturally turned in that direction.

Hotta had been an exception. Most Japanese felt that not only Harris and Alcock but all foreigners were unwanted guests. Moreover, western-style social functions were unknown to them. In any event, they could not imagine socializing with someone like Harris.

Manabe wondered what Harris was trying to say—his complaints made no sense at all. When Harris paused, Manabe brought the discussion back to firmer ground: "About the currency problem you mentioned earlier . . ."

Now it was Harris's turn to be confused: after Manabe's opening remarks, he had no idea what the man was talking about.

Ministers of foreign affairs were appointed from the Roju—the five or six members of the council of state. The Roju were midlevel *daimyos*, or feudal lords, chosen from a small number of select families. The pool of qualified candidates was thus small as well. The capable Hotta had been a rare exception: nearly all the other Roju were merely putting in time, with no innate talent for their work. Manabe was typical. He had no intention of giving Harris a straightforward answer; his only thought was evasion.

"We *daimyo* are not used to dealing with money. We have ordered the official in charge to handle this matter so that there will be no further misunderstanding. We have also asked that official to attend this meeting today."

Harris abruptly broke in, saying, "What's the point of having the official in charge be present today? The currency question has already been dealt with in the treaty. There is no reason to involve the official in charge."

When Hotta had been prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, the Bakufu had appointed many capable bureaucrats and made the most of their talents. These officials opposed Ii's appearance on the same political stage. When Ii took power, he purged them and installed instead the current crowd of incompetents.

One of the governors of foreign affairs was Mizuno Tadanori, the Prince of Chikugo. Mizuno had been demoted for criticizing Hotta's foreign policy as being too radical. This, as it turned out, had been a lucky stroke for him: he was later rehabilitated by Ii and made a governor of foreign affairs. Mizuno, rather than the two incompetent ministers of foreign affairs, was the one who was really in charge of foreign diplomacy.

Mizuno dealt with all diplomatic problems, including the most pressing: currency. The minting and circulation of the nishu had been Mizuno's work. In the name of the ministers of foreign affairs, he had also handled the correspondence with Harris and Alcock concerning the currency question.

Although he had said that the official in charge would be present at the meeting, Manabe suddenly remembered that Mizuno was in Yokohama, not Edo. There was no one else present who could negotiate the currency question with Harris. Manabe tried to wriggle out of his predicament by saying, "Discussing this matter would take a long time, so we would like to put our proposal in a letter. We Japanese are still not used to seeing dollars in circulation, so some inconvenience is unavoidable. But as we become accustomed to them, the present barriers to trade will surely disappear. The government will provide various kinds of guidance to hasten that process."

Article Five, which stated that currency could be exchanged weight for weight, contained the following proviso: "As some time will elapse before the Japanese will be acquainted with the

value of foreign coin, the Japanese government will, for the period of one year after the opening of the harbor, furnish the Americans with Japanese coins, equal weights being given and no discount taken for recoinage."

This could be taken to mean that when the Japanese became acquainted with foreign currency, they would no longer have to change it.

Before leaving for Yokohama, Mizuno had said that Japanese officials, using this proviso as a pretext, could refuse to change money for foreign merchants. This is what Manabe meant by "provide various kinds of guidance."

Harris, however, loudly insisted that limiting the exchange of dollars was a violation of the treaty. Once again, Manabe retreated in confusion, saying, "As I mentioned earlier, we Japanese *daimyo* are not used to handling money. Therefore, I will order the official in charge to conduct an investigation and when it is completed, send you our proposal in a letter."

Harris, who had turned away from Manabe in disgust, spun around sharply. "I have been inquiring about this matter for some time now, but all you can do is repeat '*daimyo, daimyo,*' like a parrot. I don't know how high-ranking a *daimyo* is supposed to be, but I would expect that, since coming here, you have had time to become acquainted with the gist of the treaty. Or perhaps you have not. And yet you can still perform your duties as minister of foreign affairs? I envy you. It must be splendid to remain ignorant and still retain one's post."

Manabe bitterly resented Harris's sarcasms, a seriously insulting form of address to Japanese ears. His subordinates in the foreign office ground their teeth in embarrassment as they heard Harris's words.

"I am a *daimyo*. I don't know anything" soon became a catchphrase among the lower-ranking officials in the Foreign Affairs Office.



Manabe had repeatedly referred to "the official in charge." As he listened to Manabe's explanation, Harris understood that this

“official in charge” had to be the Prince of Chikugo and the governor of foreign affairs: Mizuno. He also realized that Mizuno was the mastermind behind the Japanese government’s currency policy.

About one month previously Harris had visited Manabe at his official residence. In his conversation with Harris, Manabe had claimed that the nishu was a legitimate currency. Harris was now convinced that Mizuno was Manabe’s puppeteer. He had told him what to say, from beginning to end. Now that foreigners were no longer fooled by the Bakufu’s scheme to triple the price of goods, Mizuno had gone to Yokohama to take personal command of the situation and halt the exchange of ichibus.

Mizuno was still in Yokohama and had not been present at Harris’s second meeting with Manabe. Manabe had repeatedly said the official in charge would attend, but not one of the governors of foreign affairs seated behind him had given him a word of support. The mastermind had to be the Prince of Chikugo.

Harris told Alcock his conclusion that the Prince of Chikugo must be the power behind the throne at the Foreign Affairs Office.

Alcock had met Mizuno once, at the ceremony to exchange ratifications. He remembered him as having doubled-lidded eyes and a defiant look, like an unruly boy in a man’s body. And now Harris was saying that this man was directing the Bakufu’s currency policy.

Though Alcock did not know how much power Mizuno wielded in the government or how he had pushed himself to the forefront, he could recall certain incidents that supported Harris’s description of the man as a “mastermind.” As Harris told his story, Alcock found himself agreeing with one part after another. Although Mizuno had impressed him as a charming fellow, Alcock now saw that his charm was a cover for slyness and trickery.

How can we eliminate this man, Alcock wondered. How can we have him dismissed? Now Alcock had another, highly vexing diplomatic problem to handle. Furthermore, Vyse and his mer-

chant friends had caused an uproar over their demand to change dollars for ichibus. Based on Vyse’s slanted version of the incident, Alcock began to press for the dismissal of not only Tanaka and Yamashita but Mizuno and another governor of foreign affairs, who were responsible for supervising their subordinates at the government customhouse, although he did not have a strong case against the latter two. Just then, however, an incident occurred in Yokohama that made Alcock’s demand for the Prince of Chikugo’s dismissal seem more reasonable.



Wars cost money. When the Arrow War broke out, the British public had violently opposed dispatching warships, partly because of the cost. England and the United States both had small governments, with budgets small enough to be comprehensible to ordinary people; they had not yet grown to unimaginable proportions. Unlike today, the general public was extremely sensitive to how those budgets were spent.

Overcoming public opposition, the British government had appropriated great sums of money, dispatched warships, and finally bullied China into signing the Treaty of Tientsin.

At the same time, the Russian commander in Siberia, Count Nikolai Nikolaevich Muraviyov, had obtained an enormous tract of territory in Manchuria from China through the Treaty of Aigun. Russia was then pursuing a policy of national expansion. From the standpoint of national benefit, the achievement of Muraviyov, whose only aim had been to obtain land, was much more important than that of Eufimy Puchachin, who had negotiated the treaties of Tientsin and Edo. These treaties, rooted as they were in the philosophy of free trade, meant little to Russia, which had little interest in foreign trade.

Commanding a squadron of seven warships, Muraviyov had sailed into Yokohama the week before Vyse and his friends had caused an incident by attempting to buy large sums of ichibus. Muraviyov had come to Japan to negotiate the Japanese-Russian boundary on Sakhalin Island. After stopping briefly in Yokohama, he had proceeded to Edo with four warships. Ten days

later, on August 25, a total of six Russian warships—three that Muraviyov had left behind and three that had arrived later—were anchored in Yokohama harbor.

At nine o'clock on the evening of that day, three Russians who had come ashore to purchase supplies—an officer, a sailor, and a steward—were suddenly attacked on their way back to the ship, near the temporary lodgings for foreigners next to the customhouse. Twenty Americans—members of an exploration and survey expedition who had lost their ship in a typhoon—were staying in the lodgings. The assassins' real target might well have been the Americans. If so, the Russians were simply unlucky.

The steward was the first to be attacked but found refuge in a vegetable store, where he had just finished shopping. The officer and sailor, however, were caught and cut down. Many foreigners would later be murdered by Japanese in Yokohama, Edo, and the resort town of Kamakura. This was the first of such incidents.

On receiving word of the murders, the three vice-consuls in Kanagawa boarded a small boat and hurried to Yokohama, guided by the faint lights on shore. At the customhouse they found a bonfire burning and, nearby, the two bodies laid out on the ground. The consuls brought their paper lanterns closer to better view the wounds. Both bodies had been hacked mercilessly.

The sight was so ghastly that Vyse's voice wavered uncontrollably as he called for someone to get the *bugyo*—the governor of foreign affairs. A Japanese official who happened to be present informed him that the *bugyo* never came to the customhouse.

"What?" shouted Vyse, now enraged. "Go find him right now!" He had expected the *bugyo* to come running.

In the northern section of Yokohama there was a small hill overlooking a large cove. On top of the hill was the Kanagawa *bugyo's*, or magistrate's, office. The governors of foreign affairs also served as Kanagawa *bugyo* and stayed at the Kanagawa

bugyo's office while in Yokohama. One of those *bugyo*, the "mastermind" Mizuno, was at the Kanagawa *bugyo's* office that night.

A customhouse official, bearing the request of the three vice-consuls that the *bugyo* come right away, hurried off to the Kanagawa *bugyo's* office. After a short while, he returned with a message from Mizuno: "He said to inform the official in charge and have him deal with the matter."

All three vice-consuls voiced their anger at this reply, but to no avail.

The criminals had vanished into thin air, leaving no definite clues. Foreigners in Yokohama, including the consuls, claimed the initial investigation had been bungled by the apparently unconcerned *bugyo*. They harshly criticized Mizuno for not rushing to the scene.

"Maybe the *bugyo* himself was in on it," they said. Their anger was further fueled by Mizuno's continued restrictions on the exchange of *ichibus*. They directed a steady stream of abuse at the *bugyo* and sent an official letter to Edo detailing their complaints.

Alcock had been waiting for something like this. Using negligence in the murder investigation as a reason, he could now openly demand Mizuno's resignation. He asked Harris to join him and tried to persuade Muraviyov as well. Encouraged by Alcock, Muraviyov also called for Mizuno's ouster.



Until now Manabe had left the currency question completely in Mizuno's hands. Just as he had told Harris, he had never dealt with filthy lucre—such matters really were beneath a *daimyo* like himself. He had also never wondered whether what Mizuno was telling him was wrong or right. He had concluded that if Mizuno, an experienced foreign service officer, had said so, then that was good enough for him.

Mizuno's apparent tricks, such as his attempt to triple prices for foreigners, had caused the foreign representatives to label Manabe a charlatan and a crook. When Harris had called on Manabe the second time, he had not only rebuked him but

mocked him ("I don't know how high ranking a *daimyo* is supposed to be . . .") in front of the governors of foreign affairs and other lower-ranking officials.

Lying its way out of tight spots had been the Bakufu's preferred method of conducting foreign affairs ever since the arrival of Perry, as Manabe well knew. He had often used it himself in his battles with foreign representatives. Manabe again reflected on Mizuno's approach to the currency question. He realized that Mizuno would not hesitate to lie to the foreigners, if he thought it would help him out of a predicament.

If Manabe was right—if Mizuno's lies were the cause of his own current troubles—why did he have to be singled out for ridicule, when he was just trying to protect his subordinate?

When Manabe had met Harris for the second time, he had sidestepped the American minister's pesky questions by saying that, because Japan was a small country, it could only change a small number of dollars. "That has nothing to do with it," Harris had replied. "All you have to do is immediately recoin the dollars you receive into ichibus. I strongly advise you to do so."

At first, Manabe had not paid much attention to Harris's suggestion, but soon it began to echo loudly in his mind. Harris was right, of course. All they had to do was recoin the silver dollars they received in weight-for-weight exchange into silver ichibus and pass them off to the foreigners. That way, they would lose nothing.

Mizuno was in Yokohama. Manabe knew that if he consulted him, Mizuno would oppose his decision. And if they argued, Manabe would lose. Fortunately, Mizuno was not around. Manabe began to lean toward adopting Harris's proposal.

It was at that point when the Russian officer and sailor were murdered and the foreign diplomats began to call for Mizuno's dismissal.

If he forced Mizuno to resign, he could put an end to this uproar—and that, finally, is what Manabe decided to do. First, however, he took Ii into his confidence. Then, summoning Alcock, Manabe announced that the Japanese government would recoin dollars into ichibus and exchange 10,000 ichibus a

day in Yokohama and 6,000 a day in Nagasaki and Hakodate, weight-for-weight.



The Japanese government began exchanging 10,000 ichibus a day in Yokohama on September 19, eighty days after the opening of the ports.

The foreign merchants' appetite for ichibus was ravenous.

Eager to obtain those magical coins they could transform into fortunes, foreign merchants descended upon the Government Exchange House officials, their eyes glittering. Reeling under the crush, the officials soon caved in to their demands. Manabe had promised Alcock that the Bakufu would exchange 10,000 ichibus a day at Yokohama. But beginning the first day and continuing for the next three or four, officials were harassed into changing from 12,000 to 16,000 ichibus daily.

The number of ichibus handed to foreign merchants skyrocketed. Cobangs, once worth only six ichibus apiece, shot up to eight and nine ichibus, rising by half-ichibu increments. The official rate was one cobang to four ichibus. When the selling price of cobangs rose to eight ichibus, the profit to the Japanese doubled. Cobangs slowly surfaced in Edo and began to flow into Yokohama. The Bakufu moved quickly to prohibit the sale of cobangs to foreigners. But like Vice-Consul Vyse, the Japanese found this trade an opportunity too tempting to resist. By hook or by crook, they began to bring cobangs to Yokohama.

And the foreign merchants rushed to buy them. Like California and Australia before it, Yokohama was burning with gold rush fever. At the Government Exchange House, foreign merchants would write the amount of dollars they wanted to change on a piece of paper. The officials would not necessarily agree to change that amount, but would use it as a reference point. The foreign merchants began presenting written requests for huge sums.

Requests to change two or three million dollars were routine. One merchant handed over a request in the sextillions, a

number so high—with twenty-one zeros—that a lifetime wouldn't be long enough to count it.

The Government Exchange House officials countered, ineffectually, by making the merchants sign their requests. The Japanese, however, could not read western languages, a fact of which the merchants were well aware.

At first, they signed using the names of friends and acquaintances, but that soon proved inadequate and bothersome. Some simply wrote nonsense, like Snooks, Tooks, Bosh, Moses, Messrs. Nonsense and Hook'em, Doddard, and Is It Not. But having these men, crazed with a lust for ichibus, sign their names was also nonsense.

When the price of cobangs rose to nine ichibus, the profit the foreign merchants could make fell to fifty percent: too low to make the trade worthwhile. But Japan had the cheapest prices in the world. Goods were extremely inexpensive. Although the prices of goods were climbing steadily, the rise was not as sharp as that of cobangs. Instead of cobangs, which yielded only a fifty percent return, it was much more profitable to buy goods. Although shipping them required time, labor, and money, goods bought in Japan and sold on the China coast brought the same return on capital as cobangs.

Quickly noticing this fact, foreign merchants began to actively buy goods. William Keswick of Jardine, Matheson wrote to the company's Shanghai office concerning the business situation at this time: "The profit on cobangs is only fifty percent, much lower than the profit on silk, marine products, and fish oil."

Foreign merchants began to purchase any and all goods they could get their hands on. Like cobangs before them, goods began to soar in price.



The frigate *Powhatan*, the flagship of the American East Indian fleet, sailed into Yokohama on October 3, when the city was still in the grip of gold fever.

Crews aboard American warships served a two-year tour of duty in East Asia. The crew of the *Powhatan* had already passed

the two-year mark and was eager to return home. On its way back to the United States, the *Powhatan* had received orders from the United States government to stop in Yokohama and pick up a Japanese diplomatic mission bound for Washington, where they were to exchange treaty ratifications.

The exchange of treaty ratifications between Japan and England had taken place in Japan. It had been decided, however, to exchange ratified treaties between the United States and Japan in Washington.

An American naval officer had been waiting impatiently for the *Powhatan's* arrival. His name was Lieutenant Charles Thorburn.

Thorburn had arrived in Yokohama at the end of July. He had been the second officer aboard the *Fenimore Cooper*, a survey ship that had been sent to find the best steamship route between San Francisco and Hong Kong. Thorburn had also been the second-in-command of the survey party. The *Fenimore Cooper*, however, had run aground in a typhoon. Because many of her timbers were rotten, she was judged to be not worth repairing and was auctioned off. The *Fenimore Cooper's* crew numbered twenty-one men. Left without a ship, they had taken up residence at the temporary lodgings for foreigners that the Bakufu had built for foreign merchants in Yokohama.

The gold rush began in Yokohama one month later. Thorburn and the rest of the *Fenimore Cooper's* crew, however, were observers, rather than participants, in this event.

After reaching the bottom of the *Fenimore Cooper's* safe, they did not have any dollars to exchange for ichibus. And even had they had money in the safe, a sailor's pay was only twelve dollars a month. With twelve dollars, they could not hope to keep up with the merchants in the hunt for cobang gold.

Thorburn himself was not only penniless but in debt. On returning from Yokohama, he asked the leader of the expedition, John M. Brooke, if he could exchange his food ration for money to pay his debts.

The members of the survey party, including Thorburn, could only look on with envy at the gold rush.

If I only had a few dollars, thought Thorburn. Now the *Powhatan* had finally arrived.

Thorburn lost no time boarding the *Powhatan* and approaching the commodore and officers. "As you can see," he said, "Yokohama is in the middle of a gold rush. Anyone can make all the money he wants. How about it, gentlemen? Would you like to make a fortune?"

The commodore was Josiah Tattnal. When the Anglo-French squadron struck at China's Taku forts, he had towed a British sailing ship out of harm's way, violating his government's policy of neutrality in the Arrow War. Tattnal later said he had done it because Americans were kinsmen of the British and "blood is thicker than water." A stouthearted navy man, Tattnal had suddenly become a well-known, popular figure in European society on the China coast.

"And how can we do that?" asked Tattnal, leaning forward.

"There's nothing to it. All you need are dollars. How many dollars is the *Powhatan* carrying?"

The *Powhatan's* safe, said Tattnal, was virtually empty.

"Then you should go to Shanghai and get dollars."

Thorburn told them that in Shanghai they could obtain dollars with a note issued by the warship.

"I see," Tattnal replied. The commodore then proceeded to behave in a way that the uninformed could only call strange. And the *Powhatan* was soon to sail a route best described as unusual.



Commodore Tattnal had intended to escort the Japanese emissaries by way of the Cape of Good Hope, the southernmost point on the African continent.

One reason was fuel: on the way, the *Powhatan* could take on coal at the British colonies of Hong Kong, Singapore, Pointe de Galle, and the Mauritius Islands. It could also do the same after leaving Cape Town. But if it returned by way of Cape Horn, the southernmost point of South America, its only coal depot till San Francisco was in Honolulu. Also, after leaving Panama,

the Pacific terminus of the American transcontinental railway, it would have to round Cape Horn and sail to Buenos Aires before it could find coal.

Because coal was expensive and steamships consumed great quantities of it, they would set sail when the wind was favorable and would not ordinarily burn coal. But when they were becalmed or when entering and leaving port they would fire up their furnaces and sail under steam power. The Cape of Good Hope route offered plenty of stopping points where they could replenish their supplies of coal. The Cape Horn route did not; it was a long, difficult haul. Except for whaling ships, which pursued their quarry in all seven seas, few, if any, steam-powered warships rounded Cape Horn and crossed over to Asia. The Cape of Good Hope route was standard: Perry had used it when he came to Japan.

Tattnal went to Edo to consult with Harris about escorting the Japanese mission. Harris told Tattnal to take the Cape Horn route.

Harris was a minister; Tattnal, a commodore. Theoretically, they were of the same rank, but a commodore had far greater authority and more subordinates. If Tattnal had rejected Harris's proposal out of hand, that would have been the end of it. But Tattnal quickly agreed to the illogical Pacific route and taking his leave of Harris, returned to Yokohama.

Before sailing for Shanghai, Tattnal told Americans in Yokohama that he planned to leave the city on February 22 of the following year and escort the Japanese mission to Panama by way of the Sandwich Islands and San Francisco. Prior to departure, he would go to Shanghai, load on coal, and return immediately. He would then go to Hong Kong to complete procedures for transferring his command to his successor.

The price of coal in Nagasaki was five dollars a ton—one-third its cost in Shanghai. Although foreign merchants in Nagasaki could change only a limited number of dollars, local authorities, fearing the warships, allowed their crews an exchange rate of three ichibus to the dollar. Russian and American warships thus made a point of regularly stopping for coal at Nagasaki.

Americans there found it exceedingly strange that Tattnal would go to Shanghai to take on coal. Still stranger was his plan to return to Yokohama before sailing on to Hong Kong. It would have made sense to head south to Hong Kong directly from Shanghai.

Americans were still shaking their heads over Tattnal's itinerary when, twenty days later, on October 31, the *Powhatan* returned from Shanghai.

The rumor spread quickly: the *Powhatan* was carrying 450,000 Mexican dollars.

Thorburn took the initiative in negotiating with the governors of foreign affairs, with the full support of Harris, who was in on Tattnal's plan. In return for Tattnal's escorting the Japanese mission to America, the Government Exchange House would permit the *Powhatan* to change its dollars for 150,000 ichibus in one lump sum—a fifteen-day supply for foreign merchants in Yokohama.

News of this largesse soon made the rounds of the foreign community.

Thorburn rushed about buying cobangs like a man possessed. His base of operations was the foreigners' lodgings, where he was staying. Nearly every day, local dealers came pounding on his door in the dead of night calling for *Soru no dana*—"Master Thorburn."

Soon another rumor spread: An American naval officer was diligently buying cobangs every day at the lodgings for foreigners. The thought that an officer on the *Powhatan* had been allowed to purchase fifteen days' worth of ichibus at one time and was now rushing about buying cobangs with them was unbearable to the merchants, who had been living in the lodgings prior to Thorburn's arrival. They erupted with a tremendous howl of protest.

"Let's write letters to the *North!*" they cried. No foreign newspapers were published in Yokohama. For the foreign merchants there, the *North China Herald*, of Shanghai, was the only English-language paper in which they could vent their indignation.

Some of the American merchants shrilly proclaimed that they would "notify the American government."

Thorburn, however, kept on scooping up cobangs in utter indifference to the criticism raining down on him.

Using nearly 90,000 ichibus, he purchased 10,000 cobangs. When the supply of cobangs finally ran out before he could spend 150,000 ichibus, he quickly used the remaining 60,000 to buy Japanese goods.

Cobangs were conveniently compact: Thorburn could easily take his entire hoard aboard the *Powhatan*. The goods, however, were another story. It would not look right for the flagship of the American East India Squadron to sail out of port with all flags flying and commercial cargo stacked to the rails. Instead, Thorburn chartered the schooner *Colneria L. Behan* to transport his cargo.

Observing these antics, Americans in Yokohama easily solved the mystery of why the *Powhatan* had bought coal in Shanghai and then returned to Yokohama, and why Commodore Tattnal had chosen the difficult Cape Horn route.

He had, of course, gone to Shanghai to obtain dollars—the seeds of the money tree. He had then come back to Yokohama to purchase cobangs and would sail to Hong Kong to sell them, on the pretext of completing procedures for transferring his command to his successor. He had chosen the Pacific route so that after he then retraced his path north to Yokohama to board the Japanese envoys, he could set out directly across the Pacific without returning south to Hong Kong.

The day after the departure of the *Powhatan*, a menacing column of smoke appeared in the skies over Edo. With no wind to disperse it, the smoke rose straight up in a solid mass.

The citizens of Yokohama, both Japanese and foreign, streamed into the Bund, which offered an unobstructed view of the column.

The Japanese and foreigners came to the same conclusion: Edo was burning.

"What part of Edo?" whispered an anxious Japanese who had just come from the capital.

By evening the fire was huge. The sky over the city had turned a darkly glowing red. Just then, the first news arrived from Edo.

"The *donjon* of the castle has been destroyed by the fire," said the Japanese to one another.

"The Tycoon's palace has burnt to the ground," said the foreigners.

Alcock watched the holocaust from the deck of the corvette Highflyer, on its way from Edo to Kanagawa. "Good Lord," he said to the man on his right, the consul posted at Hakodate, "how in God's name will they survive it?" The blaze indeed appeared to be ravaging the city.

"Many won't, of course," responded the consul, who fancied himself something of a student of things Japanese. "But frightful fires have been commonplace throughout the city's history—all that wood, the paper lanterns, earthquakes . . . they even have a rather morbid nickname for them," he said, pausing. "They call the fires the Flowers of Edo."

Alcock shuddered. These people surely had a callous disregard for human life, he thought disdainfully; the bestial murders of the two Russians had demonstrated that.

The British consul felt at this point that he was beginning to achieve the proper note of firmness with the sly, inexplicably changeable Japanese. He was energetically campaigning for the dismissal of the two customhouse officials who had insulted Vice-Consul Vyse. He also felt that the same fate was in store for the "mastermind," Mizuno, who both Alcock and Harris believed was behind the many wily Japanese schemes to thwart the opening of the country to foreign trade.

Of course, the behavior of his fellow Occidentals had not been exemplary, either. Alcock had heard rumors of the greed-crazed rush to speculate in cobangs, extending even to the captain of the American ship Powhatan, which had escorted the first Japanese envoys to the United States. It was in order to attend to this matter that Alcock was traveling to Kanagawa on the Highflyer. Alcock hated this speculative frenzy. It

was not only unseemly and immoral, but dangerous: if the Japanese saw the foreigners as parasites sucking their national lifeblood, they would use any means available—including murder—to rid themselves of the pests. And in some cases, Alcock thought darkly, they might well be justified.

4

Intimidation

NOVEMBER 1859—FEBRUARY 1860

Alcock had been absent from Edo for about one month. Hearing of the gold rush in Yokohama, he had boarded the *Highflyer*, a British warship that happened to be in port, and headed for Hakodate, a port on Japan's northern frontier, to inspect the situation there.

When he returned to Edo at the end of October, Alcock was greeted by a list of grievances that Vice-Consul Vyse had forwarded from merchants in Yokohama.

"The officials will only exchange a small number of ichibus."

"The officials allot ichibus without rhyme or reason."

"They delay distribution until we are provoked beyond endurance."

Alcock finished reading Vyse's report, his lips drawn into a mirthless grin. "What it comes down to, sir, is that these merchants are speculating in cobangs," said Alcock's secretary and interpreter, who had presented him with the report. He had served as diplomatic representative in Alcock's absence.

One extremely vital task of Alcock and other British diplomats was to serve as advance agents for British firms: in every corner of the globe, they were busy promoting the sales of goods exported by British businessmen from all over England. The nation's economic existence depended on their labors. Alcock's paramount duty in Japan was to ensure that commercial activities got underway as quickly as possible. Now, four months had passed since the opening of the ports and trade had yet to begin,

thought Alcock bitterly. It was all because of those merchants, whose only thought was to fill their own coffers in the rush for cobangs, and everything else be damned.

Alcock was mistaken: foreign merchants would by this time no longer deign to look at cobangs, which had become too expensive. Instead, they had switched to speculation in Japanese goods, which offered a far greater rate of return. Except for uninformed newcomers like the officers on the *Powhatan*, no one showed any interest in cobangs. Alcock, who had been absent from Edo a long time, did not yet know this. But he had already encountered the anger of the foreign merchants.

Alcock wondered how he could stop cobang profiteering. He decided that that problem was first on his agenda.

Soon another foreigner was murdered in Yokohama. The victim was the Chinese servant of the French vice-consul, who was also an agent for Dent and Company. The French chargé d'affaires, Duchesne de Bellecourt, had not come to Japan with a vice-consul for Kanagawa. Instead he had appointed the agent of Dent and Company, a Mr. Loureiro, to the post.

On November 6, Loureiro's Chinese servant had been cut down in broad daylight. In Yokohama's European community it was rumored that he had been killed because he was wearing western-style clothes and had been mistaken for a European.

No one had yet come forward to identify the murderers of the Russian officer and sailor: the case was still a mystery. In the current case as well, there were no known clues that might lead to an arrest. Like the previous case, it would probably remain unsolved.

Europeans in Yokohama were easy targets for murderous Japanese. They had to face the possibility of an encounter with an avenging sword of doom every day. How could they protect themselves? How could they make Japanese authorities in Yokohama, who neglected their duties and displayed little interest in catching criminals, improve security for foreigners?

Alcock and Harris not only had to deal with the currency question but also with the problems of the open ports and the

issue of substituting Kanagawa for Yokohama as the open port mentioned in the treaties.

In their negotiations with the Bakufu, they managed to secure a site in Kanagawa for an open port.

But the foreign merchants were indifferent to questions of ghettoization or diplomatic pride: they preferred to settle in Yokohama because it had a deeper harbor, good port facilities already in place, and open land on which to build homes for themselves. For the most part, the practical-minded businessmen were no more interested in cultural exchanges with the Japanese than the Japanese were with them.

Jardine, Matheson rented lot number one, the lot closest to the customhouse. Number two was taken by Walsh, Hall and Company, an American firm, number three, by Textor & Co., another American firm, and numbers four and five, by the large French firm, Dent and Company. Employing Japanese carpenters, merchants quickly began to build makeshift godowns, or warehouses, in the Japanese style.

Should the foreign merchants settle in Yokohama, the Japanese would achieve their aim, which would also mean a complete loss of face for foreign diplomats. Somehow, they had to change the site of the open port to Kanagawa.

Yokohama as yet had no hotels. And even had there been one, Alcock would not have stayed there; he had no intention of lending credibility to Yokohama as the legitimate open port. He found a room in the British consulate at Jyoryuji Temple instead.

Beginning the next morning, Alcock set out nearly every day for Yokohama. The Japanese officials he met there had one complaint after another, accompanied by documents proving that foreigners had tried to change huge amounts of dollars, signing ridiculous names that mocked the Japanese, and bought cobangs with the ichibus they had received.

Three days after the fire, the vice-consul received the following notice from the *bugyo*: "Because of the palace fire, the government will incur various expenses, which may mean that

no ichibus will be sent from Edo. In that event, we may have to refuse to exchange ichibus for the time being.”

The next day the minister of foreign affairs sent the same notice to Alcock. Just as the notice warned, the Government Exchange House shut its doors soon afterward. With its closing, the demand for ichibus, which had been growing for some time, escalated even further. The foreign merchants not only pressured the vice-consuls but gathered at the entrance of the Government Exchange House to heap abuse on the Japanese authorities and their policies.

These are the crazed, ravenous dregs of Europe, thought Alcock, pained by the spectacle.



After a stay of several days in Yokohama, Alcock returned to Edo. On arriving, he immediately wrote a long official letter to Vyse, with the intention of having it circulated among the British merchants in Yokohama.

Using the palace fire as a pretext, the Japanese government has decided to suspend the exchange of ichibus. This is, to all practical purposes, the same as suspending trade. Foreign residents, by their unlawful and immoral actions; i.e., their buying of gold coins, must bear the responsibility for reducing trade to this state. Because of their speculations in gold coins, the Japanese government has suspended the exchange of ichibus to prevent this state of affairs from continuing. But it is for you in the exercise of the authority with which you are legally invested in the interest of both nations to punish all those whose acts tend to turn such authority into contempt.

Unbeknownst to Alcock, foreign merchants had already stopped buying cobangs, and in any case, such purchases were not prohibited by the treaty. Furthermore, the proviso of the currency article stated that “coins of all description (with the

exception of Japanese copper coin) may be exported from Japan . . .”

Neither the export of cobangs nor the preliminary stages—the search for and purchase of cobangs—violated the treaty in the slightest. British subjects felt that Vyse had no right to punish them for the “crimes” Alcock outlined in his letter.

It is difficult to say whether the indecent levity, or the disregard of all Treaty conditions and national interests or repute, equally manifested, are most worthy of reprehension. Some are a positive disgrace to anyone bearing the name of an Englishman or having a character to lose. Not only the sums in their preposterous amount, are an insult to the Japanese Government to whose officers these requisitions were presented, but they are documents essentially false and dishonest as purporting to be the names of individuals having a real existence and entitled to demand facilities for Trade; whereas mere words are used as names and made to convey gross and offensive comments. That there be no question upon the strict correctness of this description, I annex true copies of several of these documents so disgraceful to the authors; and I direct you to circulate those, together with a copy of this Despatch for general information among the British Subjects at your port.

The documents, which were requests signed with fabricated names, were unquestionably fraudulent. But Alcock's suggestion that they be made public was disproportionate to the crime. Alcock continued, writing, “yet large sums have been shipped and exported by Foreigners contrary to the stipulations of the Treaties, without manifest or declaration at the Custom House.”

Gold coins could be freely and legally imported and exported. They were not subject to customs duty. Although it could be argued that a manifest or declaration was necessary, there was no mention of that in the treaty. In any event, the export of gold coins without either could not be called an illegal act.

The Japanese have taken the most effective means for the moment of protecting themselves, by stopping the issue of ichibus, on which the purchase of cobangs hangs, and when it is found possible to induce the Government to recommence the issue of silver at Yokohama, it will at the same time be necessary to have a clear understanding with the Government and Treasury Department, as to the adoption of some intelligible system, and a rigid adherence to an equitable principle of distribution, under guarantees that all who are entitled to apply, shall receive impartially a fair share or proportion.

In short, Alcock was instructing Vyse to devise a new system that would bring about the resumption of legitimate ichibu exchange. A system, in other words, that would put an end to the rush for cobangs.

But it is the business and the duty of all Foreign Representatives to prevent a few individuals thus endangering the relations and damaging the permanent interests of nations. . . . It is an imperative duty therefore to send out of the country all who lend themselves to such mischievous practices, before the worse comes of it, and you are directed to keep a vigilant eye upon every British subject within your jurisdiction and apply the law without hesitation or delay in every case of deliberate offense or misdemeanor for which legal penalty has been provided.

In his closing remarks, Alcock described the British merchants in Yokohama as though they were criminals.

But even after sending off this letter, Alcock still couldn't rest easy. Though he had ordered Vyse to punish wrongdoers, Alcock had his doubts as to how the buying of cobangs violated the law. He had denounced it as though it did, but he had no conclusive proof that it was indeed a criminal act. Certainly it was a moral, if not a legal, offense. Alcock thus tried to appeal

to public opinion in the open ports on the China coast. By doing so, he hoped to impose discipline on the foreign merchants in Yokohama. Alcock applied to the resident minister in China for permission to print his letter to Vyse and Vyse's reply in the *North China Herald*. Permission was granted and the letter was printed.



"The foreign merchants in Yokohama are bad enough, but the Japanese government . . .," wrote Alcock, bursting with righteous indignation toward not only the foreign traders but also his hosts.

Before leaving Nagasaki, Alcock had made the local authorities agree to address the complaints of British merchants and implement reforms beginning July 1, the day the ports were scheduled to open. But the British consul in Nagasaki reported that nothing had been done about the complaints and that the situation had not improved in the slightest.

Manabe had told Alcock that the Bakufu would permit the exchange of 10,000 ichibus in Yokohama and 6,000 each in Hakodate and Nagasaki. Although some ichibus were sent to Nagasaki, shipments were sporadic, and the amounts much smaller than promised. Even though the ports were, in theory, to have been completely opened on July 1, trade in Nagasaki had gotten under way by fits and starts and had shown hardly any real development.

And as for Kanagawa . . . Alcock had frequently requested that customs be transferred there. He knew that if the customs-house were in Kanagawa, the open port designated in the treaty, foreign and Japanese merchants would naturally move there. The Bakufu replied that foreign and Japanese merchants were free to live anywhere in the area designated by the treaty, but it did not move customs. And the foreign merchants showed a decided preference for Yokohama. In the end, the efforts of Alcock and the other foreign representatives to prevent Yokohama being transformed into another Dejima were a tilt at a windmill—so much wasted energy. They completely lost face.

Alcock realized that the same thing was happening with the currency question.

The Japanese government had at first limited the exchange of ichibus to 10,000 a day. And even though that was far from satisfactory, they finally suspended the exchange of ichibus altogether, explaining that it was a temporary measure necessitated by the palace fire. Of course that was just an excuse.

His patience had also been sorely tried by the Bakufu's decision to allow the crew of the *Powhatan* to buy 150,000 ichibus. And then there was the problem of Japanese officials needlessly meddling in the trade between foreign and Japanese merchants. In modern terms, this meddling by Japanese customs officials constituted a nontariff barrier. In other words, it hampered free trade and violated the treaties.

Such problems seemed endless, and the numerous incidents they occasioned further provoked Alcock's ire.

The evening that Alcock set out for Kanagawa, an express messenger came from Edo bearing a letter signed by both ministers of foreign affairs. "Documents have become scattered and lost because of the recent fire. Therefore, they may be a delay in replying to your inquiries. We request your understanding," it said. Alcock knew that the ministers were doubtless busy, but on November 17 he requested an interview with them. Two days later two governors of foreign affairs came to the British mission.

Alcock told them that he wished to "meet with the ministers of foreign affairs in the near future." There was, however, no reply. On the 24th, Alcock pressed for an answer. None came. On the 30th he again demanded a response, to no avail.

Using the pretext of the palace fire to close the Government Exchange House had been had enough, but now the ministers of foreign affairs gave the same excuse to avoid meeting him. Was there any other country like this in the world? Was it not exactly the same as China?

Now that he thought about it, Alcock realized that Manabe was playing the part of Yeh. The arrogant, unapproachable Yeh, who expressed neither wonder nor admiration, and the emaci-

ated, ascetic-looking Manabe, an old man with a gloomy face that never clearly showed what he was feeling, had at least one thing in common: no aptitude for diplomacy.

Alcock recalled his instructions. "The British government," Lord Malmesbury had written, "must rely on your judgment to win the confidence of the Japanese people regarding British intentions toward them. You must be content with gradual progress and not exert pressure for immediate compliance with your suggestions or demands. You should insist on the fulfillment of the provisions of the Treaty of Edo, but not in a manner calculated to give offense to the Japanese government."

Of course, he had no choice but to obey the instructions. That was a diplomat's first duty. But without the backing of military force, how could he compel observance of the treaty from Japan, a country that was identical to China in its recalcitrance?

Just when Alcock had reached the limit of his patience, a reply signed by both ministers of foreign affairs arrived. It was nothing but a list of excuses for the delay in responding. "We would like you to meet with the vice ministers, who are second in rank after us."

Alcock's anger finally exploded. He quickly took up his pen:

To arrive at a harmonious solution, I am prepared to meet with all officials who are entrusted with foreign affairs at any time, now or in the future. These officials must, however, at all times possess the final authority for deciding various matters during the course of our discussions. They must, in other words, have the same authority that you yourselves possess. If they do not have this authority, it would be meaningless for them to meet me, as I possess the plenipotentiary powers of the British Government.

Alcock continued: "Whether peace and tranquility between our two countries can be preserved or whether we enter into a state of war will depend in part on the outcome of our meeting that day."

Alcock had finally played his trump card by mentioning the word *war*. "A violation of the treaty and a state of war between our two countries will lead to serious consequences and reduce Japan's entire administrative organization to a condition of chaos."

In other words, Alcock was suggesting that if talks with the vice ministers, who did have not powers equivalent to his own, broke down, Britain and Japan might enter into a state of war. If that should happen, Japan would fall into chaos and the Japanese would have no one to blame but themselves. Here, Alcock clearly violated his instructions.



Now that the flow of cobangs out of the country, the rush to buy goods, and the rise in prices had caused a crisis, the minister responsible, Manabe, was placed under severe pressure by the tyrant Ii Naosuke, who as Tairo, or regent, was the Bakufu's highest-ranking official.

Manabe had been among Ii's most loyal subordinates ever since Ii had first seized power. The year before, Manabe had gone to Kyoto, arrested men suspected of opposing Ii, and sent them to Edo. Even so, Manabe was a *daimyo*. He did not know anything about financial dealings. But Ii demanded results and began pressuring Manabe to produce them.

Then came the fire at the palace *donjon*. Using the fire as a pretext, Manabe stopped the supply of ichibus—the cause of all the uproar. After that, however, he was at a loss as to how to proceed. Manabe had no alternative but to rely on Mizuno, then serving as a commissioner of naval affairs, who seemed to know much more about the currency question than Manabe himself.

But just when Manabe needed him most, Mizuno was blamed by Ii for the flap over the murder of the foreigners and demoted to post of *Nishi no Maru Rusui*—Caretaker of the West Keep of the Tycoon's palace.

The post was a sinecure that required no work and was usually a last, brief stop for government bureaucrats just before

their retirement. It was a position at the fringes of the fringes of power.

The one most upset by Mizuno's exile was Manabe. He opposed Ii's treatment of his favorite, upon whom he depended. Ii, however, held his ground and refused to listen to Manabe's pleas. Mizuno became *Nishi no Maru Rusui* on November 22, eleven days after the burning of the palace. With that, Manabe, who had been Ii's loyal follower, turned his back on the Tairo. He was prepared to resign forthwith.

Since assuming power, Ii had replaced one minister and bureaucrat after another. Given Manabe's attitude, Ii was prepared to dismiss one or two of his troublesome subordinate's people at any time.

Faced with these problems, Manabe had neglected to reply to Alcock's letter. But the British minister was doggedly persistent. So Manabe, thinking to leave everything up to the vice ministers, finally sent a reply asking Alcock to meet with them. Now Alcock's latest letter had arrived, demanding that Japan choose either war or peace.

The Tycoon's ministers took Alcock's threats extremely seriously. They knew how fearsome the British could be. The Opium War and the more recent Arrow War had made them aware, however dimly, of British power. Fear of the unknown is stronger than fear of the known. And now the diplomatic representative of these terrible English was asking them whether they wanted war or peace. They had no choice but to accept his demands. Ii and Manabe compromised. Two days after receiving Alcock's letter, which seemed to be handing them an ultimatum, Manabe and Wakisaka went to see the British minister.



Alcock had ceased to trouble himself about the irritating "instructions." He was in no mood to trade pleasantries with his visitors. He began the meeting without preliminaries:

"I am a representative of the British government. I do not possess any ships of war, but I am sure you are well aware of

British military power, and British naval power in particular. I would like you to keep that power in mind as you listen to what I have to say.

"We can settle our differences in two ways. One is to discuss them peacefully. The other is to commence hostilities. England does not like to fight, but given your attitude, we may have to go to war. It all depends on whether or not you wish to observe the treaty. What is your answer, gentlemen?"

Alcock was forcing the issue. Manabe capitulated completely. After this, though he did not acquiesce to each and every one of Alcock's demands, he was much more willing to listen to—and accept them—than he had been before. He quickly agreed to resume the exchange of *ichibus* on the same basis as before.

Having finished discussing the business at hand, Alcock added, "What I have said today is upon my own authority. However, the representatives of America and France share my sentiments exactly. I urge you to comply with our request. Otherwise, we will present a note signed jointly by the three powers—Great Britain, the United States, and France."

Alcock was giving them an ultimatum. If the Bakufu did not respond by the deadline set by the three powers, they would issue a declaration of war. He continued, saying, "As I mentioned earlier, ships carrying the ministers of Great Britain and France, who were on their way to North China to exchange ratifications for the Treaty of Tientsin, were treacherously fired upon by the Chinese government forts and as you have no doubt heard, suffered a crushing defeat in the resulting battle."

Alcock had feared that, on learning of this attack, the Japanese government might regard Great Britain with contempt and consequently feel free to impose various barriers, beginning with restrictions on commerce.

"My country, however, has no intention of withdrawing from China because of this setback. Within four or five months a fleet of warships will be sent from my country and, joining hands with the French, will bring about the fall of Peking. I would like to you to be aware of our intentions."

Alcock had spoken the truth: a joint Anglo-French force was on its way to attack Peking.

"I hope and pray that our relations with Japan will not come to that pass."

Alcock then returned to a discussion of China:

"Although we concluded the Treaty of Nanking and entered into diplomatic relations with China more than twenty years ago, the Chinese government has consistently defied the treaty. This defiance was the cause of the Arrow War, which ended last year. We then concluded a new treaty—the Treaty of Tientsin—and the British minister left for Peking to exchange ratifications. The minister and his party were nefariously attacked, precipitating the current conflict. It goes without saying that this conflict began because the Chinese government violated the treaty."

Staring intently at his visitors, Alcock fired this parting shot: "If treaties are to be broken, it is best not to make them in the first place."

Japan had not signed the treaty of its own free will—it had been pressured into signing. Listening to Alcock's threatening words, the junior officials at the ministry of foreign affairs who had accompanied their superiors to this meeting gritted their teeth in anger and frustration.



There was one thing, however, that Alcock could not understand. He and Harris had advised the Japanese government to raise the value of the *cobang* before the Yokohama gold rush started in earnest. If the Japanese had followed their advice, they could have stopped the outflow of *cobangs*. Instead, they had responded with ridiculous excuses and had done nothing to increase the value of gold. Nothing had changed at all. The day that Alcock issued this threat to Manabe, he shook his head with wonder and dismay.

Soon after coming to Japan he had told the Japanese that if they did not raise the value of *cobangs* when the exchange of *ichibus* began, the gold coins would flow out of the country. But

instead they had done nothing. What on earth were they thinking?

That was not the only thing puzzling Alcock: he could also not understand why the Japanese had such an aversion to the dollar.

Their reluctance to accept the dollar, which had never altered, had been the original barrier to trade. If the Japanese had only accepted the dollar in trade, it would not have been necessary to change it for ichibus.

Initially, Alcock had thought that the Japanese rejected the dollar because the Tycoon's government, seemingly the dominant power in domestic politics, was compelling them to do so. For a short period immediately after the opening of the ports that kind of coercion may have been possible. But now that five months had passed since the beginning of trade, Alcock had to discard that theory—and wonder what the real problem was. Now the Bakufu was melting down dollars and reminting them as ichibus. Ichibus and dollars were both silver—and silver was silver. But the Japanese continued to shun the dollar and refused to accept it. Alcock could not understand.

Soon after issuing his threat to Manabe, Alcock met with Harris and Bellecourt. He described his meeting with the Japanese in detail and freely expressed his doubts concerning the currency question.

Like Alcock, Harris could not understand why the Japanese government did not raise the value of gold. He reasoned that the Japanese must be prejudiced against the dollar because it was not engraved with their government's stamp.

"When I meet them this time, I will propose that, instead of reminting dollars into ichibus, they can save time and trouble by simply engraving the dollar to indicate that it is worth three ichibus. If they do that, anyone would be able to use dollars anywhere in the country. The Japanese will have their official guarantee written on each coin."

Following this discussion with Alcock, Harris met with a minister of foreign affairs on December 25.

By this time, the relationship between Ii and Manabe was

approaching a crisis. Pleading illness, Manabe confined himself indoors. Suspicious of his subordinate's intentions, Ii had Manabe's every movement shadowed.

Harris visited Wakisaka, the other minister of foreign affairs, at his official residence, near the Tycoon's palace.

After enumerating his complaints, Harris said, "Cobangs are flowing out of the country because the cobang's value in relation to the ichibu is extremely low. If you were to triple the value of the cobang, you would make the ratio of gold to silver in Japan the same as that current in the rest of the world and cobangs would no longer leave the country. I strongly advise you to do this."

He then added, "I have spoken of this before, but if the government exchange houses in Yokohama, Nagasaki, and Hakodate were to engrave the dollar to indicate that it is worth three ichibus, Japanese could also use it. I urge you to do this as well."

Wakisaka listened intently to Harris's suggestions.

Three days after Harris's visit to the official residence, Bellecourt also met with Wakisaka. Well aware that his knowledge of the currency question was slight, Bellecourt directed Wakisaka's attention to other matters. Harris went to the official residence again the day after Bellecourt's visit.

Wakisaka first spoke at length about various problems related to engraving the dollar to pass for three ichibus, but added that, in general, he agreed with Harris's suggestion. He did not come out in favor of raising the value of gold, saying that "there are still various matters we wish to study." The Bakufu, he said, had decided to issue dollars engraved with the government stamp so that they could pass for three ichibus.

In mid-January 1860, following Harris's suggestion, the Bakufu began issuing dollars engraved with the characters for *sanbu tsuyo* to indicate that they were equivalent to three ichibus.

Sometimes economic actions lead to unexpected consequences—and illuminate the psychology of those affected. The Japanese who first saw the dollars engraved with *sanbu tsuyo* (good for three ichibus) wondered what they were supposed to

be. They finally decided that they were the same as dollars. "Good for three ichibus? Who are they trying to fool?" they said, laughing. They began to refuse to accept the engraved dollars.

But these "three ichibu" dollars were more than a joke: they were a nuisance. Because they would be punished by the authorities if they did not honor them for the amount engraved, people came to refuse them even more firmly. Finally the dollar disappeared from the marketplace altogether.

On February 11, about one month after first issuing the engraved dollars, the Bakufu announced that it would raise the value of the cobang 3.375 times, beginning in ten days, on February 21. It had been six months since Harris had first recommended that the cobang's value be increased.

Alcock settled himself, his writing implements arrayed before him on his desk, to an evening of personal correspondence. The issues that tormented him could neither be discussed with the elderly female relations at home with whom he maintained a polite if irregular exchange of letters, nor could he confide completely in the one man who should have been his closest ally: Townsend Harris. Alcock was still undecided about the American's motives. He chose to pour out his frustrations in a letter to a diplomatic colleague still serving on the China coast.

He wrote frankly of his successes and disappointments in his new post. On the one hand, there were a number of humiliating failures, such as the blow of having Yokohama chosen over Kanagawa as the open treaty port, thereby ensuring that the foreign community would remain in a state of near-quarantine from all but a tiny minority of the Japanese population. He likened it to the Chinese attempt to keep foreigners outside the walls of their cities. This had come about through an unwitting collaboration between the Japanese authorities and the foreign merchants, whose concerns strayed little from their account ledgers, he recorded, with a twinge of disgust.

Then there was the thoroughly unsuccessful attempt to issue a dollar with its value in ichibus stamped on it in Japanese. What possessed these people, wrote Alcock, his blood pressure rising as he wrote with increasing fury, to reject the dollar time and again, when they admit it's perfectly good silver coinage? What more do they want? "Pure, unalloyed perverseness," he fumed.

On the other hand, he could not regard the recent decision of the

Bakufu to devalue their gold piece, the cobang, in conformance with the world standard, as other than a feather in his diplomatic cap. That would end cobang profiteering once and for all, he congratulated himself (he was unaware, of course, that it had ended a month earlier because of an increase in the price of cobangs naturally caused by the boom). He was certain that Harris—at his urging—had done the Japanese a great favor by persuading them to alter the parity of their gold and silver. For all the apparent sophistication of certain aspects of their culture, the Japanese were rather childlike in many ways, he felt. At least in this instance, he had followed Her Majesty's instructions and acted in a friendly fashion toward Japan.

Alcock put down his pen. That last was not quite the whole of the truth. There was the small matter of his having threatened war. But Alcock decided not to mention that. Even in a casual letter to an old friend, frankness had its limits.

5

Discovery

MARCH 1860—FEBRUARY 1861

The supreme ruler of Japan was the Tycoon or, as the Japanese usually called him, the Shogun.

The Tycoon, however, was only one *daimyo*, or feudal lord, whose rule extended over no more than one-seventh of the country. His political power was formally delegated to him by the mikado—the emperor—who lived in Japan's former capital, Kyoto. He was thus an unusual "supreme ruler," indeed. The closest European equivalent to Shogun would be "generalissimo." But in their dealings with the outside world, the Japanese usually referred to the Shogun as the Taikun (Tycoon), a seldom-used title that means great sovereign. *Tycoon* would later, of course, become an American colloquialism for "big businessman."

Although the Bakufu—the Tycoon's government—represented Japan as a whole, it should really be called a shogunal, rather than a national, government. It thus had a character somewhat different from that of European governments.

The nucleus of the shogunal government was the Council of State, whose ministers were called Roju. This council was subordinate to the Shogun, the titular sovereign of the country. As a general rule, the prime minister was the most senior Roju.

The Roju were midlevel *daimyo*. Few were qualified other than by birth for their posts, and many were incompetent.

In times of crisis, a Tairo, or regent, temporarily took over

the reins of government. This post was filled by a great feudal lord who was a member of a select group of noble families.

Since the middle of the Tokugawa shogunate, which lasted nearly 250 years, the post of Tairo had been merely decorative and honorary. Even so, officially the Tairo ranked above the Roju and presided over them.

Since the signing of the treaties, the Tairo had been Ii Naosuke, the Prince of Hikone, an arch-conservative. But Ii had been an exceptional Tairo—instead of being a figurehead, he had wielded absolute power.

On March 24, 1860—one month after the government raised the value of the cobang to the world gold standard—Ii was attacked and beheaded by a band of ten unidentified assassins as he was on his way to the Tycoon's palace. The assassins had ambushed him just outside the palace's Sakuradamon Gate.

This murder of a Tairo in broad daylight, in sight of his own home (the Ii mansion in Miyazaka), and in front of a bridge that passed over to the Tycoon's palace, greatly shocked Alcock, Harris, and the other foreign diplomats.

Alcock was unaware of the distinction between a Roju and a Tairo. Also, he and the other diplomats did not know that Ii, who had held supreme power, had ruled by terror and harshly suppressed his opponents. Although they gathered information from various sources about Ii's assassination, they did not pay close attention to his political stance or changes in the political situation that might result from his death. This was testimony to the effectiveness with which Ii had managed information, using secret police methods.

After Ii's assassination, Kuze Hirochika, the Prince of Sekiyado, and Ando Nobumasa, the Prince of Iwaki, seized power.

Ando had been a member of Ii's Council of State, winning a promotion from Wakadoshiyori—vice minister—to Roju. He had also served as minister of foreign affairs. At the time of his ascension, however, he was still a newcomer to the council. To enhance his authority and eradicate all traces of Ii's rule, he welcomed Kuze into the council, and together they formed a coalition government. Kuze had been a member of the council for many years, but had clashed with Ii and resigned.

The political line adopted by the Kuze-Ando administration differed from Ii's. They aimed to repair the strained relationship between the Bakufu and the mikado and placate public opinion.

The mikado, Emperor Komei, was a rabid exclusionist. The word *joi* (which means "expel the barbarian") had become a popular rallying cry of the time. The "barbarians" were the Europeans. Emperor Komei was a leading symbol of the *joi* movement.

Ii, an ultra-conservative, had had a strong ideological affinity with the exclusionist cause. He thus did not welcome the arrival of Harris, Alcock, and the other foreign representatives.

Soon after being appointed Tairo, however, Ii had impulsively agreed to permit the signing of the commercial treaty the previous prime minister, Hotta Masayoshi, had negotiated with Harris. He thus reluctantly took his stand with the progressives, who were for the opening of the country, and suppressed the *joi* forces.

Ii was a stubborn, willful man. He brought such unwarranted severe pressure to bear on his opponents—pressure for the sake of pressure—that public opinion turned completely against him. The antagonism he aroused finally led to his assassination. Inevitably, in spite of the ideological common ground between the two men, some of those who had been crushed by Ii had had connections with Emperor Komei.

The emperor had been a politically impotent figure almost since the earliest recorded history. But in the confusion surrounding the opening of the country, Emperor Komei discovered his latent political strength.

He could not, however, easily display this strength during Ii's reign of terror. Then Ii was felled by an assassin's sword, and the mikado bounded out of his restrictive nominal role. No longer able to ignore his influence, the Kuze-Ando administration tried to mend ties with him.

Ever since the Ii administration, there had been talk of marrying Kazunomiya, the mikado's younger sister, to Shogun Iemochi. Hoping to improve relations with the emperor, the

Kuze-Ando government tried to play matchmaker. They eagerly appealed to Kyoto to let Kazunomiya become Iemochi's consort.

In his brief reply to this appeal, Emperor Komei twice referred to "expelling the barbarians." The Bakufu interpreted this to mean that if it took decisive action to expel the barbarians, the emperor would permit the marriage. Emperor Komei, a hard-line *joi* advocate, had doubtless intended to imply as much in his letter. Kuze and Ando leaped at the suggestion.

It was not in the power of the Bakufu, however, to expel the barbarian. Instead, it proposed postponing the opening of Hyogo and Niigata to trade and Edo and Osaka to foreign settlement. By deferring the quickly approaching opening of these ports and cities, which had been stipulated in the commercial treaties signed with five nations, they could demonstrate their intention to expel the barbarian. The diplomatic problem of asking the treaty nations to delay the opening of the ports and cities had thus become entangled with domestic politics. Ando, the minister of foreign affairs, approached Alcock and Harris about agreeing to a postponement.

The minister plenipotentiary of Prussia, Count Friedrich Albert Eulenburg, came to Japan in September with special orders to "conclude a commercial treaty with Japan." The Bakufu, however, was in the midst of negotiating a delay in the opening of the two ports and two cities with the foreign representatives. Ando refused Eulenburg's request to negotiate a commercial treaty, saying, "we cannot sign a new treaty under any conditions."



Harris was a sociable man. But he looked down upon and remained standoffish toward the American merchants living in Yokohama. Harris could unburden himself only to his diplomatic colleagues in Edo or the naval officers of various nationalities who occasionally came to visit him.

Not surprisingly, the Americans living in Yokohama were strongly prejudiced against Harris for what they saw as his

"haughtiness and airs." Three missionary families in Kanagawa, however, were different.

The missionary families were staying at Jobutsuji Temple—a fact that reflected the lack of religious dogmatism in Japanese Buddhism. Luckily for Harris, the temple was only a seven- or eight-minute walk from the American consulate. One family was that of James Curtis Hepburn, who later became known for his Hepburn System of romanizing Japanese.

Another was that of S. R. Brown, his wife, and their two young daughters. At this time there were only twelve European women in Yokohama and Kanagawa. Five—the three missionary wives and the two Hepburn girls—were living at Jobutsuji. The temple thus had a certain sparkle and charm for the many male callers who visited there frequently, even though they had no pressing business.

Harris considered himself a devout Episcopalian and generally behaved as such. The Hepburns and the other two families had come to Japan to spread the message of Christ. To Harris, they were of a different order from the American merchants in Yokohama. Also, unlike the merchants, the missionary families lived in Kanagawa, which he and other diplomats had demanded be made an open port. Although the missionaries had settled in Kanagawa because they felt that there they would have more opportunities to meet and proselytize the Japanese, their choice was a welcome one for Harris. Also, the three wives and two young ladies added considerable spice to his social life. Harris's demeanor changed completely when he visited the three families. He played the good-natured uncle who never failed to bring unusual presents from Edo.

The three families at Jobutsuji responded in kind: they alone among the foreigners greeted Harris warmly and treated him as a friend.

In New York, where Harris had grown up, people exchanged visits on New Year's Day to celebrate the beginning of another year, just like the Japanese. In Edo, Harris had only familiar faces from which to choose. Visiting the Japanese was not an option. There were, however, the three families at Jobut-

suji who welcomed his company. As 1860 drew to a close, Harris left for Kanagawa to celebrate New Year's Day with them.

On New Year's Eve, Harris received a visit from a governor of foreign affairs, who had come from Edo expressly to see him, bearing yet another tale of a certain Mito no Goroko.

Mito no Goroko—Mito the Old Nobleman—was a name often mentioned by the Japanese. Mito was a catchall scapegoat, invariably blamed (whether correctly or not, no one ever knew for certain) for anything that went wrong, until the foreign diplomats tired of hearing about him. The assassin who had beheaded the Tairo Ii was rumored to be a former retainer of Mito no Goroko. The governor of foreign affairs had called on Harris this New Year's Eve to tell him that the Roju had definite information that several hundred *ronin*—samurai formerly retained by none other than the infamous Mito no Goroko—had assembled in two groups: one to set fire to foreign residences in Yokohama, the other to attack the diplomatic legations in Edo and to kill the foreigners employed there.

"Until we can arrest these men and end this disturbance, it would be best for you and the other foreign representatives to leave your legations temporarily and evacuate to a building inside the moat of the Tycoon's palace. Also, please instruct your consular representatives to move to Yokohama so that we can better protect them."

Not again, thought Harris in disgust. This was a transparent ploy to shut up the diplomatic representatives in the Tycoon's palace and herd the consuls into Yokohama.

"You will not be able to use such a flimsy ruse with me," said Harris in firmly refusing the governor's request. He dismissed him without another word.

But, in any event, he would have to inform his colleagues.

In East Asian countries such as China and Japan, western diplomats were well aware that they had to act in concert. Otherwise, it would be extremely difficult to conduct diplomatic negotiations. When western diplomats failed to present the appearance of unity, Asians were quick to take advantage.

This was regarded as common sense among western diplo-

mats in China and Japan. Harris and Alcock were both well aware of it. In dealing with various matters, including the currency question, they fought on a common front.

Harris, as the senior diplomatic representative in Japan, had a duty to convey the Bakufu's warning to Alcock, Bellecourt, and Eulenburg, of Prussia, with whom he had become intimate over the past four months. Tomorrow, however, was New Year's Day, a day he had planned to spend visiting the three families in Jobutsuji. He was already in Kanagawa and had no intention of returning to Edo. Instead, he wrote letters to his three colleagues. The next day, on the morning of January 1, 1861, Henry C. J. Heusken, Harris's secretary and translator, carried them back to Edo.



After spending a pleasant New Year's Day socializing in Kanagawa, Harris returned to Edo. Arriving at the legation, he was greeted by the sight of a cannon that had been brought in by the Japanese government and unceremoniously deposited inside. Supposedly, its purpose was to protect the legation from attackers, but to Harris it smacked of theatricalism.

Harris immediately summoned Alcock, Bellecourt, and Eulenburg. "It's nothing but a ploy," he said disdainfully, showing his visitors the cannon. "That's all it is. They mean to shut us up inside the Tycoon's palace and drive the consuls into Yokohama. I told the Japanese in no uncertain terms that they would not be able to get away with it."

Escorting his visitors back inside the legation, Harris continued to vent his annoyance. "Three years ago, when I first came to Edo to negotiate a commercial treaty, I was warned nearly every day that my life was in danger. A heavy guard was placed around my lodgings and even ordered to patrol at night. This was intended to frighten me and send me packing from Edo. But when the government realized that none of this had any effect on me, they quietly stopped the patrols and withdrew the guard."

The Bakufu had placed a guard around Harris's lodgings

because *ronin* from the Mito clan had shown signs of wanting to attack him. Harris, however, suspected that the Bakufu was using this threat to drive him from Edo. But when he came to know Hotta Masayoshi, the minister of foreign affairs, Harris realized that he was not a man to trifle with such schemes, and his suspicions had been allayed. His colleagues, however, did not know that. Taking advantage of their ignorance, Harris referred to this incident to advance his own case.

Alcock had often heard Harris tell this story. Recently, he had started to wonder whether Harris's version of it might be an exaggeration or, to put it more plainly, a deliberate misrepresentation. He also suspected that Harris might be hiding the truth about his buying of cobangs as well. His story was a little too perfect. Furthermore, Alcock could not believe that the warning was just a Japanese ploy.

"Pardon me, but my view of the situation is slightly different," said Alcock, interrupting. On the evening of January 1, the day he had received Harris's letter, Alcock had had a visit from a governor of foreign affairs concerning the same matter.

"The governor looked at me very gravely—I could detect no deception in his glance. He expressed grave concern about our safety. I do not believe that this is merely a Japanese trick."

Alcock had recently been promoted to minister. The British diplomatic mission was now housed in a legation, and Alcock had carefully observed the Japanese who came there.

"The behavior of the officials and servants betrays fear. Even when the regent was murdered, they did not look so clearly afraid or anxious for their own safety as they do now. We cannot easily determine the truth or falsity of the information we have been provided, but there are definite signs of danger that have given the Japanese government cause for concern. Therefore, I have sent a letter to Rear Admiral Jones in Yokohama requesting that he station two ships in Edo Bay."

As Alcock had already informed the Japanese in October of the previous year, the Anglo-French forces that had been dispatched again to the China coast had fallen on Peking without mercy and quickly captured it. The allied army had come to

Yokohama and Edo to spend the Christmas and New Year's holidays. The day he had received the warning from a governor of foreign affairs, Alcock, deeply concerned about the situation, had sent a letter to Rear Admiral Jones, who had just come from Edo to Yokohama, requesting that he leave two ships behind in Edo Bay.

Until recently, Alcock had not had even one man-of-war at his disposal. But now that the dispute with the Chinese government in Peking had been settled, the rear admiral had granted Alcock's request and left two ships in Edo: the small sloop *Pioneer* and the corvette *Encounter*.

Because the views of Harris and Alcock differed, the foreign diplomats gathered that day at the American legation did not decide to oppose the Japanese government, and the meeting ended inconclusively.



After reaching a compromise, the Bakufu and the Prussian minister had finally agreed to conclude a commercial treaty. On January 15, in a ceremony at the foreigners guest house and Prussian mission in Akabanebashi, Eulenburg presented the Japanese with gifts from the Prussian government to celebrate the imminent signing of the treaty. Henry Heusken, Harris's secretary and a veteran interpreter, had assisted with the negotiations from the beginning. Heusken had been at work from morning until night on this day as well because the Bakufu had requested some minor changes in the wording of the treaty. At about eight-thirty, as he was strolling back to the legation after dinner at the foreigners guest house, Heusken was attacked near Azabu Nakanobashi.

Although Heusken had been accompanied by three mounted officers and four foot soldiers carrying lanterns, when the half-dozen or so attackers pounced, his Japanese guards fled, scattering in all directions.

Finding Heusken groaning in the street, servants from the legation placed him on a board and carried him back to the

legation at around nine o'clock. Harris immediately sent word to Eulenburg and Alcock and summoned a surgeon.

Alcock had once been a surgeon himself, but had not practiced for many years. Fortunately, Dr. Myburgh, a medical officer who also served as a Dutch interpreter, was attached to the British legation. Alcock sent him to Harris.

Wondering whether the wound would prove fatal, Alcock spent the night pacing in his quarters.

The two Russians were the first to be killed, thought Alcock. This is the fifth such incident. The sixth counting Dan, that heedless but charming Japanese boy.

Alcock's mind wandered from Heusken's condition to the fate of his former interpreter.

Dan, a Japanese castaway who had learned English from his rescuers, was a stoker on the *Mississippi* when he heard that the British consul in Canton had been promoted to the post of consul general of Japan. Talking his way into the Canton legation, Dan became Alcock's interpreter and messenger and returned with him to Japan. Dan had a naturally violent temper. During his vagabond days, when he had had to rely on his own wits and strength to survive, that temper had become even more violent. Used to independence, Dan had thrown off the yoke of the Japanese feudal system. He rode into Japan proudly, ready to hurl himself bodily at the old order and ridicule his countrymen, who were still bound to it.

Fortunately for him, he was an employee of the British legation. Because of his position, the Japanese could not touch him. Well aware of their helplessness, Dan began to provoke them publicly. Japanese could not ride horseback in Edo unless they were samurai. But even though he had been a mere sailor—a low rung on the Japanese social ladder—Dan rode horseback and cracking his whip, habitually raced his mount at a gallop through the streets.

The samurai that he passed were incensed by Dan's behavior. Dan lashed out at them as though he were baiting them. More than once, he found himself involved in a quarrel. Several times, these street rows had come to the attention of the city

magistrate's office, which had judicial as well as police powers. The city magistrate, however, had no judicial authority over Dan and was unable to take any action.

Dan's insolent behavior was notorious among the Edo samurai. More than one had designs on his life. Given the chance, they would have cut him down without hesitation. Alcock was secretly warned of this by the Japanese. He seriously thought of sending Dan abroad for his own protection, but when Alcock broached the idea, Dan refused to listen.

Soon afterward, Dan was stabbed in the back in broad daylight while leaning against the entrance to the legation. Seeing him staggering, with a short sword buried to the hilt in his back, the porter came running. When he drew out the sword, Dan fell face forward, blood spraying from his wound. The point of the sword had hit its mark, piercing his heart.

Alcock was roused from his musings by the sound of hooves and a horse neighing near the legation gate. Dr. Myburgh had returned. Alcock went out to meet him.

"How is he?"

"The moment I saw the wound, I realized that Mr. Heusken's condition was hopeless," replied the doctor.

"And the cut?" asked Alcock, reflexively.

"The cut extended diagonally from the area of the navel across nearly the entire pelvic region. The bowels were protruding, and some of the intestines had been nearly cut through. I did everything I could, but to no avail. Mr. Heusken breathed his last at half an hour past midnight."

"And Mr. Harris?"

"He was weeping at Heusken's side."

That was only to be expected. Harris had lost a close friend and loyal subordinate who had stood by him since Shimoda. Alcock said nothing, but the thought of Harris's loss was uppermost in his mind.



Heusken's funeral was held on January 18. On that day, Alcock passed along the familiar road to the American legation. Arriv-

ing, he found the legation surrounded by a mob of curious onlookers. Pushing through the crowd, Alcock entered the gates.

Bellecourt had already arrived. Eulenburg had not yet appeared, but J. K. de Wit, the Dutch consul general, had come from Nagasaki aboard the warship *Cachelot* and hastened to the legation together with the crew.

When Alcock had finished offering his condolences, the Japanese mourners—five governors of foreign affairs—cleared a path through the crowd and entered the legation. One of them expressed his government's regrets to Harris. He then said something so strange that Alcock wondered what the man was thinking of:

"We have received definite word that a band of assassins is coming to attack the funeral procession. The government has taken measures to ensure your safety, but cannot guarantee it. Therefore, we ask you to bury the coffin quietly, with no one accompanying it. We also request that the ministers and their companions stay in their homes."

Preventing such attacks was the Japanese government's sworn duty. And now they had the impudence to suggest that the funeral be called off! Such were the thoughts of the diplomats as they looked at Harris. Conscious that all eyes were upon him, Harris, raising his voice to reply, so that even the crowd outside could hear him, said, "My colleagues and I must perform our duty of love and accompany our murdered friend's body to its final resting place. If the Japanese government has neither the ability nor the will to stop such an attack, we will take measures to protect ourselves."

Having said this, Harris sent a Japanese messenger to Eulenburg, who had not yet arrived, requesting a larger military escort.

Although Harris had raised his voice in replying to the Japanese request, it was a voice that did not have its usual sharpness, spirit, or force.

He has just lost his friend and is exhausted from lack of

sleep, mused Alcock. This struck him as entirely natural and he gave it no further thought.

A grave had been prepared at Korinji Temple, which was about one kilometer from the American legation, in Zenpukuji Temple. The funeral procession departed at one-thirty.

In addition to the ministers, legation staff members, and Yokohama consuls, the procession included Prussian and Dutch officers and seamen, who were guarding the diplomats, and the naval band from the *Arcona*, a Prussian warship. The procession was headed by the five governors of foreign affairs on horseback.

Alcock had armed himself with a pistol and short sword. The military escort shouldered rifles loaded with live ammunition as they moved forward to guard the route.

The procession came to a stream running along the left side of the road. There were ample places from which to launch an ambush, such as the bridges that spanned the stream, the street corners, where visibility was poor, and the hedges to their right. The procession moved forward with caution.

The Japanese governors of foreign affairs, who were leading the procession, warned that there was danger of an attack. "We have taken precautions for your safety," they said. But the mourners could detect no signs of Japanese bodyguards.

"I don't see that a single soldier has been summoned," said one.

"And not only that," said another, "they have taken no measures to guard against a surprise attack on the road."

"The story about a gang coming to attack us is a complete fiction. They merely wanted to threaten us so that we wouldn't join the procession."

The diplomats vented their contempt for the governors' all-transparent lies.

The procession arrived at Korinji. A deep hole had been dug at Heusken's grave site. Next to it was the grave of Dan, marked by a plain wooden post.

The coffin was lowered into the grave. A priest, who was also a translator attached to the French legation, conducted the

service according to the Catholic liturgy. The military band played a mournful hymn, a soldier dipped the American flag, and each of the bareheaded mourners tossed a handful of earth into the grave. Then a Buddhist priest who had been dispatched by the Bakufu recited sutras.

The ceremony ended peacefully. Harris thanked the mourners in a brief but emotional speech. They then filed silently out of the cemetery.

"Would everyone please give me their attention for a moment?" Alcock called to his colleagues when they had passed through the gates of Korinji.

"If the Japanese had good reason to know that there was danger, they were bound by every motive of national good faith and honor to strain the utmost powers of the government to avert it and afford protection. If no such danger existed and they issued the warning simply to keep us from joining the procession, it is an infamy and outrage. I would like to meet with you to discuss the situation we now find ourselves in, as well as what measures we should take to protect our personal safety, our national honor, and the lives and fortunes of all foreigners in Japan."

Everyone agreed with this proposal. The next day, the ministers gathered at the British legation to discuss what should be done. Word of this meeting was also conveyed to Harris, who had remained behind at the cemetery.



"By now there have been many cases of foreigners murdered—many victims have fallen at the hands of assassins."

"The Japanese government has yet to capture even one criminal. I wonder how hard they are trying."

It was with these comments, emerging unprompted from the lips of the participants, that the day's meeting began.

De Wit, the Dutch consul general from Nagasaki, was not well acquainted with the situation in Edo; he attended as an observer. Because Prussia had not yet signed a commercial treaty with Japan, Eulenburg, the Prussian minister, had also

originally been an observer at these meetings, but he had now been in Edo four months and was an active participant in the discussion. Bellecourt, of France, who had just been promoted to the rank of minister, tended to follow the lead of Alcock and Harris and not assert his own views. He did not speak as much as the others. The leader of the meeting was Alcock. Harris, who was usually highly conscious of his position as senior diplomat and spoke as though he were in contention with Alcock, the representative of a Great Power, was oddly quiet today.

He has just lost Heusken. It's only natural that he be in low spirits, thought Alcock as he began the meeting.

"Further protests are useless—a waste of time and effort. Nothing we say to the Japanese will change or improve the situation. It will simply become more chaotic and confused. Also, our lives will continue to be threatened indiscriminately. I therefore propose that we withdraw our legations from Edo temporarily and move them to Yokohama. There we can receive adequate protection from two British ships of war. Furthermore, our removal to Yokohama in itself will place great pressure on the Japanese government."

Nearly everyone agreed with Alcock's proposal. Just one shook his head in disagreement: Mr. Harris. He finally broke his silence, saying, "The Japanese government has consistently warned the diplomatic representatives of the existing dangers from the first day of their arrival in this city and has shown its anxiety to secure their safety.

"We have been in Edo for nineteen months in safety, and this fact is proof of the desire and ability of the government to give us effective protection."

Harris ordinarily had nothing good to say about the Bakufu. Only two weeks before, he had been extremely caustic in describing the Bakufu's warning as a "ploy." Now he was extolling the Bakufu's sincerity and good faith. Alcock was not the only one astonished by this turnabout.

"I know that everyone regrets the loss of Mr. Heusken, who was a loyal and able interpreter at the American legation. His loss is particularly painful to me. But we must all remember that

this tragedy occurred because Mr. Heusken disregarded the reiterated warnings of the Japanese government against his constant exposure of himself at night."

Harris, who had previously maintained that "diplomats in the East have to harmonize their views and act as one" was now ignoring the diplomatic common sense that he himself had been the first to practice—Harris, the senior diplomat, the one with the most experience in Japan. Alcock could not believe his own eyes and ears.

Harris was an eloquent speaker. His words flowed smoothly and rapidly, betraying no hint of awareness that he was reversing his earlier position.

"To return to Yokohama with the intention of producing an effect on the Japanese government will, I think, prove a mistake—that is exactly what they want. There was no article in the American treaty more difficult to obtain than the one securing a residence in Edo for the diplomatic representative of the United States. The Japanese governors on that occasion warned me of the grave difficulties such a residence in Edo would cause and they were very solicitous that I should accept a permanent residence in Kanagawa or Kawasaki with the right to come to Edo whenever duty required."

Initially, Iwase, the chief Japanese negotiator, had made such a request. But he had quickly retreated and substituted the condition that the minister's arrival at his post be delayed by a year and a half. Alcock and the others, however, did not know that. Once again, Harris had distorted the facts to suit his own convenience.

"The retirement of the foreign legations to Yokohama is exactly what the government desires, as it relieves them from great anxiety, responsibility, and expense. They state that the legations can be more conveniently protected at Yokohama than in Edo. Therefore, instead of the retirement giving a swipe to the Japanese government, they will view it as highly desirable. I apprehend that a residence in Yokohama will further encourage the Japanese mind to confound the foreign representatives with

the foreign traders, an effect that cannot fail to injure both our prestige and our influence."

As his senior colleague's monologue showed no signs of ending, Alcock interrupted. "Just a moment please, Mr. Harris. Until now we have discussed the necessity of making the Japanese government amend its neglect. If we do as you say, we will in effect be accepting that neglect."

"That may be so," replied Harris, "but I say that we have to trust the sincerity of the Japanese government and see how the situation develops, for at least a little while longer. Retiring to Yokohama now would be a tactical blunder."

"But in our previous discussions, you consistently denied that the Japanese government had ever demonstrated sincerity or good faith."

"Not 'ever,' Mr. Alcock. If you review the history of the past nineteen months, I think you will find ample cause to trust in the Japanese government's sincerity and good faith."

The discussion was beginning to sound more like an argument. Eulenburg intervened, saying, "In view of the circumstances, I believe that the decision of the British, French, and Dutch ministers is correct. But because the current situation does not absolutely demand united action, the American minister should be allowed to act as he thinks best. Mr. Harris was the first to conclude a commercial treaty with Japan and has lived in Japan longer than the rest of us. He has his own view of the matter, and even if he remains behind, it will not in any way harm the interests of the representatives who remove to Yokohama. In fact, his presence here might serve to calm those disturbances, which concern us all."

Actually, Harris's presence in Edo could seriously harm the interests of the other foreign representatives—specifically, those of Alcock and Bellecourt—but even so, Eulenburg's somewhat inconsistent attempt at peacemaking calmed Alcock and Harris and brought the argument to an end.

Two days later Alcock again called a meeting of foreign representatives. But feeling that Harris would not alter his views and that his presence would only disturb the meeting, Alcock

did not issue him an invitation. That day, Alcock and the others decided to withdraw to Yokohama, despite Harris's opposition.

Alcock had the *Encounter* and the *Pioneer*—the two warships in Yokohama—come to the Shinagawa offing. Lending one ship to Bellecourt, Alcock boarded the other with his staff and sailed to Yokohama. The second meeting of foreign representatives was held five days later, on January 26.

Heusken, the secretary and translator, had been the American legation's only staff member. Now Heusken was dead and Harris remained in Edo alone.



Acting Consul Howard Vyse was living in Kanagawa with his wife. Alcock could not very well ask to lodge in a room at the consulate for a long period of time. After arriving in Yokohama, Alcock stayed at the Yokohama Hotel, a new establishment that had a western-style bar and restaurant as well as—a true rarity in Japan—a billiards table.

In the nineteen months since the opening of the ports, Alcock had always acted in concert with Harris. His senior colleague's sudden change of attitude after Heusken's murder had been completely unexpected. Until recently, Alcock and Harris had harmonized their views and coordinated their dealings with the Japanese. Even in their private lives, the two bachelors had gotten along well.

Why has Harris altered his views so suddenly? Has something happened to make him change so? Is he really telling the truth? Sitting in a rocking chair in his hotel room on the Bund, gazing out the window toward Edo on the other side of the water, Alcock spent his days pondering Harris's inexplicable transformation.

Harris, on the other hand, had begun a life of maddening isolation, painfully aware that his colleagues most likely suspected his motives.

The misconduct of the officers and crew on board the *Powhatan*—namely, their frenzied speculation in cobangs—had been reported in the *North China Herald* and described in letters

sent directly to the United States. It did not take long before the U.S. government became fully apprised.

In addition to buying cobangs, the *Powhatan's* officers had used the remaining 60,000 of the original 150,000 ichibus to purchase goods and charter a merchant ship. Loading the goods on board, the merchantman had set sail for Hong Kong. The cargo was large—and troublesome to sell—but the officers finally disposed of it by conducting an auction. The U.S. government had also been informed of this in letters sent from Hong Kong. When the *Powhatan* returned to Yokohama from Hong Kong, the officers obtained another 110,000 ichibus, which they used to buy cobangs. The U.S. government knew this as well.

The Japanese diplomatic mission had boarded the *Powhatan* and sailed to Panama via Honolulu and San Francisco. At Panama the Japanese disembarked, crossed the isthmus by train and arriving at the Atlantic, headed for Washington. The Japanese returned via the Cape of Good Hope aboard the *Niagara*, a ship dispatched by the U.S. government. The U.S. government had also given the *Niagara* an official letter for Harris. It stated that he was to “investigate and report on the misconduct of the *Powhatan's* officers and crew.”

Harris was well acquainted with the misconduct of the *Powhatan's* officers and crew. It was he, after all, who had advised them to take as many ichibus as possible. Racking his brains to write something that would divert attention from his part in the matter, Harris finished his report and sent it. Then came the New Year. Not long after returning to Edo, Harris received the order he had been dreading:

“Because it is suspected that you yourself may have been speculating in Japanese currency, you are hereby relieved of responsibility for the investigation into the misconduct of the *Powhatan's* officers and crew.”

After issuing this order to Harris, the U.S. government organized a committee to conduct an independent investigation. In the course of that investigation, the committee discovered that, prior to the opening of the port of Kanagawa (actually,

Yokohama), the American minister had sold a large quantity of cobangs in Shanghai.

In Harris's written records of November 7, 1857—over three years before—he had written, “My outlay is about \$1,500 per annum. But . . . I can remit to New York some \$6,000 per annum as my savings out of a salary of \$5,000!”

What had been Harris's original purpose in coming to Japan? The evidence indicates he had come for no other purpose than to enrich himself.

If his expenses amounted to \$1,500 out of a yearly salary of \$5,000, he should have been left with \$3,500. But Harris was able to remit \$6,000 to New York. Somehow, he had managed to save an extra \$2,500. How had he done it? Just as Alcock had suspected: by speculation in cobangs.

Soon after arriving in Japan, Harris had learned that the ratio of gold to silver was extremely low—about one to five. Internationally, the ratio was one to sixteen. Like the foreign merchants in Yokohama, Harris soon realized that by having the Japanese agree to a weight-for-weight exchange rate and exchanging ichibus for cobangs at the official rate, he could obtain enormous profits. But if this situation were allowed to continue, Japan's gold—its cobangs—would disappear when the country became fully open. Harris was aware that Alcock wondered why, knowing this, he had done nothing. He also realized that Alcock had two important weaknesses: a tendency to believe too readily what he was told, and a priggish unwillingness to face the unpleasant. Harris therefore was, correctly, able to discount the irascible Englishman as a serious impediment to his designs.

Harris represented himself as a devout Christian and a man of principle. Had he really been either, he would have informed the Japanese that their ratio of gold to silver was low as soon as he knew of it and advised them on ways to keep gold from flowing out of the country. To do so should have been his proper business and responsibility, but Harris did nothing because he was dazzled by the prospect of making a killing that required minimal effort on his part.

Harris's negotiating partners in Shimoda—the local authorities—were easily intimidated. Harris, who had an unerring nose for the weaknesses of others, not only bullied them during the negotiations but later had them collect cobangs and bring them to the legation.

To clear a profit of \$2,500, Harris must have obtained nearly 1,000 cobangs. He established his consulate at Gyokusenji Temple in Kakizaki Village, about one and a half kilometers east of Shimoda. His private quarters were in the rear eight-mat room on the left, facing Gyokusenji's main temple building. Looking at this room, which has remained unchanged since Harris's time, it is easy to imagine the bent form of a middle-aged man, counting his cobangs one by one by the light of a candle and muttering, “This will earn me about two thousand five hundred dollars.” That would be close to a true picture of Harris.

Between Perry's visit and Harris's arrival, warships and other vessels visited Shimoda several times. Each time they came, they paid for their expenses in gold coins. “Besides,” Harris recorded, “I have made a little sum of about \$2,500 by taking from the Japanese foreign gold at the rate at which they took it—i.e., 34½ cents per dollar.”

Harris had come to Japan with \$5,000—his annual salary, paid in advance. When he totaled his personal accounts at the end of the year, he had \$3,500 left. He had also earned a \$2,500 profit from cobangs and a \$2,500 profit from foreign gold, for a total profit of \$5,000. He thus ended the year \$8,500 in the black.

The U.S. dollar of the 1850s was much stronger than today's. Even at the lowest estimate, it was worth about 300 times its present value. In one year, Harris thus made about \$2,500,000 in present-day dollars.

Just after the opening of the ports, there was an incident involving Henry Heusken—Harris's secretary and interpreter abruptly left his post without permission. This incident was also caused by Harris's cobang profiteering.

A young Dutch immigrant to the United States, Heusken had been looking for work in New York when he heard that Harris needed an interpreter. He applied for the job, was hired, and went to Japan. Like Harris, Heusken soon realized that the ratio of gold to silver was low and that he could make a fortune if he bought cobangs.

With the help of Moriyama Takichiro, the Dutch interpreter for the Japanese, who could also understand a little English, Harris was able to obtain cobangs secretly. Learning of this, Heusken asked Moriyama to do the same for him.

Moriyama refused. The local authorities had told him that there was "no need to supply cobangs to the interpreter." Heusken thus had to ask Harris directly. If Harris refused, Heusken would threaten to divulge his secret to the Europeans who would soon be coming to Japan in increasing numbers.

But Heusken found Harris accommodating. "Don't worry, I'll give you your share," Harris replied when Heusken approached him.

Harris secretly took cobangs out of the country when he went to Shanghai aboard the *Mississippi*, which made a timely visit to Japan in April of 1859, just three months prior to the opening of the ports. Heusken, who remained behind at Shimoda, saw Harris off, expecting that he would get a large cut of the profits.

Harris returned from Shanghai on June 26, just prior to the opening of the ports. Heusken watched the servants unload considerably less baggage than they had loaded on for the trip to Shanghai. Heusken naturally assumed that Harris had changed the cobangs as planned, but his boss did not broach the subject of his share.

Boarding the *Mississippi*, Harris and Heusken left Shimoda and arrived at the Kanagawa offing on June 30, the day before the ports were to open to the British. Harris had as yet said nothing. Unable to contain himself, Heusken brought up the subject on the evening of July 3, the day before the ports were to open to the Americans. Harris took out a package he had

prepared. It was not nearly as big as Heusken had expected. He refused it and demanded a larger share.

On July 4, American Independence Day, the ports opened to the Americans. That day, Harris, accompanied by Vice-Consul E. M. Dorr and the captain and officers of the *Mississippi*, went ashore at Kanagawa and proceeded to the consulate in Honkakuji Temple, where they celebrated the double holiday. While Harris and the others were ashore, Heusken left the ship and boarded a Dutch merchantman that had just come into port, quitting his job without notice.

When he found Heusken gone, Harris was stunned. If Heusken let it be known that he had been buying cobangs, it would ruin everything. His reputation as a diplomat would be destroyed, and he would be made a laughingstock. Harris presented himself to the world as a devout Christian. Cobang profiteering was one of the most shameful acts a devout Christian could commit, especially one serving as a diplomatic representative.

Harris was desperate; somehow or other he had to get Heusken back, no matter what the cost. The only way to do it, he realized, was to give him a satisfactory share of the profits.

Should he leave the ship and tell this to Heusken himself? He had his reputation as a minister to consider, and if Heusken refused, it would only add to his shame. Instead, he wrote a letter saying that he was willing to pay Heusken an adequate share. Of course, he could not deliver it himself. Should he have a crew member from the *Mississippi* take it? But there was the danger that the messenger might glimpse the contents.

The next day, July 5, the *Mississippi* dropped Harris off at Edo and sailed immediately for the China coast. Harris waited until the ship had departed before entering Edo the following day. Moriyama, the interpreter, was among the officials who greeted him. Harris entrusted him with the letter to Heusken, and Moriyama left for Yokohama by the overland route.

Harris had no guarantee that Heusken would return. Worried that Heusken might refuse his offer and remain at large,